



# European *youth* event

**EYE report 2018**

**Speak up Europe!**

100 ideas for a better future

**#EYE2018**



European Parliament

## THANK YOU

The editors of this report would like to extend a special thanks to everyone who made this report possible. Firstly, our massive thanks go to the indefatigable team of reporters without whom this report would not be possible. Thank you also to the interns who helped us seizing the ideas and the brains behind. Many thanks to Iris Walter, Christina Altides, Niamh McGovern and the rest of the EYE team who helped facilitate this report. We would also like to thank, last but by no means least, the European Youth Press for taking on this important role of giving a voice to the EYE participants that will hopefully be heard in the European Parliament chambers.

Finally, thank you to all the people who contributed ideas to this report and the participants who made the EYE such an inspirational event.

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## Contents

Editors' notes.....	4
Foreword by Antonio Tajani .....	5
Foreword by Klaus Welle .....	6
Speak up Europe! 100 ideas listed by theme .....	8
EYE report questionnaire.....	13
<b>1. YOUNG AND OLD: Keeping up with the digital revolution .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Work and unemployment .....	16
Technology .....	20
Education .....	23
Youth Forum Commentary.....	27
<b>2. RICH AND POOR: Calling for a fair share.....</b>	<b>29</b>
Inequality: sharing is caring .....	30
Revolution .....	33
Empowerment.....	37
Youth Forum Commentary.....	41
<b>3. APART AND TOGETHER: Working out for a stronger Europe.....</b>	<b>43</b>
Future of Europe.....	44
European elections 2019: youth turnout and voting.....	47
Engagement and citizenship .....	50
Youth Forum Commentary.....	53
<b>4. SAFE AND DANGEROUS: Staying alive in turbulent times.....</b>	<b>55</b>
Human rights and rule of law.....	56
Creating space for civil society .....	59
Handling technological advances .....	62
Youth Forum Commentary.....	65
<b>5. LOCAL AND GLOBAL: Protecting our planet.....</b>	<b>67</b>
Climate change and farmers .....	68
Renewable energies, smart cities and sustainable entrepreneurship.....	71
Food waste, no plastic, clean water and sanitation: changing consumer habits .....	75
Youth Forum Commentary.....	79
<b>Meet the authors.....</b>	<b>82</b>



## Editors' notes

“ Young people aren't the future, they're the present. ”

This principle was expressed loud and clear during this year's European Youth Event (EYE). But aside from statements of intent, what do young people bring to the table in modern Europe, and what is our vision for the future?

There's no denying that the world has changed dramatically in the past couple of years. The legacy of the European project is one of peace and security for the citizens within its borders; however, it's becoming clear that without concerted effort it's possible that young people may be about to inherit a much more unstable Europe than they enjoyed growing up in.

But there's cause for optimism. Fundamental changes in the way we live our lives, and engage with one another, will likely impact how we govern ourselves in future. Young people are often accused of being apathetic and disengaged. Yet, this report shows that young people are informed, sensible in their approach to politics and engage in ideas on how the future can be structured in a fairer and more sustainable way.

While many may be nervous about the potential ramifications of a more technologically advanced future - be it threats to employment or even personal liberty - young people are already leading this change and proposing ways to handle the expected fifth industrial revolution.

One of the central ideas to come from this report concerns the European elections next year, and it's fairly simple: involve young people in the political process. Be brave enough to field young candidates and listen to their concerns, ideas and solutions.

So while politicians should look to embrace a younger perspective to dealing with the future, young people also need to have faith in their convictions of tolerance and optimism in the opportunities these changes offer us.

Previous generations have suffered greater turmoil to construct a social contract which worked to protect the interests of the majority. Now it's our turn.

This report offers broad proposals; both imaginative and concrete. From mind-boggling technological possibilities to strong, non-discriminatory security; from improving political engagement to ensuring that people don't work harder for less.

We invite critical engagement equally from politicians and young people. This is about creating a conversation which defines a set of common values and goals that we wish to maintain or achieve in the coming decades.

Because it's true: the imagined "future" is fast becoming the present, and young people are starting to speak up.

**Greg Bianchi & Julie Mahlerová**  
Chief Editors

# Forewords



For the third time, the European Parliament opened its doors to thousands of young people from across the continent for the European Youth Event 2018. In this unique get-together, more than 8.000 young citizens engaged in an open debate on the future of Europe, nurturing the work of our institution with their ideas.

It was a true inspiration for all of us. As roles were reversed, young people led the conversation and MEPs listened - a reminder that the youth are our present and future.

The two-day event saw a wide range of stimulating discussions and debates. At their core was a strong desire among young people to be agents for change and actively involved in shaping their future.

These exchanges are critical at a time when Europe is facing many challenges: the refugee and migration crisis, consolidating the recovery from the economic crisis and the ever-present threat of terrorism. The response to these challenges is not to fall back to national borders. On the contrary, the solution is to enhance cooperation and trust, to reinforce solidarity and our European values, and to assert European interests on the global stage, based on multilateralism.

It was clear from the EYE that young people are keen to take on these challenges and work for a better future.

Young people can make a difference, and I am sure their contribution will lead to an increasingly vibrant European democracy. The European elections of 23-26 May 2019 will be a great opportunity for all citizens to determine the political course of our Union, ensuring that the prosperity, stability and peace we have been able to guarantee for more than 60 years continues. Indeed, it is within this framework that European citizens have been able to exercise their freedoms.

As MEPs, we will continue this important dialogue with you, the young people of Europe, and work to ensure that your future rests in a better and stronger EU.

**Antonio Tajani**  
*President of the European Parliament*

Young people, young Europeans, are the future of the European Union. While I am now slightly above the age bracket of the European Youth Event, I was a staunch youth activist in the beginning of my career and still am a strong supporter of youth today. For this reason, I suggested to Parliament's political leadership to establish a European Youth Event as a central hub to develop an open, structured and continuous dialogue between Members of the European Parliament and young people.

The first EYE in 2014 and the subsequent editions were hugely successful not least because young people had a strong say in shaping the programme. The EYE is now established as a biennial event for young Europeans to voice and exchange their ideas for a better Europe. Bringing together more than 8 000 young people in such a unique place as is the European Parliament, allows them to forge a European identity.

The European Youth Event is an opportunity for young active citizens to leave their mark on European politics, and to have their say on policies which will affect their lives.

This process continues well after the event. The most innovative ideas presented during the EYE2018 are collected in this report and will be presented to Members of the European Parliament.

The authors, selected with the help of the European Youth Press, have captured the impressive range of ideas that young EYE participants brought forward in Strasbourg on 1-2 June 2018.

The success of the EYE rests on several elements: Parliament's political leadership, the Parliament services responsible for the preparations, event partners and youth groups contributing to the programme, the large number of volunteers and, of course, most of all the participants themselves, who engaged enthusiastically before, during and after the event.

The dialogue between Members and young people is not over after the EYE; it continues with this report and the upcoming Youth Hearings at the end of this year in the run-up to the European Elections in 2019.

**Klaus Welle**  
*Secretary General of the European Parliament*



## Speak up Europe! 100 ideas listed by theme

### 1. YOUNG AND OLD:

#### Keeping up with the digital revolution

- 1 Embrace e-portfolios to revolutionise recruiting
- 2 Support VET and implement a dual training system
- 3 Create dedicated youth departments in institutions
- 4 Portable system for worker benefits
- 5 Reform the youth guarantee
- 6 Create an intergenerational workforce charter
- 7 European skills mismatch scheme
- 8 Create a European robotics agency and robotics compliance seal
- 9 Regulate military use of AI
- 10 Create a European crowdfunding platform
- 11 Invest in technology for culture and heritage
- 12 Create a European robot assessment
- 13 Create a pan-European media
- 14 Entrepreneurial programmes and soft skills
- 15 Use Erasmus to help tackle depopulation
- 16 Life skills classes
- 17 Promote curiosity, self-development and responsibility
- 18 Introduce "challenge" lessons to encourage more creative students
- 19 Inter-school collaboration for projects
- 20 Tools against digital exclusion and for mental health

## 2. RICH AND POOR:

### Calling for a fair share

- 21 Pursue universal basic income to tackle inequality
- 22 Promote lifelong learning
- 23 Basic income, except not universal
- 24 Unified tax and labour rights within the EU
- 25 Healthcare access for transgender people
- 26 End the pink tax
- 27 Promote human rights in textiles trade
- 28 Provide accessible courses across Europe
- 29 Support a more inclusive EYE
- 30 Tax robots!
- 31 Prevent tax evasion
- 32 Equal representation in the European Parliament
- 33 Make us happier, stop using GDP as the only measure of progress
- 34 Make rural areas more attractive for the youth
- 35 Empower and integrate refugees by including them in the national education system
- 36 Comprehensive sexual education
- 37 Support for social entrepreneurship and sharing economy
- 38 National protection mechanisms for journalists in Europe
- 39 Promote sign language
- 40 Create transitional housing

## 3. APART AND TOGETHER:

### Working out for a stronger Europe

- 41 Ensure educational opportunities in the UK after Brexit
- 42 Create a European refugee day
- 43 Invest in foreign aid
- 44 Encourage more exchanges between Europe and Turkey
- 45 Set up a voluntary system to link migrants with Europeans
- 46 Strengthen external borders and data sharing
- 47 Encourage young people to stand in elections
- 48 Use social media to inform young people about voting
- 49 Create an annual Q&A between EU leaders and young people
- 50 Create a uniform age for young people to stand for election
- 51 Advance e-voting to encourage turnout
- 52 Introduce votes at 16 for European elections
- 53 Utilise companies and apps to spread the word about voting
- 54 Link Europe with national platforms to encourage engagement
- 55 Develop a European Citizens' Initiative
- 56 Promote classical languages and European history
- 57 Create a platform for qualified refugees to fill educational roles
- 58 Introduce politics into civic classes
- 59 Fund a youth ID to allow discounts to cultural sites
- 60 Create a mobile headmasters initiative

## 4. SAFE AND DANGEROUS:

### Staying alive in turbulent times

- 61 Lead by implementing UNSCR 2250 for youth
- 62 Prioritise human rights in trade agreements
- 63 Move justice to a European dimension
- 64 Battle exclusion to stop extremism
- 65 Make social media a public utility
- 66 Promote greater military cooperation
- 67 Create humanitarian corridors for refugees
- 68 Create a pan-European transparency database
- 69 Protect whistleblowers
- 70 Train police to tackle online hate crimes
- 71 Create a young candidates fund
- 72 Online rights declaration
- 73 Compulsory first aid training
- 74 Ensure transparency in sports
- 75 Mainstream and align cyber security
- 76 Make cybersecurity education a standard practice
- 77 Promote EU intelligence cooperation
- 78 Promote education on molecular and cellular biology
- 79 Invest in gene editing technology
- 80 Create a free anti-virus software for EU citizens

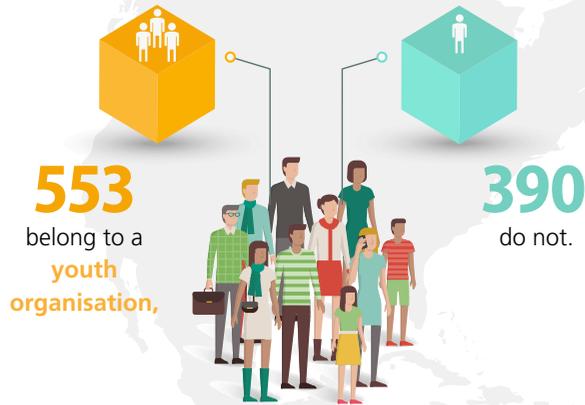
## 5. LOCAL AND GLOBAL:

### Protecting our planet

- 81 Create a European green rooftop programme
- 82 Use green diplomacy to negotiate with the climate in mind
- 83 Feminism in the battle against climate change
- 84 Support to young farmers and new technologies
- 85 Fewer meat subsidies
- 86 Promote biodiversity and higher standards for farm animals
- 87 Support sustainable households to sell energy back to the grid
- 88 Set a timetable for ending the use of fossil fuels and limit job losses
- 89 Promote a European energy community and market
- 90 Empower European-scale infrastructures and a common policy for transport
- 91 Smart cities and public transport
- 92 Sustain eco-friendly entrepreneurship and projects
- 93 Promote recycling of electronic devices
- 94 Promote a plastic-free approach
- 95 Fund the removal of plastic from the oceans
- 96 A new culture for food stores and taxation
- 97 Make reducing food waste legal and mandatory
- 98 Simplify the process for food donations
- 99 Sustainability education at school
- 100 Develop a system of using rainwater for plumbing

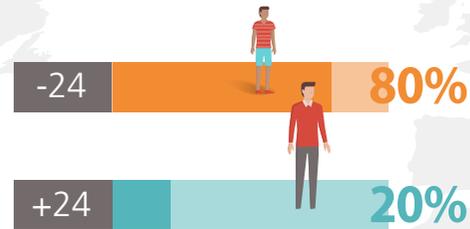
# EYE report questionnaire<sup>1</sup>

## AMONG 943 RESPONDENTS FROM OUR QUESTIONNAIRE



## AGE

The majority of respondents in a youth organisations (80%) are under 24.



## CONCERNS



Respondents across the EU place

most concern on

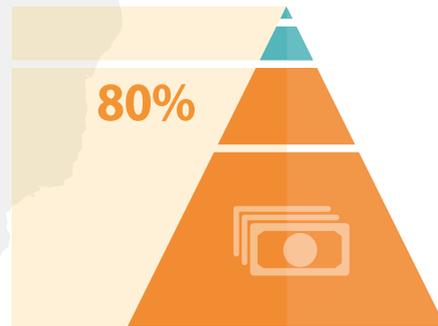


## ABROAD

67% of respondents say working, living and studying in a country outside their own "completely" appeals to them.



## OPINION



80% of respondents think young people either completely, or mostly benefit from the EU. The remaining are undecided or disagree.

<sup>1</sup> 943 respondents from 28 EU member states. Questionnaire undertaken between 12 March to 19 April 2018. The questionnaire was shared with EYE participants and the European Youth Forum.

<sup>2</sup> The question was open ended meaning that finding could refer to any aspect of immigration (e.g. whether we do enough to help refugees, whether we need to strengthen border controls, etc) and doesn't necessarily prove opposition to immigration.

# 1. YOUNG AND OLD: Keeping up with the digital revolution

Today, we live in a world where being young is increasingly difficult. Naturally, many things have improved from the past: times of pan-European conflict are fading into memory, access to education is widespread and young people in Europe generally have good living conditions. Yet, inequalities between young and older generations are increasing. According to Eurostat, youth unemployment rates are generally much higher than unemployment rates for other age groups, and there are also many who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs)<sup>3</sup>. Digitalisation is changing the world of work, requiring new skills and perspectives. Working practices are becoming more fluid, allowing for flexibility, but this also carries the risk of precarious lifestyles and reduced access to forms of social protection.

At the same time, automation and robotics are making giant steps forward in all fields. Machines undoubtedly improve many aspects of human life, such as in the medical and automotive fields – but they also bring forward ethical and practical issues, including concerns that they will destroy jobs. Some have warned of science-fiction scenarios, where artificial intelligence (AI) might endanger the very existence of the human species. The degree of myths and fear around digitalisation suggests that there are still ethical and normative questions which demand answers. In this context, education systems are not well-equipped to keep up with such a fast-paced societal and technological change; schools and universities often lack the resources, preparation and mind-set to help their pupils and students achieve the right balance of both hard and soft skills needed to enter the new digitised labour market. This often results in a mismatch between the capabilities they can offer and those that are requested by employers.

The social impact of all these trends combined is both extremely complex and subtly dangerous. Young people study for longer periods and access stable jobs later, delaying their financial independence. Young people start contributing to the pension system later and in a more scattered way, meaning they are unable to contribute as much for social security programmes, including healthcare for the elderly until later in life. Life expectancy has increased, but at the same time birth rates have been steadily falling, meaning that there are increasingly fewer resources to ensure a comfortable life to an ageing population.

Poverty is on the rise among young people, an element which, combined with unemployment, threatens not only their position as taxpayers, but also their mental wellbeing. According to a 2016 McKinsey Global Institute research<sup>4</sup>, this is the first generation in history that is worse-off than their parents, a fact that has been acknowledged as having potentially destructive consequences for the entire system we live in. Young people need to be established as a priority in all sectors and in all institutions, from the local to the national and European level. While this would be a start, what measures should be taken to improve the labour market, the technological development and education systems across Europe to ensure that young people can benefit from them? At the 2018 edition of the EYE more than 8.000 young people gathered to discuss these themes. Young people are nervous, but ambitious. It's time for policy makers to embrace this youthful spirit.



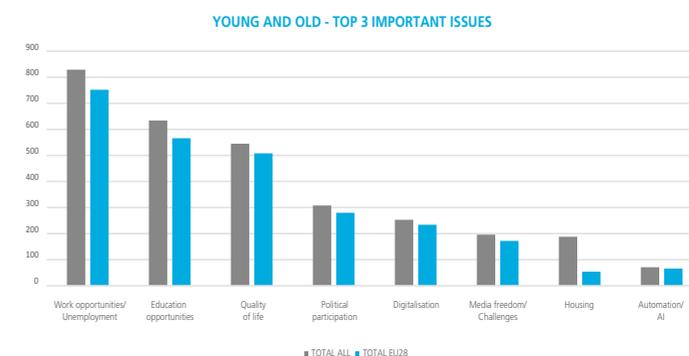
Instagram: @cinnavox

## WORK AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis has hit certain groups of people, including the young, more heavily than other parts of the population. In 2017, the EU28's youth unemployment average was at 16.8% (Eurostat), roughly the same percentage as ten years earlier (15.8%)<sup>5</sup>.

Young people were particularly hard hit during the financial crisis. While there has been an improvement in recent years, employment figures are only just reaching pre-crisis levels and at one point youth unemployment stood at 23.9% in the first quarter of 2013. Unemployment rates vary from country to country, ranging from 6% in Germany to 42% in Greece, clearly indicating how young people in southern and eastern Europe face greater obstacles in accessing the labour market. Moreover, the percentage of NEETs, those who neither work or study, is on the rise: in 2017, there were almost 17 million young people aged 20-34 who were neither in employment, education or training, totaling almost one in five young people (18.3%) according to Eurostat<sup>6</sup>. In addition, the distinction between those who are considered employed and unemployed usually fails to include those who, even if they are in work, are underemployed; working illegally or being underpaid. Precarious work is on the rise, being accentuated by the so-called gig economy offering temporary employment; the concept of flexicurity (flexibility and security) has not yet proven successful, and although increasingly more young people work, they remain poor (one out of three young people in Europe, according to Eurostat)<sup>7</sup>. New forms of work impose flexibility, which too often is a forced choice rather than a free option, leading to a new, worrying phenomena such as the "SINKies" – Single Income, No Kids, referring to young working couples whose wages when combined barely reach the equivalent of one single "decent" income. All this affects the ability of young people to access specific sets of social rights, such as housing, work and education.

To counter these trends, the EU has put in place measures such as the Youth Guarantee<sup>8</sup> and the Youth Employment Initiative<sup>9</sup>. Although these are considered strong measures to tackle the youth employment crisis, according to Caritas (2018) the European responses are characterised by a certain fixation on employment and employability, appearing to be geared towards quantity rather than the quality of the offer<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, they do not always manage to reach out to highly marginalised groups and fail to match the scheme with protection measures. Unpaid internships are a classic example of these problems. "Now that the economy seems to be increasing its take up, it is time to correct this by guaranteeing the quality of employment and apprenticeships" says Caritas. And indeed, one of the things that young people call for most is fair working conditions - starting with salary expectations.



“ I don't want to demonize success, but in the spirit of ambition, what's more ambitious than finding a system that works with that ambition and collective protection? ”

Johnny, 31, UK

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat, "Unemployment statistics", Eurostat Statistics explained, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics#Recent\\_developments](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Recent_developments) (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>4</sup> Richard Dobbs et al., "Poorer than their parents? Flat or falling incomes in advanced economies", McKinsey Global Institute, July 2016, <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Employment%20and%20Growth/Poorer%20than%20their%20parents%20A%20new%20perspective%20on%20income%20inequality/MGI-Poorer-than-their-parents-Flat-or-falling-incomes-in-advanced-economies-Full-report.ashx> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>5</sup> Eurostat News Release, "Unemployment in the EU regions in 2017", <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8830865/1-26042018-AP-EN.pdf/bb8ac3b7-3606-47ef-b7ed-aadc4d1e2aae> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat, "Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training", Eurostat Statistics explained, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics\\_on\\_young\\_people\\_neither\\_in\\_employment\\_nor\\_in\\_education\\_or\\_training](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training) (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>7</sup> Eurostat, "Young people - social inclusion", Eurostat Statistics explained, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Young\\_people\\_-\\_social\\_inclusion](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Young_people_-_social_inclusion) (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, "The Youth Guarantee", <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079> (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, "Youth Employment Initiative", <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1176> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>10</sup> Caritas Europa, "Europe's youth. Between hope and despair" <http://www.caritas.eu/sites/default/files/caritas-europesyouth-en-web.pdf> (Accessed June 2018)

### 1. EMBRACE E-PORTFOLIOS TO REVOLUTIONISE RECRUITING

*Imen & Simone*

When we make sense of our job we make sense of our lives. We need to change the recruitment systems in companies and go past CVs. One practical way to achieve this would be for the EU to encourage the use of e-portfolios – a new form of CVs – which aim to create a new approach to identity in the EU.

This would do a number of things: connect people and jobs in a more dynamic way; allow people to exhibit individual skills and new learning tools (particularly for teachers); improve and enrich ESCO platforms (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) when looking for a job. E-portfolios work by presenting firms with proposals, saying "this is what I can bring to your business".

A solution like this would encourage young people to actively and purposefully think about the job they want, as well as motivating employers. It would also have the added value of skills, competences and qualifications intertwining in a more interactive way. Ultimately, this means more visibility in the labour market and less difficulty in finding a job or a worker.

The EU could become a leader by incentivising the creation of e-portfolios and seeking to create a centralised database where job seekers can routinely update their progress and apply for jobs in a more streamlined and targeted manner.

### 3. CREATE DEDICATED YOUTH DEPARTMENTS IN INSTITUTIONS

*Ana*

I believe it would be beneficial if all companies, state and public institutions, non-governmental and governmental organisations had a dedicated department for youth. This department should draw up a programme for young people to perform a job which is suited to their profile. These programmes would be a kick-start for young people, who would grow professionally through experience.

The basis for accepting young people into such programmes should be motivation, academic performance and personality. Ideally, academic institutions would cooperate with companies and other organisations to create these programmes to better blend theory and practice together.

This would be beneficial for both sides: employers could get the right staff for their company/institution as they teach them the necessary skills during the placement and young people could prove themselves and acquire a job.

### 2. SUPPORT VET AND IMPLEMENT A DUAL TRAINING SYSTEM

*Thomas*

Vocational education and training (VET) is increasingly being seen as a way to bridge the gap between education and employment. This allows for a more flexible attitude to gaining new skills and helps balance work and family life with a potential change of career. It also takes people's mental health into account by avoiding lengthy periods of unemployment. Potential issues with VET such as schools being far away or cost of materials and transportation need to be addressed.

One possible approach could be to adopt a pan-European dual training system like the one in Germany. German students combine school attendance with learning in the field, through professional vocational training. They go into companies and learn a profession hands-on, being remunerated for it.

This would help young people, and would also be useful for companies who could benefit by retaining employees they have invested in.



### 4. PORTABLE SYSTEM FOR WORKER BENEFITS

*Daniel*

I propose adjusting the new forms of flexible work with economic security and social protection. The EU should establish a "portable" system for worker benefits. How would it work? The scheme would create individual accounts that follow workers throughout their career and enable them to change the nature, structure and intensity of their work while continuing to have access to social benefits.

As traditional assumptions - that learning ends in one's twenties, career progression ends in the forties, and work ends in the sixties – become less relevant, this nullifies the notion of "lifetime employment". Therefore, it is key that the conditions for flexible, agile and diverse forms of work are created.

Alternative forms of work are already creating increased flexibility for businesses who can leverage expertise that exists outside the organisation and for workers who can adjust their career paths in line with their personal preferences. However, flexible work should not come at the expense of economic security. This proposal would help provide that guarantee.

In order for this to work, the EU would act as a mediator, gathering stakeholders to define: who will contribute financially and how much? Who can administer such a scheme? And, what type of regulatory action is necessary to enable such a model?

### 5. REFORM THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

*Idea heard in workshop*

The EU should consider reforming the EU Youth Guarantee to focus on job quality rather than quantity. Only opportunities which provide a guarantee of secure employment for young people for a period of at least 18 months should be subsidised.

Professor Bjørn Hvinden, head of the EU Negotiate project, which is attempting to measure the effects of temporary and insecure employment on young workers, has argued that employers in some EU states were subsidised to create low quality jobs with few long-term benefits. His research shows that in addition to harming young people's quality of life and mental health, low-quality forms of employment may be making young EU citizens less attractive to employers<sup>11</sup>.

Reforming the EU Youth Guarantee would help to alleviate stress and the damaging nature of insecure work.

### 6. CREATE AN INTERGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE CHARTER

*Idea heard in workshop*

The EU should implement an intergenerational workforce charter, to utilise different generational skills and produce a more harmonious workplace. This would help recognise the variety of pressures such as a skills mismatch, particularly in terms of skills and training, that different generations are facing, and use their combined talents to overcome common challenges. For example, while young people are often believed to be good at certain technological skills, older workers can impart wisdom from decades of working in the business, or suggesting solutions that worked previously.

The EU intergenerational workforce charter would be a voluntary code of practice which would commit organisations to harness the combined skills of their workers who belong to different generations by encouraging practices such as intergenerational mentoring or reverse mentoring where the young share knowledge with their older colleagues.

Soon, for the first time in its history, the EU workforce will contain people who belong to five different generations<sup>12</sup>. Each generation has been shaped by different experiences, possesses varying strengths and weaknesses and has its own views on working life. These groups will have to work together in large organisations, and could end up pulling in different directions.

Organisations which sign up to the Charter could also commit to creating a more intergenerationally balanced workforce through making adjustments that would enable older workers to remain in the workplace for longer (e.g. altering their premises, creating more flexibility) and making it easier for younger workers to balance their working lives with other responsibilities such as caring for children and older relatives.

Incentives and recognition could be granted to organisations that sign up to the Charter. Likewise, the EU could seek to involve companies in this process and create a network explaining best practices in ensuring inter-generational fairness.

<sup>11</sup> Teresa Küchel, "EU youth unemployment: some jobs are worse than being unemployed", Nordic Labour Journal, <http://www.nordiclabourjournal.org/myheter/news-2017/article.2018-01-15.4801052502> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>12</sup> Bentley University, "Multi-Generational Impacts on the Workplace", <https://www.bentley.edu/files/2017/11/01/Bentley%20CWB%20Generational%20Impacts%20Research%20Report%20Fall%202017.pdf> (Accessed July 2018)

## 7. EUROPEAN SKILLS MISMATCH SCHEME

Daniel

The EU should build on EU initiatives and funding mechanisms that promote lifelong learning (e.g. New Skills Agenda for Europe) by creating a European skills mismatch scheme. This could include an EU-level ecosystem (public-private dialogue) of experts who are responsible for monitoring and mapping out by country, industry and sector, what future skills are needed and identify skill mismatches in the process.

Technological advancements and digitalisation are rapidly changing the types of jobs and skills that will be needed in the labour market – putting pressure on the existing labour market systems in the Member States. This proposal would help control these wide-ranging changes, harness their potential and ensure fairer distribution across Europe, encouraging mobility throughout all Member States rather than depopulation.

This scheme should be piloted, setting clear standards and providing legal certainty for everyone and ensuring it is universal in its application – meaning it supports the growth, development and movement of people across organisations, industries and countries.



## INTERVIEW



### The EU has put in place specific strategies to fight youth unemployment: are they working?

*The situation with youth unemployment has been improving, and the Youth Guarantee has contributed positively to this. But what kinds of jobs are being created? Are they being well paid? Do they have social protection? Do they earn enough? Can young people become independent? Maybe we are not unemployed, but we are often working in non-standard employment. We are told this might be even the future of work. We are open to this, but a whole new narrative started: that we like to be unpredictable, flexible and free. But if you could choose what type of job you want, what would you choose? 74% of young people who are part of our organization say that their first choice would be a stable, long-term contract. Only 4% want to be freelancers. 50% of young people have really worked in anything without being able to call it quality work. So we chose this as a lifestyle? This is absurd. Flexibility is imposed, and this freedom is not real: if I am always worried about work, I am not free. We cannot be abused by the labour market anymore. We must start talking about quality jobs. We need to give young people a choice.*

### What are the three top actions that should be undertaken to change the system?

*The first thing would be to put the quality factor put in place: the salary should be above the living wage, it should have equal opportunities for everybody, and it should require no more than 8 hours of work. We should also keep the environment in mind, so creating quality and sustainable and green jobs would be the main solution in the future. The second thing, concretely for young people, is that all internships should be paid. The EU should encourage their countries to change their legislation so that all internships become all paid. The third thing is that we need to pay attention and to regulate this 4th digital revolution. So far, the gig economy has created jobs without any social protection, so in my opinion social and workers' rights should be protected in any type of job. And do not forget to include young people in this development. We want to be part of the solutions.*

### Commissioner Thyssen said that the EU has doubled the budget for Erasmus Plus, you say that we should increase it ten times more.

*I don't think that youth are the priority, despite many EU representatives saying they are: when it comes to the budget lines, it's clear that they are not. Other sectors, such as agriculture or security systems, are priorities. Awareness of this is not high enough in Europe. If we really saw how important it is to ensure that every young person has an opportunity, then it wouldn't be a problem to increase the budget ten times, because we would know that this pays off at the end of the day.*

Tea Jarc,

President of Youth Trade Union Mladi Plus in Slovenia



## TECHNOLOGY

### The advancement of technology currently constitutes a challenge in all fields of human life.

*The EU acknowledges that creating new technologies, making effective use of them and putting them to use in commerce is essential in the global race for innovation and profitability. High-tech sectors and enterprises are considered the key drivers of economic growth, and generally provide well-paid employment.*

*According to Eurostat, in 2014 the EU had almost 46,000 enterprises in high-tech manufacturing (ranging from aerospace to armaments, telecommunications to scientific instruments etc.), but the sector accounted for only 4% of total employment in the continent in 2015. Despite being worth 17% of the value of all exports from the EU, high-tech products also recorded a trade deficit, with imports around € 22 billion higher than exports in 2015 alone. Investment in research and development in the technological field is improving, but Europe is still far from establishing itself as a world leader in these terms<sup>13</sup>.*

*Despite the advancement and necessity of technology being clear, it is still viewed with suspicion. One of the most outstanding and alarming consequences is that the rise of robotics and artificial intelligence is predicted to increasingly take jobs away from people - up to 800 million workplaces by 2030, according to a McKinsey Global Institute research<sup>14</sup>. The subject is being debated, but optimists say that where old jobs disappear, new ones will be created, and young people tomorrow are likely to find themselves doing jobs that do not even exist yet.*

*Whatever the future, the trend is unstoppable, so it's better to get ahead of the curve and find a way to manage technological change. Many questions have been posed with regards to technology: how to regulate artificial intelligence and robots manufacturing and what quality and ethical standards to establish to ensure that technology facilitates human existence, instead of threatening it. Concerns also relate to privacy and safety issues. All of these questions call for discussion in the public sphere and not only in scientific committees and technical working groups.*

## 8. CREATE A EUROPEAN ROBOTICS AGENCY AND ROBOTICS COMPLIANCE SEAL

Francesca & Eduard

The EU should develop, enforce and constantly update rules for testing, certification, design and standardisation of - specific classes of - Robotic & Artificial Intelligence (R&AI) products. This can be formalised through expert committees dealing with ethical, technological, legal and economic issues, as well as collaborative-governance instruments. Furthermore, a European Robot Compliance Seal would ensure a uniform standard.

One of the biggest challenges in the tech field is developing a common strategy for robotics across the continent. Legislation can create boundaries to innovation, but it is also needed to make technology acceptable to as many people as possible. It is therefore essential to create a legal framework that fosters innovation and ensures that it is driven by core EU values.

This approach could help us realise all the available opportunities in R&AI by regulating technological innovation through narrow, tailored, pre-assessed and constantly monitored rules, while also promoting ethically-aligned designs to ensure users' acceptance from the earliest stages of product-development.

Furthermore, a Robot Compliance seal goes hand in hand with the Iterative Regulatory Process for Robot Governance as this process would allow the creation of guidelines that could serve as temporary benchmark for uses and robot developments. The certification could be reviewed from time to time to ensure the maximum protection standards.

## 9. REGULATE MILITARY USE OF AI

Neven

The European Union should ensure that companies situated in the EU which trade with other (non-EU) countries are bound by strict rules around the use of artificial intelligence in warfare.

We have heard a lot about artificial intelligence and machine learning, with its new benefits for healthcare and self-driving cars, but another important impact that machine learning has today is actually on military technology. Already, machines have the decision-making capability to kill or not, and these decisions are mainly based on machine-learning models.

Many of these algorithms are largely opaque and nobody is really responsible for the decision over life or death.

This would help limit the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning to peaceful use. Greg Allen, a fellow at the Center for New American Security, says AI could be as influential in military hardware as the development of nuclear weapons.

The EU could enforce a ban of AI in military hardware by legislating arms manufacturing in the EU.

<sup>13</sup> Eurostat, "Archive: High-tech statistics", Eurostat Statistics explained, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:High-tech\\_statistics&oldid=220664](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:High-tech_statistics&oldid=220664) (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>14</sup> James Manyika et al., "Jobs lost, jobs gained: workforce transitions in a time of automation", McKinsey Global Institute, December 2017, <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Future%20of%20Organizations/What%20the%20Future%20of%20work%20will%20mean%20for%20jobs%20skills%20and%20wages/MGI-Jobs-Lost-Jobs-Gained-Report-December-6-2017.aspx> (Accessed June 2018)

## 10. CREATE A EUROPEAN CROWDFUNDING PLATFORM

Olga

I think it would make sense for the EU to settle the system of crowdfunding within the existing institutions of public financing and to create an official platform where all proposed projects would be evaluated and vetted by official experts working for the EU. These experts could include individuals drawn from the fields of cybersecurity and tackling fraud to spot potentially fraudulent actions.

Many early-stage start-ups rely on public funding, but also on crowdfunding platforms. Unfortunately, these platforms are sometimes abused as safe havens by scammers.

It would give to European citizens the opportunity to directly and safely fund the projects they are interested in, and also for start-ups to immediately find clients for their products.

## 11. INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY FOR CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Adrià

I believe that the EU should invest more in technology applied to the cultural and artistic fields, starting with public museums, to make the experience more inclusive for users. The use of new technologies, in fact, would change the way we visit, explore and learn in traditional museums, making people passionate about culture.

Bots are already being used in some museums so that people, in particular young people, can be guided and learn about art and history in a fun way. This could be developed and taken to the next level. I dream of a future where in museums, AI and virtual reality enable visitors to directly interact with historical characters, or plunge into a painting, for instance.

In order to support investment in these technologies, part of the traditional tourist taxes, for example from hotels, could be devoted to fund these museums.

## INTERVIEW



### What are the biggest challenges today when it comes to AI?

*Speaking of robots and artificial intelligence, I believe there are three keywords at play, and subsequent questions. The first element is perceptions, that is to say, how robots have to emulate people. The question here is, how do we construct them so that they improve people's lives? Then comes the concept of diversity: nowadays technology is able to go beyond human nature; for instance some technologies allow to "hear" colors that we can't see. The question then is, how do we foster technology that helps people but that is still similar to human nature? The third keyword is protection, meaning the question of how to shape law that still protects people.*

### Robotics and automatization are increasingly a cause of concern, especially among young people who are worried about jobs being "taken away" from them: is this worry justified or not?

*Innovation has always been there. There's a book by Nicholas Carr [ndr, The Glass Cage] about the changes made by technology over time that explains this. What we are facing right now might have a massive impact also due to globalisation, but it's still something that has always happened in history. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't address that challenge, but we have to see the opportunities in it: other jobs will be created, and a part of the jobs that will disappear are going to be jobs that are not needed or inefficient. Innovation might generate economic growth that will benefit everyone: some jobs will change and evolve, involving digitalisation. We should try to see the benefits in order to help and adjust the organization of jobs for those who are going through the transition. This will be normalized in time. Change will come and we cannot hide from it, so we need to decide how to address it.*

**Francesca Episcopo,**  
Research Fellow at DIRPOLIS Institute



## 12. CREATE A EUROPEAN ROBOT ASSESSMENT

Eduard

I propose the creation of a European Robot Impact Assessment that can help roboticists identify, analyse, mitigate and eliminate the risks posed by the insertion of R&AI technology.

There are currently no robot-specific multidisciplinary guidelines in order to identify and assess the risks that R&AI technologies pose to society. A robot can impact people's privacy, dignity, autonomy and safety – both physical and psychological – which raises serious ethical questions.

An impact assessment is in line with the risk-based approach followed by the Privacy and Surveillance Impact Assessment in the European Union, but would seek to extend its scope to many other types of risks; with recent applications in the robot domain (Care Robot Impact Assessment, Fosch-Villaronga 2015) and the algorithm domain (Algorithm Impact Assessment, AI Now Institute 2018)<sup>15</sup>.

This would ease the compliance process of robot developers, as they would be accountable for identifying and assessing the various risks for their robot.



## 13. CREATE A PAN-EUROPEAN MEDIA

Olga

We desperately need a pan-European media, and I don't mean media focused on political events, but media that provides news, entertainment, movies; media with the same programming across Member States. There's not enough communication and promotion of the EU through mainstream outlets, starting from TV and video on demand.

In Europe, in every single Member State, we consume American bestsellers, American blockbusters and TV series and gadgets. I don't buy the argument that there is a language or cultural barrier between different Member States: Sweden is as different from Italy as Texas is from California. Culture and media are the common ground for a European identity.

The success of certain European TV shows, often crime, in Anglophone countries shows that audiences are willing to engage with content that's subtitled – see various productions from the Danish broadcaster DR.

The EU could seek to create dialogue between various broadcasters to produce pan-European series' that are subtitled and of interest to people across Europe. This could range from large scale, historical projects and drama. Already, programmes have brought together an international cast of actors; organising greater collaboration between European production companies and TV channels would be an exciting prospect.



<sup>15</sup> E. Fosch-Villaronga, "Creation of a Care Robot Impact Assessment", International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Vol:9, No:6, 2015, <https://waset.org/publications/10001664/creation-of-a-care-robot-impact-assessment>; (Accessed June 2018)

D. Reisman et al., "Algorithmic Impact Assessments: a practical framework for public agency accountability", AI Now Institute, April 2018, <https://ainowinstitute.org/aiareport2018.pdf> (Accessed June 2018)

## EDUCATION

In a world where work is becoming increasingly fluid, people have multiple jobs in their career and long term contracts are elusive, people need new, pan-sectoral skills to be able to emerge. The new keyword "life-long learning" indicates that people will need to learn new skills throughout their life, even after they have completed their studies.

Yet, educational systems are not equipped to make young people ready for the world of work, and the lack of technical and digital skills is widely acknowledged.

This is evident in the large mismatch between the skills that one learns in school and the positions and capabilities that are requested on the job market. Part of the problem of the skills mismatch is that tertiary graduates may take jobs for which they are overqualified. Internships and training are becoming widespread also thanks to the Youth Guarantee, but the transition between school and the world of work is rarely a smooth one. Moreover, soft skills such as teamwork, creativity and problem-solving or useful skills like internet and media literacy are barely being taught in school or at universities.

As mentioned earlier, vocational education training (VET) helps young people to take responsibility early on, improves their employability and equips them with cutting-edge skills. It appears that apprenticeships and other programmes that equip students with the more practical knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required for a particular occupation increase the likelihood of recent graduates being able to find a job.



### 14. ENTREPRENEURIAL PROGRAMMES AND SOFT SKILLS

Christian & idea heard in workshop

My idea for a better education system would be to include entrepreneurial programmes in school, engaging young people with organisations such as start-ups and introducing activities within the school curriculum - inspired by examples such as the Transatlantic Leadership programme<sup>16</sup>.

Schools fail to teach enough soft skills to their students. When young people enter the job market they feel their education hasn't properly prepared them for various challenges.

The EU could develop a soft skills project platform, where different organisations could collate different activities across the EU, related to topics such as politics, activism or travel, so that young people would be empowered to learn new things, acquire new skills, and develop projects together.

<sup>16</sup> Youth Proaktiv, "Transatlantic Leadership Program" <http://youthproaktiv.org/programs/eu-us-leadership-program/> (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, "Half of young Europeans ready to work abroad", <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1026&furtherNews=yes> (Accessed June 2018)

### 15. USE ERASMUS TO HELP TACKLE DEPOPULATION

Idea heard in workshop

Provided that it is well-known that international experiences are extremely useful in terms of life skills, the idea is that this type of experience should be made more accessible for young people. Furthermore, young people could be encouraged to live, work and study in regions where depopulation is an issue. A period abroad could last three months, and students could stay with host families and study or do internships. This would foster learning about other cultures and languages, as well as becoming more open-minded. At the end of university many students are unsure as to whether to continue studying or go to work; an experience like this could help them develop a clearer idea.

The Erasmus programme is becoming more and more popular among young people, but there are still many who have never travelled to another country to study or work for a period longer than a holiday.

This could also help solve a mobility problem: EU data shows that half of young people in Europe who do not find a job in their country would be willing move abroad to find one<sup>17</sup>. By offering incentives to move to a different country for at least three months, young people could gain experience abroad and fill gaps in the labour market. As for the financial aspect, the EU institutions should provide the necessary funding for these mobility programmes.



### 16. LIFE SKILLS CLASSES

Idea heard in workshop

A way to better prepare young people for life, helping them acquire the basic skills that they need to successfully manage their daily activities and be better citizens who are integrated and involved in society, would be to introduce life skills classes. Many young people don't consider various life skills, such as filing a tax return, recycling or cooking basic meals. With the introduction of a subject like this, young people could learn about this important part of life from an early age.

A system that works on this basis, and could very well work EU wide, has been introduced in Finland, where pupils are taught "Kotitalous", home economics, and "Käsityö", handicraft. They learn about cooking, cleaning, using money responsibly, doing laundry, recycling and saving water and energy; but also about small-scale house-work such as knitting, repairing clothes, building a sled to have fun in the snow or a birdhouse for their garden.

Even more importantly, they are taught about digital skills such as identifying fake news, the risks of cyberbullying, but also more practical skills like installing anti-virus programmes and using a printer.

### 18. INTRODUCE "CHALLENGE" LESSONS TO ENCOURAGE MORE CREATIVE STUDENTS

Aleksandra

Assessment criteria should be revised at all educational levels to embrace creativity and innovation. The traditional system of knowledge evaluation is not suitable for the assessment of modern content. For instance, the grading system of projects and individual assignments could be grouped into different categories, each category having its own assessment criteria and grading, similar to university assessment criteria. In this way, the area in which a student lacks more competences is visible and clear, so they know what to focus on improving and the teacher is clearer on where to focus.

One of the main requirements and necessities in today's competitive job environments is creativity. An alternative way to distinguish and help students who are more creative is to offer them the possibility of a fair assessment

This could be achieved by working to break down barriers and promote responsibility by bringing in new subjects like "Challenge", as is practiced in some schools in Berlin. This includes one hour per week which students spend on a challenge, for example: playing chess with the elderly or starting a local project for young people. This enhances both self, and social interaction.

### 17. PROMOTE CURIOSITY, SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Laura & Jakob

Students should be encouraged to work on their weaknesses, while they are given the freedom to choose what activities they want to focus on. We think that this kind of project-oriented system where young people can develop their own ideas and strengths rather than having knowledge hammered into them can yield much better results. It would encourage curiosity and creativity. Working on projects means practicing new skills and learning during the process, reinforcing the message that failure can be an important lesson.

As a democratic society, we want young people to be free, equal and living in solidarity, but actually the school system is not democratic in any way: a class of different students with different strengths and interests are taught the same thing by their teacher. Considering everyone's individuality, every student should be enabled to develop their own skills and passions. By adopting this approach, we can get the most out of all students.

The PISA study recognises a similar system in Finland as the most successful school system in the world. For younger students of up to 13 years old standard lessons don't exist but students and teachers collaborate instead. "Play" in school is very important and the teachers' goal is to motivate their pupils. Specifically, there are no classrooms, but the students work in learning groups to boost their in-depth analysis and developing solutions skills or other talents. This encourages inclusion and development of social skills. Finnish students are also allowed to choose a topic that they are interested in and to develop it by getting in touch with external resources, such as experts or museums. This "phenomena learning" has been found to provide students with the right skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we should implement it all over Europe.

## 19. INTER-SCHOOL COLLABORATION FOR PROJECTS

Gaétan

One idea would be to create positions of network facilitators who operate in schools to get different groups of students and engage on a specific theme (for example European values, sustainable development, education and others) through a series of meetings. For example, taking a group of students who want to develop a project around sustainable development in their school.

Supported by a teacher, they would study whether, in the European Union, there are other institutions working on the same theme. At that point they could approach and utilise the network of facilitators to put them in touch with the school network. This way, this school will be able to build relationships with others and will be able to interact and to work together.

The network could collaborate to organise a European Conference on Sustainable Development, where, just like at the EYE, high school students would share their projects and propose solutions and ideas. These networks would have many advantages: sharing information and skills; promoting exchanges on a certain theme between European schools; developing cooperative relations; allowing young generations to reflect on a European theme; creating a sense of belonging to the EU; collecting new ideas, and improving youth engagement.

In France, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food for instance has diverse and varied networks for young people in agricultural education. These networks make it possible to trace the desires and proposals of young people to the ministry in order to co-build projects: it is a good practice that could be exported all around the EU.



## INTERVIEW



**When we talk about the wellbeing of young people we tend to only think of it in economic terms, forgetting the aspect of mental wellbeing and health. Many youngsters today can find themselves "trapped".**

*You have a boomerang generation which lives with their parents moves out only for a short time, works in very unstable environments and on zero contract security, meaning they cannot develop fully their independence and sometimes have to go back to living with their parents. Public and social services do not yet fully recognize the specific needs that young people have. The reasons why many young people are not turning to social services are that they are associated with stigma. The youngsters are either not confident enough or simply don't know that these services exist. It is important to improve the working conditions for beginners and ensure better mental health support, so that young people can feel fulfilled and be productive members of societies.*

**There is also an intergenerational issue that complicates the subject.**

*Several participants here at the EYE mentioned they felt that older people tend to not take young people's issues very seriously. They hear things like: "it's just because you're young, you will grow out of it. When I was young it was much tougher and I survived." I think that times are changing, they are becoming much more unpredictable. When our parents were growing up, they finished school, got jobs which were permanent and stable, they could afford housing and so on. Today this simple structure of life for young people is gone. It is much more fluid now. So, of course, it raises concern and anxiety that young people need assistance with, and I think that saying "just grow up" is not the best advice older people can give.*

**Anna Ludwinek,**  
Research Manager, Social Policies unit, Eurofound



## 20. TOOLS AGAINST DIGITAL EXCLUSION AND FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Larissa

I think the EU can do something about access to digital tools and resources, making sure that countries invest enough money in providing equal access to technologies in classrooms, which means in all schools, not just top schools in big cities, but also vocational schools and schools in rural areas.

A big theme in schools currently is that of digital exclusion. We take for granted that everyone has access to digital platforms, but in reality not everyone can afford the same kind of technology. What we (OBESSU) have demanded is to solve this is to provide laptops and tablets in schools, so everyone is granted the same access to technology.

When it comes to social exclusion more generally, promoting awareness, supporting civil society organisations to go into schools and to run workshops is essential. Access to funding for these initiatives is something that the EU could provide and is providing now. But I do think this should be done on more local levels, so that schools can work closer with civil society on these difficult issues.



# YOUTH FORUM COMMENTARY

## YOUNG AND OLD

The digital revolution is raising many questions, bringing many challenges and opportunities. How can Europe progress, using the best without harming our standards of living? To embark this journey, Europe needs to put people, their rights and their communities at the centre of this shift towards a more digitalised world. The European Youth Forum strives for a digital revolution that works for all generations.

The past decades have seen technological advancements that have changed the way we live and organise our lives. From the rise of the internet and social media platforms, to rapid advances in automation, robotics and artificial intelligence more broadly, these developments have happened at such a rapid pace that assessments of their impact have struggled to keep up. Today's generation of young people have been, arguably, affected the most. They have grown up at a time of major breakthroughs and technological developments. They are thus simultaneously both the first to get to experiment and see their lives enhanced by these news technologies, and those who suffer the most from our lack of knowledge and understanding of the long-term negative impacts they have on our lives, democracies, the environment, jobs and labour rights, and our health. They are also living these technological changes amidst well-known social-political and economic issues, such as high unemployment, greater risk of poverty and social exclusion, increased levels of inequality, and other challenges in accessing their rights.

Examples of the impact that the digital revolution has already had on our lives are numerous. It has provided new ways of connecting with others and has completely changed the way we get informed and how we interact with the media. It has led to new forms of community building, and to the creation of new forms of political activism. It has led to a proliferation of media and news sources, new forms of reporting that are more accessible to all, and to the making of the citizen journalist. The downside of all this is a significant rise in disinformation online, including fake news, and to hate speech being easier to spread. As a result, we might argue, this also makes it easier to manipulate and create chaos in elections and other democratic processes from the outside. The economy, work and the labour market have also been affected. In the global race for competitiveness and to stay ahead of the curve, investments in new technologies and innovation have been a key driver of economic growth and productivity. It has led to the rise of tech giants, Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon to name a few, to the proliferation of technology start-ups, and, as a result, to an enormous creation of new jobs in the high-tech and technology manufacturing sectors. Unfortunately, one of the consequences of this has been the concurrent rapid expansion of the so-called gig-economy, more and more young people being employed by app-driven services such as Deliveroo and Uber, and thus to the

moving away from secure and long-term employment towards precarious jobs with no basic rights or social protection or holidays. Big data and relating Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems, furthermore, are being used more and more in every sector of society. They have an ability to guide, sometimes even replace, humans in taking decisions and identifying solutions to problems. Through machine learning, AI and algorithms, big data can enhance our lives in many ways. They can ensure that resources are allocated in a much more targeted and cost-and-time-saving way, and/or identify problems and solutions much faster than humans ever could. In the health sector, for example, personalised diagnosis and medicine identified through AI systems can lead to better and more adequate care. The impact this will have on our societies and lives will only multiply significantly with the development and arrival of the Internet of Things, and as data sharing and technology become embedded in everyday lives through vehicles, home appliances, and other physical devices equipped with data generating technology.

Some say that we are on the brink of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as these developments are happening at an unprecedented speed and disrupting almost every industry and sectors of society, leading to the transformation of entire systems of production, management, and governance. Others warn of the potential collapse of western democracies and the welfare systems as we know them. What recent global political events have shown us is that new societal problems are caused, including around privacy, as the exploitation of personal data becomes a business model, as well as a tool for creating political chaos. As the recent scandal around Facebook data and



Cambridge Analytica shows us, these developments need happen alongside a broader discussion around principles and ethics, and on how to make sure that these technologies do not end up being more a risk to our futures than the force for good they were meant to be. Legislation and regulation, some will argue, might create boundaries to innovation, but are needed to make sure technology is benefiting and accessible to as many people as possible. In the EU, it is essential that we create a legal framework that fosters innovation, to stay competitive versus China and the United States, while also ensuring however that this innovation is driven and framed by our core European values. The EU already took the lead in data regulation through the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information of individuals. A lot more is needed, however, to make sure that young people, especially, are supported and better equipped for the changes to come. Young people at the YO!Fest and the European Youth Event 2018 in Strasbourg, proposed a number of ideas that European policy makers would do well do consider, including: "The EU should develop, enforce and constantly update rules for testing, certification, design and standardisation of Robotics & Artificial Intelligence products. This can be formalised through expert committees dealing with ethical, technological, legal and economic issues, as well as collaborative-governance instruments." Another proposal was for support and funding to be made available for a lifelong learning ecosystem, where an experts group would monitor and map out what skills will be needed in the future by country, industry and sector.

At the European Youth Forum, we advocate for EU regulations that must first and foremost follow a rights-based approach. This means that any policy solutions would need to be normatively based on international human rights standards, with first consideration given to what impact technological innovation has on young people's access to their rights to decent work, to health, not to be discriminated against, or on to participate in decision making. A big part of the issues outlined above stems from the over-concentration of wealth and resources in the hands of a handful of tech giants/conglomerates. The EU should lead the way in discussing and finding regulatory solutions to this new reality – ones that lead to reducing the power imbalances it creates. Finally, our education system needs to be rethought, as this new reality calls for more critical thinking and digital literacy, so that young people, especially, are able to influence and shape digital policy making. Mark Zuckerberg is recently quoted as having said that "protecting our community is more important than maximizing our profits". Interestingly enough, that might be a good mantra for the EU to adopt in its attempt to lead the way in regulating the digital revolution.

## 2. RICH AND POOR: Calling for a fair share

Before we can begin to solve inequality, we must agree that it exists. The Rich and Poor theme was designed to find common solutions to Europe's expanding inequality, but inequality is a complicated phenomenon, one which comes in many shapes and is hard to identify, let alone agree upon. Inequality exists on a micro and macro level, so the solutions must be found on both scales. It is difficult as an individual to admit that what we have in life is produced as much by privilege as by our own achievements, but we should work to make things fairer.

As a powerful supranational alliance in a globalised era, the European Union touches the lives of millions of non-EU citizens, therefore our responsibility and solutions to reduce inequality expand beyond our own borders.

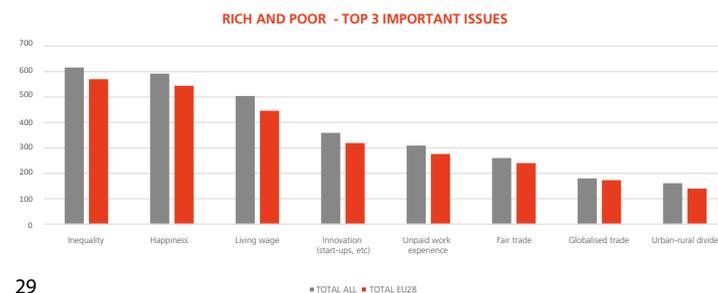
While it might be rooted in wealth, inequality is produced and reproduced in our daily lives in ways that extend far beyond our bank balance. Europe's income gap is a valid topic; inequality is a much more complicated system, stemming from sexuality, gender, education, the urban vs. rural divide, citizenship, globalisation, physical capabilities, skin colour, technology and, of course, power.

Europe differentiates itself through its social policies, however, the increasingly visible results of inequality have prompted discussions of new means to redistribute the incomes of the wealthier in society.

These questions are often raised in connection with the anticipated restructuring of the labour market and rise of mainstream AI technology. While there were many ideas, undoubtedly the buzzword of the Rich and Poor theme was Universal Basic Income - a basic living stipend paid to all citizens, regardless of their employment status. This is a social policy that has attracted a lot of debate, but young people clearly see it as a possible solution to numerous political issues and are prepared to assume its risks.

Inequality is subtle, and we must recognise this if we are to identify its causes and provide solutions. If we are serious in our goal to end inequality, all efforts must be inclusive of those suffering the consequences. While the EYE provided such a platform, a recurring issue raised by participants was the significant costs attached to attendance at the event, in addition to a high minimum standard of education needed to participate in talks. This is a potential barrier to the very people whose valuable insights into inequality need to be heard.

Inequality breeds feelings of shame by telling certain members of society that they deserve less. If we are committed, as a democratic union, to dismantling the inequalities that shame our citizens, and if we want to look back at this point in time and feel proud of our actions, we must be willing to work together and make those difficult decisions. True equality is inclusive.



### INEQUALITY: SHARING IS CARING

In the capitalistic societies we have built ourselves, money is synonymous with power; when money and power find themselves overly concentrated in certain groups, this translates into a system that fails to serve the interests of the many. While EU Member States establish national welfare systems with the objective of minimising the effects of this imbalance, the consequences of past power structures has resulted in systemic inequality which continues to reproduce itself.

*This tells us that people are not free to design their own fate according to merit, but that they are born into a system beyond their control which pre-selects winners and losers, taking power for the former at the expense of the latter. The growing inequality between the "haves" and the "have nots" attests to this, and tells us that the current welfare system is not doing enough to close this gap.*

*Equality shouldn't be about who works harder or who is more deserving, equality is about giving everyone the same chance to succeed. Everyone deserves the same starting point in life, but until we find ways to distribute resources more fairly, the gap between rich and poor will continue to grow.*

### 21. PURSUE UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME TO TACKLE INEQUALITY

Joe

Universal Basic Income (UBI) is an unconditional income disassociated from employment, paid by the state to all of its citizens regardless of their earnings, and it was popular at this year's EYE as a solution for social issues rooted in inequality. This is increasingly seen as a solution as young people are finding themselves in precarious living situations due to rising living costs, falling wages, and increased barriers to employment.

Proponents of UBI such as Aurelie Hampel at Unconditional Basic Income Europe argue that UBI would almost remove poverty, as citizens themselves are best positioned to identify their own needs and UBI provides them with the autonomy to meet these. With a large number of jobs seen to be under threat from automation, UBI would provide a new pillar of social protection that allows citizens to weather the storm of a changing labour market. According to Aurelie, we need to stop thinking of UBI as "free money".

The economist Harro Boven refutes criticisms that UBI is unaffordable and believes that by removing bureaucratic costs, the majority of UBI could be sourced by re-assigning current welfare payments with the remaining deficit funded by a modest wealth tax.

UBI would relieve some of the financial burdens created by tertiary education, which currently poses a barrier for low-income families and discourages young people from following their dreams. Tell us we have financial security. Tell us we can dare to dream.

### 22. PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

Matthaeus

I would like to see the increased profits gained by multinational corporations through efficiency redistributed to their employees via lifelong learning programmes.

Automation has been progressing at an unprecedented rate in recent years thanks to the advance of Artificial Intelligence, and experts are predicting a dramatic restructuring of our labour market when humans are no longer indispensable workers. This increased efficiency will save employers a lot of money but potentially leave large numbers of people unemployed and create new jobs for which today's labour force lacks the necessary skills.

This would both benefit the company, but also equip the employee with the necessary skill-set to navigate the changing circumstances of a labour market in flux by improving their attractiveness. This requirement should take the form of a legal obligation, however, as it may prove prohibitively costly for small companies it would only be mandated in the case of large multinational corporations. This would lead to the establishment of a business culture in which lifelong learning programmes are an essential feature in order to attract employees.

### 23. BASIC INCOME, EXCEPT NOT UNIVERSAL

Anoosh

We need to transform the current social welfare system, the main structures of which are from the 20th century.

The idea of a basic income to reduce systemic societal inequalities could work, but it makes no sense to pay a wealthy bank manager the same as an underpaid nurse.

Introducing a conditional basic income to supplement lower wages would transfer the responsibility of fair wages from private companies to the state and reduce reliance of some on low wages if companies can't afford to pay more. It would also ensure the utilisation of limited state resources in line with the objectives of the welfare state.

### 25. HEALTHCARE ACCESS FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

Frederieke

I would like to see transgender people welcomed into the EU with open arms. This should extend to medicine which is especially well positioned to meet their unique needs. Both the transgender treatment and identity should be legitimised within the healthcare system through specialised training of medical staff and the depathologisation of transgender identity. Currently, transgender individuals receive different treatment and rights across the EU, which is an issue that should be addressed at the EU level.

Transgender Europe has found that due to the prejudice and marginalisation of transgender people in our society, they suffer from poorer mental and physical health including an elevated risk of HIV infection and suicide. To compound these inequalities, transgender people have difficulty accessing adequate healthcare due to their stigmatisation at the hands of the medical community, which manifests itself through behaviour such as referring to transgender people with their name and gender they are assigned at birth, thus eroding the trust between medical staff and the patient.

Transgender people in Europe also face difficulty accessing the necessary hormone treatment and gender reassignment surgery due to financial barriers and stigmatisation, despite the European Court of Human Rights ruling that these treatments constituted "necessary treatment" and required Member States to classify these under insurance plans as such. According to a 2008 study by Transgender Europe, one third of the respondents were denied treatment because their doctor personally objected to the gender reassignment, while half of those within the EU obtaining this surgery were funding the expenses themselves<sup>18-19</sup>.

### 24. UNIFIED TAX AND LABOUR RIGHTS WITHIN THE EU

Anoosh & Quentin

We propose a standardisation of the EU tax and labour laws, aimed at promoting equality amongst all citizens and between all Member States.

Despite striving for common goals, gross inequalities still exist within EU borders. This means that there is an ever-increasing disparity between the standard of living experienced by EU citizens, depending on which Member State they live in.

We believe that all people deserve the same opportunities in life, however the diverging taxation and labour rights of national governments inhibit this. This would allow the introduction of a standard minimum wage, which would increase the purchasing power of citizens by non-privatised means.

In essence, by creating a unified tax and labour policy within the EU, a standard minimum wage across Europe could then be introduced over time as economies grow closer together. This would help stop geographical differences in terms of economic strength across the EU.



### 26. END THE PINK TAX

Emily

I would like to see the increased costs placed on female items removed so that women are not subject to higher living costs by virtue of their gender. This imbalance extends to the taxation system, where basic hygiene products indispensable for a woman's health are subject to a luxury tax while razor blades for men are considered a basic requirement.

The PINK tax refers to the phenomenon whereby products and services designed for women are automatically more expensive than comparable ones for men, resulting in an increased cost of living for women. The phenomenon within the taxation system to classify women's hygiene products as "non-essential luxury items" is referred to as "tampon tax", resulting in a higher taxation at odds with their necessity.

Since March 2017, EU Member States can decide which products they would add to the list of reduced VAT items. However sanitary items cannot be taxed at a rate lower than 5%<sup>20</sup>. For homeless women, women in low-income households and young women who purchase their own sanitary items, the "tampon tax" poses an unnecessary barrier in their efforts to manage their basic healthcare needs.

### 27. PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS IN TEXTILES TRADE

Davina

We need to make textile supply chains fairer through binding legislation to human rights. The textiles industry that produces and/or sells within the EU need to prove that they respect human rights and ensure compliance with the International Labour Standards.

Eventually, institutionalising fair trade and establishing joint schemes as well as holding an open discussion about fair trade and reaching wider audience need to be promoted within the EU.

This could be achieved by MEPs backing campaigns and resolutions in order to create a chapter on fair trade policies in each trade agreement.

## INTERVIEW

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### How important is integrity in human rights?

*When it comes to Europe, it's becoming easier to question its integrity and commitments to basic human rights when we stand by and let vulnerable families and individuals die on our shores? How can we tell young people to be proud of Europe when we don't respect basic human rights? Too often there is the impression of over-emphasised, charitable platitudes and an abstract feeling of solidarity on migration. Europe needs to engage in some self-analysis, and the EU needs to reconsider some of its trading practices to ensure that human rights remain central to its trade deals.*

### Why do people refrain from voting?

*In my opinion, young people aren't voting because they feel no connection or representation with the European Parliament, especially non-white Europeans who are still referred to as second- or third-generation migrants. How can we ask young people to vote in the European Parliament when they have no representation there. Europe has to focus more on listening to the young people and their needs, and try to give them the representation in the EP that they deserve.*

**Amal Hussein,**  
Somalian student studying in Spain

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<sup>18</sup> European Parliament, "Transgender Persons' Rights in the EU Member States", <http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/NOTE-20100601-PE425.621-Transgender-Persons-Rights-in-the-EU-Member-States.pdf> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>19</sup> Transgender Europe, [www.tgeu.org](http://www.tgeu.org) (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>20</sup> European Commission, "VAT rates", [https://ec.europa.eu/taxation\\_customs/business/vat/eu-vat-rules-topic/vat-rates\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/business/vat/eu-vat-rules-topic/vat-rates_en) (Accessed July 2018)

## REVOLUTION

**There is growing unrest and agitation within Europe. We are starting to recognise that current socio-economic structures are not designed in the interests of the people. The contradiction of the current economic situation is that its success hinges upon perpetual and inexhaustible growth. Sustaining this growth has come at the cost of the masses; the trickle-down effect that was promised never materialised, instead the rich have become richer and the poor poorer.**

*It is an inescapable fact that if things remain as they are it will only get worse, therefore, change is our only hope. As individuals functioning within a system, we find ourselves forced to submit to its rigid and unforgiving demands. As individuals acting alone we are powerless, and the system sustains itself at our cost. As this cost multiplies itself, our individual suffering is transformed into a collective cost.*

*If we wish for things to improve we need to transform this collective cost into a collective revolution, and dismantle the oppressive structures that undermine the good of the people. The Members of European Parliament are in a privileged position to lead this change, and we, the young people of Europe, urge them to make the bold and brave decisions in the interests of the most vulnerable.*

*Like all great change, it will be met with controversy and resistance, especially by those who benefit from the current status quo. We need politicians with vision and integrity to make these difficult decisions for the greater good, and to resist the inevitable pressures from the corridors of power.*

*We are young and idealistic, and we believe change is possible. Please do not let us down.*



## 28. PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE COURSES ACROSS EUROPE

*Idea heard in workshop*

The EU should promote the introduction of easily accessible and free of charge educational modules on YouTube and other social media platforms, with the assistance of universities. This could include courses in topics such as coding as well as language courses.

Many young people study across the EU and have the chance to study in various universities through the Erasmus programme, however when young people start work they lose the chance to build on the various skills they worked on at university. By offering these courses the EU could make a tangible difference, and help people across the EU to expand their skill set. It could also have the added benefit of providing opportunities for education to people who didn't go to university but want to learn new skills.

This could be achieved by partnering with various universities across the EU, possibly taking advantage of the existing Erasmus network.

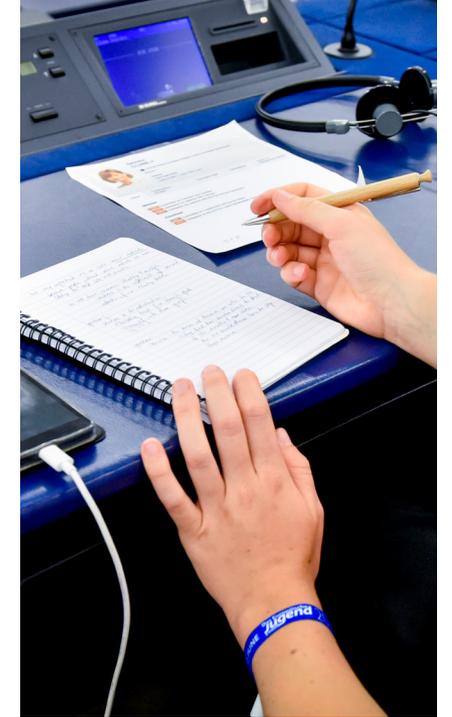
## 29. SUPPORT A MORE INCLUSIVE EYE

*Roger*

I believe that the EYE should make funds available in advance to youth groups representing a plurality of users, for whom the financial costs of attending EYE would prove prohibitive. Many of this year's participants were highly educated and financially secure, which is an inaccurate representation of the European youth. I would like future EYE events to place broader social inclusion at the centre of all policy decisions, to ensure that individuals from a varying range of backgrounds are in attendance.

The EYE provides an invaluable opportunity for the young people of Europe to make their voices heard. However, it is vital that these voices are representative of all of Europe's youth population and not just the privileged few. The cost of transportation, accommodation and food adds up, and for those travelling from far the prices can rise even higher. Although EYE does provide sponsorship to some youth groups to cover these costs, as they are paid retroactively it is necessary for participants to have the cash already available.

The EYE 2018 lacked the unique perspective of those facing financial issues, whose valuable ideas will remain unheard as a result. This could be achieved by directing funding towards individuals, as well as raising the profile of the event among the institutions. Another suggestion could be to work with partners to sponsor opportunities, and promote the event beforehand, in regions where there were few attendees.



## 30. TAX ROBOTS!

*Idea heard in workshop*

I would like to see the EU impose a robot tax, which would tax robots in a similar fashion to the taxes levied on human workers. This could help recoup losses from culled income tax, and provide the government with additional income to address the restructuring of the labour market.

Robots are predicted to take over middle-skill, middle-waged jobs, as Artificial Intelligence enables them to work harder, faster and more flawlessly than humans ever could. To prevent the hollowing out of the middle class, which would fuel even further inequality, steps must be taken to ensure the increase in wealth generated by robots is redistributed amongst society at large. The European Parliament has previously rejected a proposal to introduce a robot tax, however I believe this is a necessary step if governments are to address the problems caused by a restructured labour market<sup>21</sup>.

An automation tax would enable the redistribution of wealth via social security, educational programmes, public services, and allow for investment in other sectors of the economy. Crucially, redistribution in the form of a tax ensures the transfer of power and responsibility from private companies to the more suitable and democratically elected government.

## 31. PREVENT TAX EVASION

*Jonathon*

I would like the EU to prevent the rich from exploiting their wealthy privilege by introducing a real beneficiaries ownership register of all European assets.

All the numbers point towards the inescapable fact that inequality is growing, and as the rich get richer, they have also become smarter at hiding their money. Not only does this starve public services of vital funds and fuel the reduction of living standards of the lower social stratus, the failure of governments to crack down on the illegal practices of the super-rich erodes the people's trust in the democratic process.

By introducing transparency, the real beneficial owner of an asset would be identifiable. This would prevent wealthy businesses and individuals from hiding behind shell companies as was revealed to be a rampant practice by the Panama Papers.

The European Parliament could seek to work with other European institutions to make such a beneficiaries list a reality.

<sup>21</sup> European Parliament, "Robots and Artificial Intelligence: MEPs call for EU-wide liability rules", <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170210IPR61808/robots-and-artificial-intelligence-meps-call-for-eu-wide-liability-rules> (Accessed July 2018)

### 32. EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Fatima & Amal

Europe's population is more diverse and pluralistic than ever before but these changes have failed to make their way into the European Parliament where the profile of the average MEP is a white, heterosexual male. Currently only 37.4% of MEPs are female<sup>22</sup>, only 17 out of 751 MEPs are non-white<sup>23</sup> and less than 4% are currently under the age of 35<sup>24</sup>. We, the youth of Europe, come in different colours, sexual orientations and gender identifications, we are able-bodied and disabled and intersectional.

We would like to see our vibrancy and plurality reflected amongst the Members of the European Parliament. It is important that MEPs understand our experiences, so that they can relate to the unique set of issues we face and are willing to fight in our corner. More needs to be done to create an attitude of social inclusion. If we are to feel represented and with a sense of belonging within the EU, it is important that we see ourselves reflected amongst the decision-makers.



### INTERVIEW



*Europe is suffering from an inequality of happiness: people's awareness that they are less happy and less equal makes them feel worse and means the inequality gap increases further. It's therefore important to focus on happiness equality for everyone, and ultimately income isn't the main driver of happiness, it is in fact health! European politicians should consider measuring policy success by metrics of happiness rather than the GDP-centric approach currently in place. For example, mental health issues are a more important predictor of unhappiness rather than employment - however politicians focus relentlessly on employment figures as a sign of success.*

*Another political pitfall is to misinterpret scientific findings, believing that what makes people happy on average will work for the society at large. As soon as you eliminate a person's personal freedom when making life choices, e.g. forcing them to follow healthy behaviour, designed to improve their happiness, this will only have the opposite effect. For example, forcing unwilling citizens into education (on average, a predictor of happiness) will actually decrease their happiness. A better approach is to explain to people why a certain decision is wise, then allow them the freedom to decide for themselves.*

Isabelle Arendt,  
Happiness Research Institute



### 33. MAKE US HAPPIER, STOP USING GDP AS THE ONLY MEASURE OF PROGRESS

Joshua

I would like MEPs to prioritise the happiness of its citizens and to start using scientific metrics of happiness when shaping public policy and measuring their success. This means looking beyond national happiness levels to establish patterns, and identifying sources of happiness beyond traditional material quantifiers such as income.

Like all areas of life, the inequalities within society extend to happiness levels as well. Happiness is not just some abstract, fluffy notion but a hard science, and when measuring happiness, the OECD's Better Life Index uses ten different categories, including health, civic engagement, environment and community. Currently the happiness gap is widening, and if European politicians seek to reverse this trend they need to start engaging with their citizens to understand why.

While income is important, health is actually one of the primary drivers of happiness, however the two are often confounded as richer people have better access to health care. If European politicians are serious about improving happiness levels, they should put it at the centre of all their policy decisions. As one participant from Bulgaria mentioned, "Happiness is not a single policy".

### 34. MAKE RURAL AREAS MORE ATTRACTIVE FOR THE YOUTH

Jannes

I would like the EU to inject its rural areas with vibrancy, with the objective of retaining its currently dwindling youth community, but also presenting an alternative living option for young people in cities struggling to meet the rising costs of living.

28% of the European population lives in rural areas but not enough is being done to address the inequalities they face in the areas of political representation, mobility and access to knowledge<sup>25</sup>. They lack the possibilities and opportunities to explore, experiment and discover in the same way the urban population can. As a result young people are forced to move elsewhere, leaving behind them an ageing community in decline.

If rural areas are to become more attractive to young people, it is paramount that all their basic needs can be serviced. Adequate infrastructure must be provided which allows them to reach personal, political and educational self-realisation. Extending the availability of education services to remote areas - such as courses with non-physical participation - is paramount, in particular those aimed towards agricultural entrepreneurship. I would like public policy to be designed in such a way that it allows each region to fill in their own rural development programme, allowing them the freedom to incorporate the individual needs of their young demographic.



<sup>22</sup> European Parliament, "Women in the European Parliament", [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/publications/2017/0001/P8\\_PUB%282017%290001\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/publications/2017/0001/P8_PUB%282017%290001_EN.pdf) (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>23</sup> Politico, "When Britain exits the EU, its diversity departs too", <https://www.politico.eu/article/brexit-diversity-exits-the-eu-brussels> (June 2018)

<sup>24</sup> Figures from European Parliament administration

<sup>25</sup> European Commission, "Statistics on rural areas in the EU",

[http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics\\_on\\_rural\\_areas\\_in\\_the\\_EU](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_rural_areas_in_the_EU) (Accessed June 2018)

## EMPOWERMENT

**In the past century we have made great strides to reduce inequality, but it is important that we do not become complacent in this mission, and that we are always alert to attempts to undermine these efforts.**

*Equality is not permanent by default, it can be given and just as easily be taken away; even maintaining the current equalities we have achieved is a perpetual act of balancing.*

*Equality is deeply personal and contextual. A truthful understanding of equality is all-encompassing, so it is vital that our mission towards the equal treatment of all is limitless, pluralistic and bountiful. For all these reasons it is important that each and every member of society feels empowered to speak out, to express what equality means to them and how they want to be treated.*

*Empowerment is entwined with the feeling that I matter: I matter, I count, and when I speak I will be listened to. By providing them with the tools to express themselves, and crucially, by listening to what they have to say, MEP's can empower young people to fight for a fairer Europe.*

## 35. EMPOWER AND INTEGRATE REFUGEES BY INCLUDING THEM IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

*Idea heard in workshop*

I would like the EU to guide its Member States towards the incorporation of education as a necessary response to refugee emergencies.

According to a UNHCR report 3.5 million refugee children aged between 5 and 17 did not attend school in the 2016 academic year, highlighting an education crisis currently facing displaced young people<sup>26</sup>. The education system provides an indispensable opportunity for young refugees to integrate in their local communities, allowing them to forge connections, familiarise themselves with local culture and learn the mother tongue. Furthermore, it equips them with the necessary skills to play an instrumental role contributing to society.

Member States should endeavour to include refugees as part of their national education system, with the objective of providing them with the knowledge and skills to live an independent life, and to better understand the new world in which they find themselves.

I would like the EU to provide the necessary support to oversee this process, providing knowledge, data, and financial assistance where required, to ensure as seamless a transition as possible. The potential that youth groups and organisations have to facilitate the integration process should also be tapped into, with encouragement and financial support operated at an EU level.

## 36. COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION

*Jiale*

I call upon the EU to compel its Member States to provide its citizens with a comprehensive sexual education as part of their academic experience. This should be built upon traditional sexual education courses covering topics such sexual development and sexual health, but should extend into a non-biased introduction to topics like gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual behaviour and gender diversity.

Thanks to the valiant efforts of the LGBTQI+ movement, gender classification and sexual orientation has moved away from previous normative restrictions to a more tolerant and individualistic understanding. Today's young people are more self-aware, better informed and increasingly resistant to the societal constraints imposed upon them, however, current standards of sexual education do not reflect this.

This will promote a more sex-positive society, reduce prejudice, and teach young people how to care for themselves in a non-judgmental environment.

## 37. SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SHARING ECONOMY

*Ellie*

I would like to see the EU put more effort towards helping social entrepreneurship and promoting the sharing economy among young people in particular. In addition, I would like to see the EU enhance the impact of social enterprises by connecting with them on the ground in order to understand the legislative barriers which undermine their efforts, and then working together to dismantle these where necessary.

Each technological leap forward has been dogged by cautionary tales, and although modern devices are designed to enhance connectivity it sometimes achieves the exact opposite. In times like this it is worth remembering Bill Gates's observation "Technology is just a tool."

Sharing economy is a fusion of social economic solidarity and technological communication, connecting "givers", "receivers" and "sharers" on the World Wide Web. The shift of the millennial generation from ownership to access, and status to sharing, explains the roaring success of sharing apps such as Uber, AirBnB and Crowdfunder. Beyond commercial use the sharing economy is also vehicle for social justice, facilitating a circular economy in which knowledge, resources and services are redistributed to create a social impact instead of going to waste.

One such social enterprise is the app "Too Good To Go", which partners producers of food using surplus product with consumers seeking to purchase at a reduced price. Representative Rose Boursier-Wyler says that the enterprise is still facing legal barriers such as the best before date printed on products, which is slowing down their progress. She hopes that she can work with the EU to overcome these and reduce food waste even further.

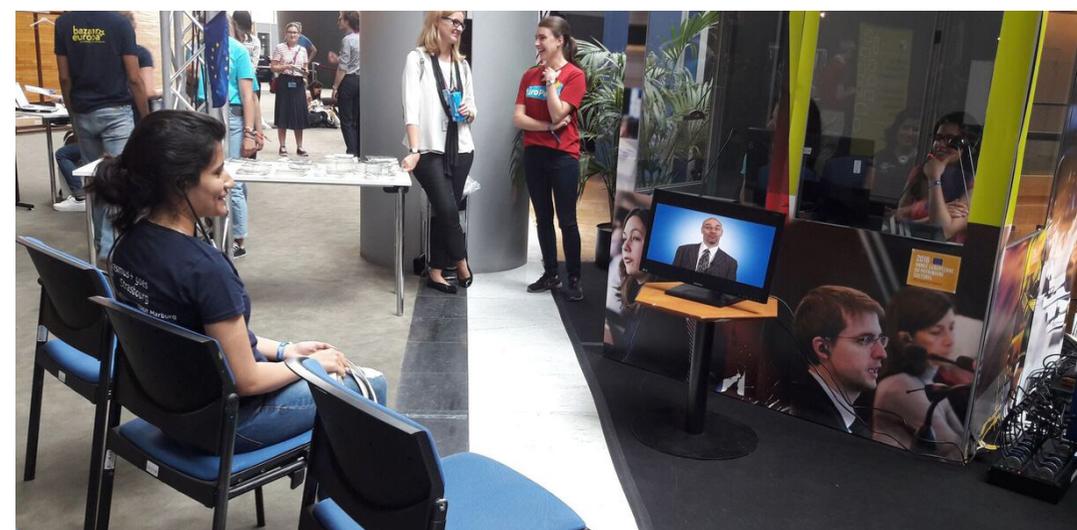
## 38. NATIONAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS FOR JOURNALISTS IN EUROPE

*Miranda*

I want the EU to assert itself as the protector of journalists, working with Member States to establish national protective measures for journalists working within Europe and ending the current culture of impunity of those in power. This could be achieved by creating a pan-European working group, or organisation, which covers the state of journalistic freedom across Europe and reports back to MEPs and Member States on the issue.

Democratic values mean little without the guaranteed protection of freedom of the press. Recent months and years have seen the erosion of press freedom, in a world where a journalist is killed every five days with almost full impunity<sup>27</sup>.

Europe has not been impervious to the denigration of journalistic freedom; recent months have seen the deaths of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, Slovak journalist Jan Kuciak and Danish journalist Kim Wall. Government interference and hostility towards journalist has worsened in most of Europe according to Reporters Without Borders' 2018 regional indicator, with Malta, Czech Republic, Serbia (a candidate for EU membership) and Slovakia seeing the biggest drops<sup>28</sup>.



<sup>26</sup> UNHCR, "UNHCR report highlights education crisis for refugee children"

<http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/9/59b6a3ec4/unhcr-report-highlights-education-crisis-refugee-children.html> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>27</sup> Free Press Unlimited, "Money Trail: Exposing financial crime with investigative journalism", <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/news/media-organisations-urge-eu-to-take-action-on-killing-of-journalists> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>28</sup> Free Press Unlimited, "Media organisations urge EU to take action on killing of journalists", <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/news/media-organisations-urge-eu-to-take-action-on-killing-of-journalists> (Accessed June 2018)

### 39. PROMOTE SIGN LANGUAGE

Ferre

I would like to see the mutual education of disabled and able-bodied people, in such a way that the challenge of co-existing represents itself an added value to the learning experience. Able-bodied people should be encouraged to learn sign language, which should be promoted through the availability of courses within schools.

The current approach towards people with disabilities within the education system, sometimes separating them from able-bodied people, leads to the social exclusion and immobility of the disabled community. For example, the portion of students with disabilities that participate in Erasmus is much lower compared to the representation of this segment of the population.

The issue of disability access and its barrier towards education is wide in scope. 14% of people in the EU aged 15-64 report basic activity difficulties<sup>29</sup>. Meanwhile the rate of early leavers for those with disabilities is much higher than for those without disabilities, at 31.5% compared to 12.3%<sup>30</sup>. These exclusionary tendencies also extend to employment, as less than 1/2 people with basic activity difficulties are employed<sup>31</sup>.

It is important to increase the visibility of the disabled community, and the education system should be used as a vehicle for their social inclusion.

This could be started by launching a campaign to promote better attitudes towards people with disabilities, such as having sign language taught at schools, and in workplaces, as an extra crucial skill. The EU could also provide guaranteed places for disabled students to take part in Erasmus.

## INTERVIEW

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*We need to think differently about how we approach the urban-rural divide. The divides themselves aren't necessarily polarised but are more of a continuum as each rural area is different and faces a unique set of challenges that require their own unique solutions rather than attributing the traditional agricultural role to it. Often rural areas believe that they have been excluded from the progress of globalisation.*

*Rural areas should find their very own niche where they have a competitive advantage and be supported in developing it. Of course, policies should create incentives for this with infrastructure as well as promoting innovation and educating. This should include moving away from a "subsidies" based approach to an enabling approach. Likewise, independent municipalities should be able to build partnerships to respond to policies together.*

**Guillaume Lecaros de Cossio,**  
OECD

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<sup>29</sup> Eurostat, "Disabilities among the working age population, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8c/Infographic\\_Disability\\_statistics\\_final.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8c/Infographic_Disability_statistics_final.png) (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>30</sup> European Commission, "Disability statistics - access to education and training", [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Disability\\_statistics\\_-\\_access\\_to\\_education\\_and\\_training](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Disability_statistics_-_access_to_education_and_training) (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>31</sup> Eurostat, "Disabilities among the working age population, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8c/Infographic\\_Disability\\_statistics\\_final.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/8/8c/Infographic_Disability_statistics_final.png) (Accessed June 2018)



### 40. CREATE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

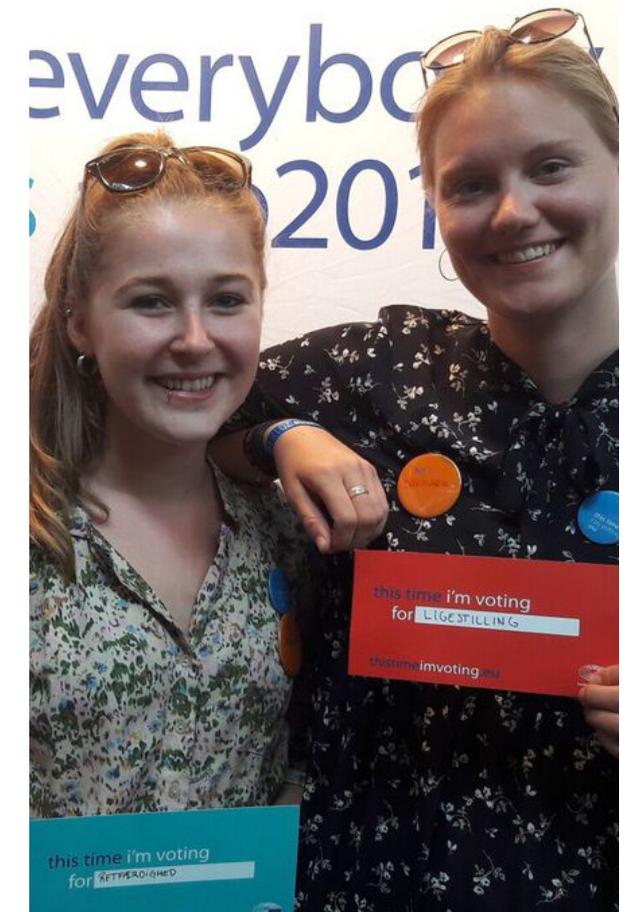
*Idea heard in workshop*

I would like to see the EU step in to help young people during this transitional phase as they enter the rental market. This requires a different approach dependent upon urban or rural locations. In urban locations, the issue is often rent prices as opposed to the availability of housing, therefore a solution could include a form of social housing in which rent prices are capped for an initial period.

Youth unemployment is remains high in certain parts of Europe, meanwhile those entering the world of work earn considerably less than their superiors as they struggle with spikes in rent. Moving out of the family home is a formative step for young people seeking to be self-determined and autonomous, however the housing and rental market is exceedingly prohibitive.

In rural areas, the issue faced by young people is the lack of affordable small units suitable for the needs of young people. I would like transitional apartments to be built in rural areas, which would offer young people and rent efficient, small-scale accommodation as an alternative to the family home.

This would provide genuine change for many young people and tackle one of the more enduring issues of youth unemployment.



# YOUTH FORUM COMMENTARY

## RICH AND POOR

The economic and financial crisis is behind us and employment is back, or so they say. But young people are at risk of being worse off than their parents. Youth unemployment is still twice the EU average. How can we ensure that Social Europe becomes more than words and a reality for all young people, including the most vulnerable? The European Youth Forum fights for quality jobs, to ban unpaid internships and to ensure that welfare systems for all.

Having become the group at greatest risk of poverty and social exclusion, it is clear young people are bearing the brunt of increasing inequality in the European Union (EU). While youth issues are rising in the European political agenda, too often interventions have focused solely on reducing the high youth unemployment rate. Yet at YO!Fest and at the European Youth Event (EYE) 2018, economic rights formed just one dimension of the conversation. Young people came together to discuss areas of social inclusion, such as access to healthcare, housing, and inclusivity in addition to employment. There was a recognition that young people are not a homogenous group; they have varying needs, backgrounds, and experiences impacting on their ability to fully enjoy their social and economic rights.

The discussions young people had at the YO!Fest and the EYE reflected the need to invest in a more social Europe after years of focusing on strengthening the economic and monetary union. On 17 November 2017, the EU proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights, a set of 20 essential principles and rights for fair labour market and welfare systems in Europe today. The Pillar includes many principles which impact on youth such as access to social protection, the right to quality and inclusive education, and adequate minimum wages.

The Pillar is a step in the right direction, but the EU must focus on the following to ensure that young people can escape poverty and social exclusion:

**We need more inclusive education systems.** School systems in Europe regularly fail to include young people from vulnerable backgrounds (e.g. Roma youth; disabled youth; young refugees; etc.). Social Europe cannot become a reality if we do not ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, has access to free, learner-centred, education, empowering young people as active citizens and as right holders. This also means greater investment in and better recognition of non-formal education and non-formal education providers like youth organisations, that have a proven track record of reaching those that formal education does not.

**We need more quality training opportunities.** There is need for increased efforts at national level to adopt and implement legislation to better regulate internships and apprenticeships, along the principles of the European Youth Forum's European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships. This would ensure equal access to training opportunities complying with quality standards, and therefore with the potential to become meaningful pathways to employment.

**We must invest in young people's ability to become independent and autonomous.** This means that accessible housing and early intervention to fight homelessness should be key policy priorities; as well as universal free access to quality health care, regardless of sexuality, origin, educational, employment or resident status.

**We must better adapt to the changing nature of work.** Young people are increasingly being forced into non-standard employment such as zero hour contracts, involuntary temporary work or part-time work, and bogus self-employment. This affects their ability to access basic workers rights such as sick leave or paid holiday. Labour legislation must be kept up-to-date to respond the emerging challenges brought on by new forms of work.



**We must improve access to social protection.** This is key to reducing youth poverty as social welfare systems often fail to reflect the reality of the labour market for young people and access is often linked to employment history or status. Social protection must be accessible for youth by taking into consideration the kind of work young people are doing, such as internships, apprenticeships, and unpaid work.

**We must abolish youth minimum wage policies.** Youth minimum wages are discriminatory and conflict with the principle of equal pay for equal work. The EU should adopt a EU Recommendation on adequate minimum wages, encouraging Member States to abolish youth minimum wages.

**We must involve youth people in combating economic and social exclusion.** Youth organisations and youth-led structures are well placed to understand the needs of young people and have experience in reaching out to vulnerable groups. Investment in youth organisations and their active involvement in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes that impact on youth is essential in order to have the most effective policies.

None of this achievable without the allocation of adequate funding in parallel with policy proposals, at national and EU level. The next EU budget is an important opportunity to prove that young people are a priority in the political agenda and to adequately invest in policies and programmes aimed at pulling young people out of poverty and social exclusion. Funds must be underpinned by a clear strategy to support the implementation of the Pillar of Social Rights, and it is vital that youth be mainstreamed in all thematic priorities.

After years of austerity, rising inequality has had significant consequences for the EU. It has affected our social cohesion, undermined confidence in political institutions, and caused the disillusioned to turn to populism and extremism. Europe's youth are calling for their fair share. It's time for us to deliver on Social Europe and invest in youth.

### 3. APART AND TOGETHER: Working out for a stronger Europe

Our generation has been shaped by the European Union and all of its benefits and challenges as well. Most of Europe's youth barely recognise life before the EU.

Still, there are a considerable number of young Europeans who support parties and movements that wish to turn back European integration. Too often, we take for granted what the EU has achieved in recent decades. This applies to all generations.

Many young people, however, don't know the difference between a European society and a non-European society, as they haven't been able to experience both. In addition, the EU is often used as a shield by various European national governments, who seek to push controversial and divisive issues onto the shoulders of the EU. This constant blame-game is forming a negative view of the EU, in part, by its own Member States.

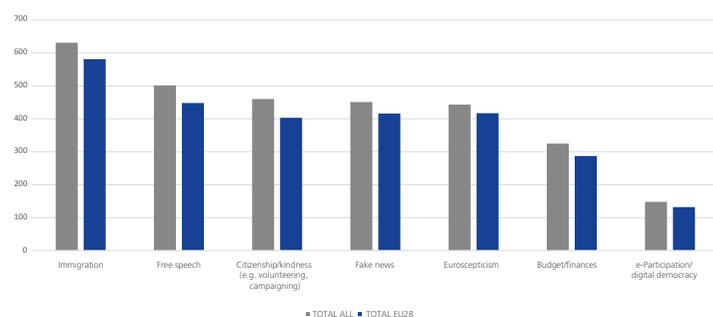
The lack of self-promotion and defence showcased by the EU and its Member States has demonstrated that the bloc has struggled to proactively solve the problems and situations which have affected the European project in recent years.

We must take into account that the EU has certain faults. It lacks a social security union for all European citizens and struggles to enforce equality among citizens, regardless of their nationality. Still, we cannot deny the benefits it has generated: peace, understanding of one another, wealth and the opportunity to discover the European continent and its diverse cultures.

Ultimately, the EU has given so much to Europeans that it is distressing to imagine the damage that would be caused if it doesn't endure. We need to bring people together across borders and age groups, and foster a greater sense of togetherness rather than division.



APART AND TOGETHER - TOP 3 IMPORTANT ISSUES



#### FUTURE OF EUROPE

**Brexit has emerged as one of the most controversial issues, not only at the EYE, but in the European Union as a whole. There are differing opinions on the issue: while some believe that it will strengthen the EU, others fear that it will destroy it.**

*Brexit has shown other Member States that the danger of populism triumphing through elections is a reality. This reality should be opening the eyes of people, making them aware of the threats represented by populism and encouraging them to fight against it. The reverse conclusion would be that Brexit may embolden other "exit" movements. The possible success of the UK and its politics regarding refugees, could lead to an increase in the support of this viewpoint, which would have a severely negative impact on the EU - potentially leading to a structural decay.*

*However, the future of Europe is not only about departing members. The relationship with Turkey, as well as other new accessions to the EU, is also posing important questions. Ongoing negotiations with those countries that don't adhere to basic human rights principles are leading to a lack of credibility and confidence.*

*In recent years, due to the different external issues assaulting Europe, the EU has seen a need to ally and build bonds with different countries who don't always respect the same principles.*

*New and fairer treaties should be constructed; the relationship with the UK after Brexit must be as profitable as possible for both parties and the relationship with Turkey must be strengthened in order to secure new strong bonds outside Europe.*

*The future of Europe is indeed up for grabs, and young people have made it clear how they envisage a stronger, more principled and fairer Union.*

#### 41. ENSURE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE UK AFTER BREXIT

Sorana & Ian

The EU and UK should agree to a continued collaboration within the educational system, and allow the Erasmus scheme to continue. This would allow British students to continue studying in Europe, and vice versa. In addition, academics in the UK should be offered the chance to find work and collaborate with colleagues in the EU.

One great fear of young people is that Brexit could cause students to lose the chance to study in the UK due to higher tuition fees and visa issues. Young people think that this matter should be taken seriously because we run the risk of creating a system that isn't beneficial for either side.

The UK has already committed to remaining in the Erasmus programme until 2020 - after the UK has left the EU - but more needs to be done to ensure that this is a long-term arrangement. Young people are concerned by the consequences of Brexit and this kind of action could reassure them.

#### 42. CREATE A EUROPEAN REFUGEE DAY

Sérgio

Creating a European refugee day would be an important signal to help ensure a more open and honest discussion about what is happening around asylum seekers in Europe, and migration in general. We need to change perspectives: this could be a strong statement considering what happened before the creation of the union where Europeans were the ones fleeing war zones.

Recent developments have shown that, in some cases, xenophobic and racist arguments are getting more attention from the media and voters. Therefore, the EU needs to do something positive to tackle this prevailing narrative.

It could work like "Europe day", where EU institutions promote the event across all Member States and raise awareness through events and talks, in collaboration with local media. With a network of representatives in the Member States, as well as contacts in the non-profit sector, the EU could take a real step towards engagement with the refugee community and create a pan-European conversation and understanding about what it's like to be a refugee and how we, as a society, can handle migratory flows.

### 43. INVEST IN FOREIGN AID

Ruben

Young people aren't blind to the pressures causing migration to the EU. Human rights and respect for refugees are crucial to helping solve this ongoing crisis. I propose a two-pronged solution where we offer humanitarian aid to camps in and around the EU, as well as directing foreign aid to help organisations in countries of origin.

We are currently in a situation where refugees are forced to flee civil wars and other forms of unrest such as droughts and outbreaks of disease, and come the EU to find shelter. However, even in refugee camps, they aren't always safe. Therefore, we need to direct funds to help ensure that refugees have safe, inhabitable accommodation when they are in the EU.

Nevertheless, simply relying on this doesn't mean the problem is solved. We should also consider directing funds to help secure refugee camps on Europe's periphery, and seek diplomatic and foreign aid solutions to solve the "push" factors that caused this irregular migration in the first place.



### 45. SET UP A VOLUNTARY SYSTEM TO LINK MIGRANTS WITH EUROPEANS

Joao

My proposal is to set up a system where Europeans can volunteer to be paired with a migrant and help them assimilate into the EU. Arriving in a new place can be difficult; a friendly face would help newcomers to navigate bureaucratic obstacles instead of having to enter an overworked social service.

The future of Europe is reliant on new arrivals, given the trend in our own demographics: a growing elderly population and low birth rates. Helping to make people feel welcome and be part of our society is a crucial part of this.

Different incentives could be considered to promote this, but it could also become a flagship programme of the European Solidarity Corps, in order to increase visibility and use of the programme.

### 44. ENCOURAGE MORE EXCHANGES BETWEEN EUROPE AND TURKEY

Malgorzata & Timon

Experiences such as the European Volunteer Service (EVS) and European Solidarity Corps can be eye opening. Young people in Turkey are interested in Europe, and if the EU responds by offering opportunities to them such as these programmes, this could benefit everyone in the long term. I propose encouraging more exchanges between Europe and Turkey.

Currently, political relations between the European Union and Turkey are at a difficult stage. However, day-to-day life for citizens isn't so different. Young Europeans need to be granted the opportunity to engage with our close neighbours in order to understand one another, counter negative feelings and combat a lack of information about one another's culture which could help turn the tide over time.

Erasmus programmes already exist in Turkey, but relations could be strengthened more by offering special exchange programmes to students, similar to the Turkish-German Youth exchange programme<sup>32</sup>.

### 46. STRENGTHEN EXTERNAL BORDERS AND DATA SHARING

Anssi

While we have a duty to support the migrants attempting to get to Europe who need our help, we also need to consider having a functioning system in place coordinating this aid and strong external borders to provide order.

One of the main principles of the EU is solidarity between its members. This would allow to settle migrants where some of their family members already are and it would end the unjust situation where certain countries are taking a higher number of refugees than others. This approach would also allow for migrants to be better integrated into society, potentially providing relevant education and helping them get into work.

The current system of voluntary acceptance of migrants by some Member States only clearly doesn't work. Greater European solidarity and cohesion is needed to solve migratory issues in a way that respects human rights.

## INTERVIEW



### Do you think that Europe is growing increasingly apart or closer together?

*It is a very difficult question to answer in a binary way. Brexit has debunked the myth that Europe is becoming a more united front and has forced the EU to consider the fact that progress can move backwards as well as forwards. Although Brexit is a fragmentation, in some ways it could also be a unifying force for the European projects and can make us think about how we can work, now, to bring people together. The threat of the Union falling apart is a real one, and I think maybe this actually helps create clarity.*

*Before the referendum, a lot of people took for granted that Britain was part of the EU, even people who were very skeptical about the EU. Whilst Brexit is not a good thing, one interesting and potentially positive outcome was that it forced pro-Europeans to make their case within Britain, and brought pro-Europeans together in forcing them to articulate what it means to be a European.*

**Olivia Elder,**  
PhD student, University of Cambridge



## EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2019: YOUTH TURNOUT AND VOTING

The European elections in 2019 will be a decisive moment in the EU's recent history. When looking at the figures, there has been a sharp drop in turnout among voters<sup>33</sup>.

*This trend needs to be reversed. By not voting, people are showing a lack of interest in European politics, which undermines the democratic authority of the project as a whole. Young people, in particular, have a growing assumption that their vote doesn't matter.*

*Increasing the youth vote isn't easy: young people need to feel that their vote is important, and valued. We need to convince people to make the decision to go and vote on polling day and therefore need to make voting easier and accessible. The EU must face its lack of promotion and counter it.*

### 47. ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO STAND IN ELECTIONS

Tristan

In order to make the EU more youthful and vibrant, why not encourage young people to stand for election?

Low turnout is often a symptom rather than a cause. Some MEPs are hoping to return for their sixth mandate - this gives an image of a dated, out of touch EU which isn't wholly representative of the society that elects it, particularly of young people.

This could be countered by encouraging political groups to create a quota for younger candidates. Furthermore, the European Parliament could create a dedicated committee that focuses on young citizens and the future of the EU. Young people demand to see an EU that shows it cares.

This idea was also expressed during the EYE in 2016, suggesting young people still see this as a solution to be properly considered.

### 49. CREATE AN ANNUAL Q&A BETWEEN EU LEADERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Valerie

My idea to promote greater engagement between young people and politics would be to create an annual question and answer session between the heads of the European Parliament, Commission and Council which could be livestreamed on various social media outlets such as Facebook Live. Questions could come from young people across Europe, and be put to the EU leaders by a select group of young people.

The recent hearing with Mark Zuckerberg attracted a great deal of attention to the European Parliament as an institution. If these events were well promoted on social media it might be possible to reach new audiences. Young people aren't disengaged by default, we just need to have opportunities to express our opinions!

This would help promote the institutions of the EU and provide greater accessibility, as well as showing that the EU cares what young people have to say. This event could even be done in collaboration with youth organisations to ensure a top-to-bottom youth focused event.

### 48. USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO INFORM YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT VOTING

Giulia

My idea would be to utilise social media platforms to inform young people why it's important to vote, how they can register and where they can vote.

Traditional forms of advertising such as billboards, TV and radio adverts no longer reach young people. The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism research suggests 51% of people with online access use social media as a news source<sup>34</sup>, which is in turn controlled by a particular echo chamber. Someone who is engaged in politics is more likely to see political calls to action on their social media channels<sup>35</sup>.

One way to challenge this would be to create ad hoc social media campaigns throughout Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. This could be done by engaging various political groups to utilise their networks and share a common message that emphasises the importance of voting among younger generations.

### 50. CREATE A UNIFORM AGE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO STAND FOR ELECTION

Sam

The EU should create a uniform age as of which young people across Europe can stand in the European elections. This could also have an impact on national elections, where the changes may eventually begin to permeate.

Young people fail to engage in politics, in part, because they rarely see their peers, or politicians of a similar age, elected as representatives. One problem is that there is no common age of candidacy across the EU. While in some countries it is possible to stand for Parliament at 18, in others it is as high as 24.

MEPs and EU institutions should encourage Member States to make the necessary changes to empower young people.



### 51. ADVANCE E-VOTING TO ENCOURAGE TURNOUT

Richard

We should introduce EU-wide e-voting to ensure that voting in the European elections is as easy and accessible as possible.

The high abstention rate at elections often represents voters' growing disillusionment with politics. Busy or difficult to reach polling stations may put off voters who choose to abstain rather than wait in long lines, or travel long distances, to cast their vote.

We can learn valuable lessons from Estonia, a leading country when it comes to the use of IT-technologies and the internet in the private and public sector. Estonia is the only country in Europe where access to the internet is legislated as a social right. More than 54% of the population are internet users, 34% of the households have a computer at home and 82% of household computers are connected to the internet<sup>36</sup>.

E-voting in Estonia has been used in a number of elections and turnout increased slightly. Despite any legal obstacles, this approach could be adopted to address issues in youth turnout on a pan-European scale.

Similar to allowing more opportunities for young people to stand for election, the issue of e-voting was also a hot topic in 2016, suggesting young people see this as an important solution worth greater consideration.

### 52. INTRODUCE VOTES AT 16 FOR EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

Ella

We should consider lowering the voting age to 16 for the European elections. Also, this could be linked to more intense political education in schools. If young people were taught about the importance of voting and soon after have the opportunity to practice that right, it may lead to a higher turnout.

Precedents for this approach exist. In the 2014 Scottish Independence referendum, the voting franchise was extended to 16 year olds on a one-off basis as the vote would likely affect the rest of their lives.

Young voters didn't disappoint, with studies suggesting 75% of 16 and 17 year olds turned out to vote, higher than 18-24 and 25-34 year olds<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Statista, "Voter turnout in the European Parliament Elections in the European Union (EU) from 1979 to 2014", <https://www.statista.com/statistics/300427/eu-parliament-turnout-for-the-european-elections/> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>34</sup> Reuters Institute Oxford University, "Digital News Report 2017", [https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web\\_0.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web_0.pdf) p.10 (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>35</sup> BBC, "Social media "outstrips TV" as news source for young people", <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-36528256> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>36</sup> Council of Europe, "Report for the Council of Europe E-Voting in the 2005 local elections in Estonia", [https://www.coe.int/t/dgap/goodgovernance/Activities/E-voting/CoE\\_Studies/FinalReportCOE\\_EvotingEstonia2005\\_en.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dgap/goodgovernance/Activities/E-voting/CoE_Studies/FinalReportCOE_EvotingEstonia2005_en.asp) (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>37</sup> What Scotland Thinks, "So how many 16 and 17 year olds voted?", <http://blog.whatscotlandthinks.org/2014/12/many-16-17-year-olds-voted/> (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>38</sup> Birmingham Live, "Local elections 2018: Uber offering free rides to ensure wheelchair users can vote" <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/local-elections-2018-uber-offering-14604401> <https://en.annahar.com/article/799240-elections-2018-uber-announces-election-day-promo-code> (Accessed June 2018)

### 53. UTILISE COMPANIES AND APPS TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT VOTING

Kenny

The EU should coordinate campaigns with private companies in order to make politics more attractive. For example, during the UK election in 2017, notifications were sent from Uber with the message, "Don't be a passenger in what happens in your life. Vote now."<sup>38</sup>

Many people are either not aware of the voting procedures or choose to stay away from politics completely. Receiving simple reminders from a favourite app on a particular day could make the difference in voting turnouts.

The European Parliament is in a unique position to use its reputation to enter into discussions with organisations on election promotion. By encouraging a collaborative approach to elections, the act of voting becomes a truly societal activity rather than one undertaken in isolation.



## INTERVIEW



### What can political leaders do to encourage young people to be involved and engaged with elections?

*In relation to the EP elections, specifically because it tends to have a lower youth turnout, I think that it has to come from the young people themselves. There's an attitude towards the establishment at the moment among many young people that they won't take their orders from Brussels. I have seen in my own country [Ireland] following some referendum results, the emergence of amazing networks who collaborate, support each other and make a difference. A huge number of Irish people are now registered to vote in greater numbers than before, not because they were told by their parents, but because they were told by their peers.*

*I have five children and one of my daughters helped my younger daughter to register, and even brought her to the local police station to get the stamp, so it wasn't me who did that. It was the young helping the young. But, obviously what governments can do is increase awareness of the EP elections and emphasise how much they matter. Years ago, they didn't, and people went to polling stations just to give a slap across the face to their own government; they didn't care. But the EP has become a lot more powerful in recent years: it legislates with the Member States, and chooses the president of the European Commission. The composition of the Parliament is left, right, centre-left, centre-right and that is precisely what the future of Europe is about. That has to get across, whether from the governments themselves or civil society actors, but I think it's more powerful when young people themselves are doing this and collaborating together.*

**Emily O'Reilly,**  
European Ombudsman



## ENGAGEMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

**Values are one of the main pillars of the European Union, forming the glue that unites all European citizens across the continent. It is important to take into account that the many members of the EU have different cultures, speak different languages, and have experienced historical events like World War II differently. Now, as a whole, they form the European society. The EU underlines six points in the Charter of Fundamental Rights which have to be respected and applied by all Member States: respect for human dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, citizens' rights and justice.**

*These values are part of the European character and of what it means to be European. Ignoring them would be akin to turning away from the founding European principles.*

*With the arrival of the refugee crisis, integration has become a main challenge for our society. The topic became very controversial and divided citizens across Europe; many supported the integration of refugees, whilst others support closed borders.*

*Being a European citizen requires engagement. It may be difficult to describe what being European means – but upholding its values is the first crucial step.*

### 54. LINK EUROPE WITH NATIONAL PLATFORMS TO ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT

Jan

Political groups within the European Parliament should work more closely together with their national counterparts and synchronise ideas - this should also include people from different communities to create a grassroots approach to European politics. Politicians need to host events in their constituencies and reinforce a link between the EU and European citizens.

The European Union needs to make people understand that it is relevant to everyone. Only by showing relevance will people take the Union and its institutions seriously and engage with them. Currently, the EU seems distant from citizens and, as a result, many people feel like it doesn't address their concerns.

We need decentralised, local party groups which feed national concerns to the political groups at the European level so they can develop a truly pan-European policy which respects this diversity of opinion.

### 55. DEVELOP A EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

Andreas

People often feel that their voice doesn't really matter. This is one of the main reasons that also causes young people to turn their backs on the EU elections.

Therefore, in order to tackle this democratic deficit, we need to establish direct democracy mechanisms. More specifically, we should start from an existing mechanism, such as the European Citizens Initiative, and improve it by making it legally binding within the EU. The Swiss referendum mechanism, which follows a similar process, would be a good model. The European Court of Justice should have judicial power in order to ensure the legality of the procedure. In fundamental issues concerning the EU, there must be a way to call a European referendum, through the European Citizens Initiative process.

The real meaning of democracy lies in the will of the people (Demos). Therefore, in my view, if we respect the will of the people, people will respect the political union. Only under these terms will the citizens of the European Union really engage with the common affairs of Europe.

## 56. PROMOTE CLASSICAL LANGUAGES AND EUROPEAN HISTORY

Andrea

My idea would be to promote the teaching of classical languages and history, such as Greek and Latin, as a way to connect more with the story of Europe.

We hear a great deal about what unites us as Europeans, as well as how we need to create a European identity, however these classical languages which helped form an important part of the values that we respect in Europe today are often described as "dead languages".

The EU could seek to support the teaching of such languages and history through extracurricular youth groups, and possibly sponsor public events around these topics that may attract the interest of young people across Europe.

## 57. CREATE A PLATFORM FOR QUALIFIED REFUGEES TO FILL EDUCATIONAL ROLES

Laura & Jakob

The EU should make efforts to link refugees with professional qualifications to the education sector to provide qualified individuals to "refugee-welcoming organisations".

Currently, the Science4refugees exists as an opportunity to match refugees with a background in science to organisations that need new staff. This is done through the EURAXEES portal which provides information and support services to researchers who wish to continue their careers in Europe.

This approach could be expanded across the education sector, the fill gaps in various teaching and research roles including schools, universities and even businesses.

## INTERVIEW

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### What has been your experience of the EYE?

**CHRISTIANA:** *Engaging with the EYE and performing in the Parliament has given more confidence to the students who gained a lot by opening up and meeting new people from across Europe. They worked as a team performing what they had prepared for several months. The students wanted to share the message of unity, as only by being united can we overcome our problems. The average age of the students is 16-17. They shared their energy with the people who observed their performance in the EYE.*

**SIMONA:** *We were part of something that Europe does, and that is a very important thing. My favourite part was entering the hemicycle, meeting people from different countries and seeing different cultures. This experience had a deep impact on me and has increased my awareness of Europe.*

**MARY:** *Everyone at the EYE has a wonderful energy. I will share this experience with my friends at home and encourage them to come and participate in the next EYE. Here I have learned that when we are united we can make something very beautiful.*

**MARINOS:** *Attending the EYE was my first time travelling outside of Cyprus, and I enjoyed every moment. Strasbourg is a wonderful place and I really enjoyed the experience from the moment I stepped onto the airplane. I would pass on the message to my friends that it's nice to be part of Europe because there are so many different cultures, with different cuisines, languages, and different ways of life. This diversity shows us that there is still hope for Europe.*

**Christiana Petraki,**

Teacher at Lyceum and Technical School of Polis Chrysochous, Cyprus and her students (Simona Bortea, Mary Fournidou and Marinos)

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## 58. INTRODUCE POLITICS INTO CIVIC CLASSES

Idea heard in workshop

My idea is to introduce political education in all schools across the EU. Despite education not being a competence of the European Union, the EU should be putting pressure on Member States to improve political education. A new subject could be added to curriculums, which is based on politics as well as the history and efforts of the European Union.

There is a significant lack of political education in schools; young people are taught limited political knowledge and the educational system needs to fix this so that students understand the complexity of the European Union and how it has made their lives better.

This could be achieved in partnership with newspapers or other journalistic outlets. For example, by granting free access to an online newspaper to schools who offer politics classes.

## 60. CREATE A MOBILE HEADMASTERS INITIATIVE

John

The EU could consider promoting and coordinating a mobile headmasters' initiative, where headmasters collaborate with governments, schools and local stakeholders across the EU. This initiative would provide new ideas coming from new voices, since the workshops and roundtable discussions would be organised by the headmasters. The workshops would be devoted to deep reflection focused on the future of Europe between young leaders, students, managers and entrepreneurs. These discussions could be guided by MEPs, experts or opinion leaders from Europe and beyond.

The mobile school leaders could use projects identified by participants in the initiative to improve political engagement which could include the formulation of twenty concrete projects. The young people who take part in these workshops could then volunteer for a year to work on the identified projects. This could help promote active citizenship and engagement in European affairs.



## 59. FUND A YOUTH ID TO ALLOW DISCOUNTS TO CULTURAL SITES

Idea heard in workshop

The EU should support a scheme to provide young people under the age of 25 with a card that gives them discounted entry to certain cultural attractions such as museums, libraries and theatres.

A recent decision to create a free Interrail pass for a number of young Europeans was well received, but initiatives like this should be built on. When travelling, young people often want to see the sites of the cities they visit, however prohibitive costs can act as a barrier.

By funding a card that provides a discount the EU could provide a tangible benefit to young people who want to travel and experience more of what Europe has to offer.



# YOUTH FORUM COMMENTARY

## APART AND TOGETHER

The debate on the Future of Europe is in all discussions and most of times call on young people to be at the centre of our leaders interests. Are these empty statements or a real commitment to engage with youth to build the future of our Union? To build a more united, prosperous, democratic and sustainable Europe, with human rights and the rule of law as a foundation, young people and their organisations need to be part of the dialogue and the decisions. The European Youth Forum works to ensure that the voice of millions of young people are heard to shape today's and tomorrow's Europe.

Two processes are currently shaping the future of the European Union, namely the United Kingdom's exit from the EU and the discussion around the Future of Europe. While many of the effects of the processes are still unknown, both processes and their component parts were considered in-depth as part of the YO!Fest and European Youth Event 2018.

What both have in common is the essential role that young people will need to play, and the participation space that needs to be given to them. The European Youth Forum's long-running campaign to #YouthUp Europe, calling for a more youth-inclusive politics, highlights the importance of the youth voice in both of these negotiations.

In discussions on Brexit, young people have been, and continue to be, the most-pro EU generation. They are far from apathetic in their expression of their views as they are engaging in direct political action, leading the charge and turning out in droves for this specific issue. It is clear therefore that the young people of the UK must have their voices heard throughout the negotiations. Young people are political and are interested – they're just rejecting structures that they view as not having delivered. As such, we must look beyond simple electoral turnout when assessing youth participation: a problem of youth political participation exists, but it's strictly related to institutional politics.

Young people are clear that their voice must be heard at the negotiating table, as has been outlined by the British Youth Council and the European Youth Forum. The consequences of Brexit, political, social, economic and environmental, are likely to harm young people, potentially more profoundly than older generations. As noted in the European Youth Forum's resolution on Young People and Brexit and by participants at the YO!Fest and EYE 2018, priorities such as protection of rights and access for young people to opportunities that the EU affords them, such as Erasmus, must continue. To ensure that this becomes a fact, the role of young people within the negotiations is crucial.

Participants at the YO!Fest and EYE 2018 also highlighted the protection and advancement of Human Rights as a core area of concern in Brexit negotiations. Depending on how the UK departs the EU, the UK may no longer remain a signatory to the

European Charter of Fundamental Rights. However the UK will remain a signatory of the European Convention on Human Rights and participation in this must be protected, and potentially expanded to further enhance the protection of young people's rights, as outlined in the European Youth Forum's Policy Paper on Equality and Non-Discrimination, and was emphasised strongly by participants at the YO!Fest and EYE 2018. This is a second core area that will be a priority for young people in the Brexit negotiations.

The second process is of course the discussion on the Future of Europe. While the voice of young people is central to the Brexit discussions, the very essence of what is democratic participation and how the European Union should incorporate new forms into its architecture is intensely related to the discussion on the Future of Europe.

Central to that discussion is the theme of democracy. Democracy of course cannot exist without significant participation from all sectors of society. Particularly in the current times, young people see political participation as extending beyond voting and including many alternative forms of participation such as protests and surveys: changing forms of democracy. This is particularly true of the current generation of young people: if we fail to recognise and adapt to their changing methods and beliefs, European political institutions risk becoming increasingly distant and anachronistic. In response, the Future of Europe discussion must consider how to bridge the gap between young people and political institutions, to ensure that their creativity and potential can contribute to decision-making processes.



Many of the ideas proposed at the YO!Fest and EYE 2018 reflect this. Participants proposed reducing the voting age to 16 as the European Youth Forum proposed in 2006. Lowering the voting age to 16 has been proven to have a clear, positive impact on youth engagement and young people's political knowledge. Many countries have already embarked this journey, like Austria, Malta or Estonia. The European Parliament echoed that demand in 2015, calling to lower the voting age to 16 in Member States electoral laws.

Studies show that when young people are engaged earlier in democratic and civil life by voting, they are more engaged for the rest of their lives. Complementing this idea, both the European Youth Forum and the participants at the YO!Fest and EYE 2018 advocate for citizenship education in all schools, so that young voters will be in position of knowledge when they cast their votes. When coupled with comprehensive citizenship education, a lower voting age makes it much easier to instill a habit of voting while young people are still in school and often living at home, boosting lifelong participation rates. Without this education, 16 and 17 year-olds would be thrown in at the next local, national or European

election with no prior knowledge of the system and how it works. Therefore lowering the voting age to 16 and citizenship education must work in tandem to boost democracy.

These suggestions as to how to address the democratic gaps and the impact that these have on young people through the Brexit and Future of Europe processes are not exhaustive, but the YO!Fest and EYE 2018 debates and the broader #YouthUp campaign are proposing concrete, impactful changes that can help bring young people back towards electoral politics; they need to be at the heart of the discussions during next year's European elections campaign. The onus is on decision-makers and political leaders to listen, engage, and to welcome bigger, broader changes – to reverse the trend of political institutions moving away from younger citizens.

## 4. SAFE AND DANGEROUS: Staying alive in turbulent times

In Europe, peace and security have historical connotations of arms races and conflict; peace through fear; stability through might. In a contemporary context, peace and security is reached through diplomacy, observation of an international rule of law and adherence to a human rights charter. But is the current common understanding of security adapting to new dangers developing on the horizon? Are our approaches to security sufficient to handle present dangers?

To ensure that security policy is effective as a response to technological and sociological advances, a cross-section of society and expertise must be granted space to meaningfully engage in discussions. As the greatest stakeholders in the future and a demographic facing barriers of access to the political process, young people must be supported in having access to a platform for these vital discussions. The EYE2018 marks a starting point. Young people are longing for peace and security.

While these voices were not necessarily unanimous, common themes were apparent: participants were frustrated at the reduced access young people have to the political process and called for movements of reform, peace and security. This frustration is framed by the vulnerability and frequent exploitation of young people, with over 600,000,000 living in armed conflict zones and fragile territories worldwide<sup>1</sup>.

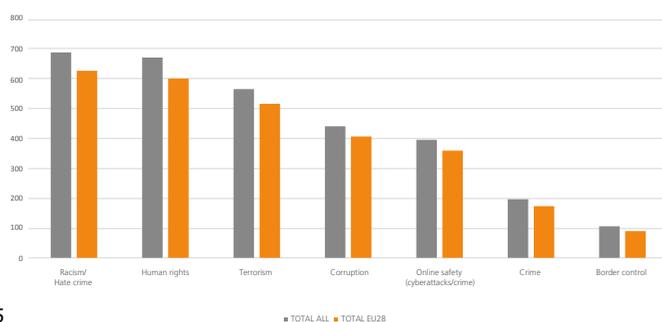
Underlying these voices was a firm call for young people to be empowered as democratic agents as we work towards peace and the prevention of marginalisation, extremism and conflict.

With participants from diverse backgrounds, distinct perspectives on safety and danger emerged from the event. Despite conflicting stances, common concerns exist and discussions often resulted in common, hands-on solution proposals. These perspectives and ideas lay the groundwork for our next steps in these turbulent times.

Yet, in this topic, it is particularly vital to acknowledge the voices which could not be heard at the EYE and to acknowledge the privilege of relative safety which enabled participants to engage in this event and feed into the report. Unfortunately, non-EU regional and global perspectives were under-represented. However, the path towards peace and security must be one which engages actors from all continents, with different experiences, since safety is a global concern. For this reason, the topic focuses strongly on supranational and international organisations' efforts towards international cooperation for peace and security and, specifically, the EU's role within these processes.



SAFE AND DANGEROUS - TOP 3 IMPORTANT ISSUES



### HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW

As safeguards for a peaceful and secure society, human rights treaties and laws stand for the safety and development of humans everywhere. Efforts towards peace and security must recognise the priority of continuing to respect these rights by engaging with the current charters which defend them.

A means to achieve this is to view threats to safety and security through the lens of the right they violate. This ensures that state failures are highlighted and it encourages decision makers to place security rights at the highest priority. Safety and security must not be seen as separate from the concept of human rights; a rights-based approach ensures the practice of implementing security and is based on human rights.

These discussions are anchored in the legal obligations held towards those whose security and safety is at risk. To do so, this subtheme will engage with criticism of the rule of law, and scrutinise current security policies. Ideas also present solutions for how the rule of law can be a tool to achieve a peaceful and safe society.

#### 61. LEAD BY IMPLEMENTING UNSCR 2250 FOR YOUTH

Idea heard in workshop

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR 2250) is the first resolution to embrace young people's role in society and support young people and youth-led organisations as important partners to challenge conflict and violent extremism. The directive is the first to recognise the link between the youth, peace and security and gives impetus to youth-led conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. We must ensure this resolution does not stumble at the implementation stage. Hence, young people are calling for the European Union to play an important leadership role in the implementation of UNSCR 2250.

National implementation plans must be created in order to integrate this framework effectively, which should then be anchored in cooperation with stakeholders at all levels. EU countries should form a common framework for the monitoring and evaluation of implementing this resolution, with internal-EU indicators for reporting, alongside internal monitoring mechanisms. Furthermore, this resolution should see the same degree of co-operation which the Council of Europe states have proved themselves capable of.

Cross ministerial-departmental approach to the implementation of this resolution needs to be ensured and cooperation encouraged at a regional and national level. The approach must facilitate joint efforts between civil society organisations and the state, safeguarding the meaningful engagement of civil society. To be equal partners in, and bring their specific competence to, this process, youth organisations need funding and support from the European Union to fulfil their capacity to work within this framework.

#### 62. PRIORITISE HUMAN RIGHTS IN TRADE AGREEMENTS

Joanna

The EU needs to start putting human rights at the forefront when engaging in international investments and trade agreements.

According to international law, the state is the number one actor responsible for protecting human rights. In democratic societies, all exercise of public powers is duty-bound to the fundamental rights of citizens. However, the responses to human rights abuses are not as effective as could be. This is particularly clear in the case of legal mechanisms which are formed for state investors.

Europe is responding to civil society pressures and is moving towards a multilateral investment court system. The questions yet to be answered in this new system are whether it will only allow investors to bring claims against states, while hindering third parties to bring claims against investors? Will it enforce human rights and environmental obligations on businesses, too?

We want to ensure that multilateral investment court system does not discourage investors from approaching the EU. In this sense, the EU should be neutral and fair, but it should also stand up for human rights when negotiating such deals.

The EU needs to start putting human rights at the forefront when engaging in international investments and trade agreements.

According to international law, the state is the number one actor responsible for protecting human rights. In democratic societies, all exercise of public powers is duty-bound to the fundamental rights of citizens. However, due to a variety of reasons, national courts are sometimes ineffective, unpredictable and fragile when it comes to responding to human rights abuses. This is particularly clear in the case of legal mechanisms which are formed by and for state investors. Europe has responded to civil society pressure and is moving towards a multilateral investment court system. The EU has to ensure that this new court will protect the property rights of investors in an efficient and neutral manner. However, there are questions: will it only allow investors to bring claims against states, while hindering third parties to bring claims against investors? Will it enforce human rights and environmental obligations on businesses, too?

We want to ensure that this court does not discourage investors from approaching the EU. In this sense, the EU should be neutral and fair, but also guided by law, which seeks to protect both investors and public interests.

### 63. MOVE JUSTICE TO A EUROPEAN DIMENSION

Nikolaus

A new treaty expanding the competency of the EU needs to be considered to ensure that national borders are not a barrier when it comes to tackling crime. A first step would be the integration of all Member States' judicial systems in order to have an overarching jurisdiction at the EU level. The recent reform of the European Prosecutor's role is a beginning but more can be done.

This new treaty could also allocate more competencies to the European External Action Service to insist on the implementation of the decisions it makes. Currently, the EEAS is the EU's diplomatic service as well as the foreign and defence ministry of the EU. If the EEAS holds more competency and engages further in cooperation between the foreign affairs services of all countries, the EU could become a more legitimate actor on the international stage.

### 65. MAKE SOCIAL MEDIA A PUBLIC UTILITY

Idea heard in workshop

An effective solution to counter violations of privacy, misuse of data and the undermining of the democratic process would be to take utilities, such as social media, out of the hands of private, profit-driven organisations and into the objective and accountable hands of community ownership.

As young people, it is difficult to exist in the present day without some kind of social media presence, considering the social, professional and practical benefits. Other vital services, such as electricity, gas or the internet, are regulated because of their crucial role in society. For this reason, social media sites should be reviewed and regulated as public services much in the same way as electric goods and phones.

Corporations behind social media platforms have proven unwilling to adapt and are unwilling to self-regulate. Though social media are not as essential for survival as traditional public utilities such as electricity, water and natural gas, we do live in an increasingly interconnected world and the lives of young people often rely heavily on these platforms.



### 64. BATTLE EXCLUSION TO STOP EXTREMISM

Idea heard in workshop

The EU should take measures to avoid exclusion and promote integration to stop individuals turning to extremist ideals. Extremism affects various communities, immigrants being just one of them, and often finds breeding ground in any form of exclusion which extremist groups exploit.<sup>2</sup>

By providing financial support for social groups that gather members across communities and free education such as language classes, individuals who would otherwise tend to feel excluded from the rest of society can instead begin to communicate with others. This helps building understanding of and respect for different viewpoints and a greater feeling of belonging.

We think it's crucial to ensure that the integration of immigrants remains a priority at a time when budgets have been under strain, as the long-term benefits are too important to ignore.

### 66. PROMOTE GREATER MILITARY COOPERATION

Michel

The EU should consider establishing a "European Security Council", which would be made up of European defence ministers and could authorise the use of pan-European military force.

In the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU has an institution for diplomatic services, which enables it to help the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. However, there is no common foreign security policy.

Not only would a security council coordinate the EU's foreign policies, it would also improve dialogue between the EU and other world powers, as it simplifies interaction. This would strengthen the EU as a unitary actor in this area, which has been neglected to date, as it is in need of improved formal coordination.

### 67. CREATE HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS FOR REFUGEES

Hannah

Inclusion and integration is crucial for creating a civil society. These terms have become even more important in recent years, following a large number of asylum seekers arriving in European countries. A key part of this discussion is the question of how to finance programmes and support incoming refugees.

Humanitarian corridors can be coordinated by civil society and a state-supported community, based on an integration support network for migrants entering the EU. This could entail NGOs working with local charities and community groups to vet vulnerable refugees. These groups would then help asylum seekers and vulnerable refugees to integrate into local communities.

This project is adaptable for other European countries since it is a partnership between private civil society organisations and Member State governments. The EU could play a role in identifying civil society organisations across Europe that are interested in participating and encourage Member States to replicate these corridors and share best practices.



## INTERVIEW



**The youth living in the European Union has not experienced extreme conflicts and human rights abuse. What is your message to young people in Europe who have a strong democracy and take it for granted?**

*They are lucky they don't have to go through what people have to experience in my country. Human rights and democracy are vital and young people have to do their best to improve it. And that is not exclusive for the European problematics. It also applies to the entire world. Young people can be easily fooled by extremism and that is the biggest danger for our future. Instead of being a part of violence, they should be concerned with human rights and activism. Through education, the awareness about human rights and democracy needs to be spread among young people. Sometimes the family background is not enough to transmit the importance of a free vote and individual and collective human rights to the youngsters. That is why education needs to be strengthened. Democracy has to prevail and it is precisely the young people who have to be aware of it and defend it in order not to lose it.*

**Lamiya Aji Bashar,**  
Sakharov Prize winner



## CREATING SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

**An independent civil society is crucial for European security; a space where communities can shape policy without the influence of commercial profit or state authority. To help challenge the injustices of insecurity, civil society must be empowered to engage with authorities and policy makers on local, national and global levels.**

*Without civil society thriving at all levels, democracy will stumble and the voices of those who face the highest barriers to decision making may be left unheard and minorities put in vulnerable positions. For this reason, young people at the EYE called for the protection of a diverse, strong and independent civil society, as it is essential for security and peacebuilding.*

*Sadly, the phenomenon of shrinking civil society spaces is growing. Following accelerated clampdowns in recent years, over one hundred countries worldwide have adopted laws to restrict civil society organisations.*

*These restrictions are an authoritarian reaction to democratic ideals and this global trend must be resisted and reversed in the interests of democracy to provide a secure environment for all citizens.*

*Regimes are being more overt and brazen in attacks on civil society, a result of weak international response to early restrictions. The EU must now act as a leader in fostering civil society growth and engagement.*

## 68. CREATE A PAN-EUROPEAN TRANSPARENCY DATABASE

Florin

The European Union must make an effort to facilitate transparency and increase accountability of state and supranational actors to individuals. One way to do this would be to create a pan-European transparency database, promoting quality journalism and strong civil oversight. This could also include a law that would extend to all Member States and require that land and company ownership data is accessible for free. This would help the fight against corruption and populism.

Transparency should find itself at the core of the EU policies. In some countries, such as Romania, something as basic as receiving a list of companies registered in the state means facing a substantial financial barrier. This would be a huge impediment for many, including investigative journalists attempting to uncover corruption, as they can only work on case by case studies. Without transparency, accountability suffers and corruption thrives. A database called ProZorro, which monitors public procurement in the Ukraine and won an award from the Open Government Partnership, could be a model for such a pan-European database.



## 69. PROTECT WHISTLEBLOWERS

Coralie

The EU should encourage Member States to introduce legislation at national level which protects whistleblowers from undue sanction. People need the confidence to step forward with information, ensured by legal safeguards, if they are to speak out against corruption. The European Parliament should take steps towards such empowerment.

The Corruption Perception Index, an annual ranking of countries by Transparency International, shows that legislation is not enough to fight corruption alone. To allow societies to overcome corruption we need to facilitate an enabling environment, which includes freedom of press and civil society spaces.

The EU has to simplify the process for people to report suspected acts of corruption, to protect whistleblowers from retaliation and to promote action through law enforcement agencies, where credible information is provided. In doing this, the EU would recognise the important role that an unhindered media and civil society has played in effective monitoring and investigation.

## 70. TRAIN POLICE TO TACKLE ONLINE HATE CRIMES

Kelly-Ann

The police should be trained to have greater digital literacy in order to recognise online abuse in its early stages. This would be followed by the implementation of preventative strategies, such as adding online abuse and crime to legal documents across the EU.

Online abuse and hate speech against women, especially on social media and other online platforms, is an issue that comes with our world of increasing digitisation.

Women are more likely to be affected by online abuse than men.4 The EU needs to step in, take the initiative and facilitate discussion on how to counter this. Digital literacy also needs to be included in school curricula, since educational platforms play a major role in raising awareness and broadcasting prevention methods.

Legislation would need to come from individual Member States, but a motion could be drafted which EU Member States could sign up to, in a similar way to the Istanbul convention: the Council of Europe's convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

## 72. ONLINE RIGHTS DECLARATION

Idea heard during workshop

Similar to the Declaration of Human Rights, a Declaration of Online Rights could become a guideline for a safer, more inclusive internet.

Currently, the internet poses a grey area for authorities, with the usual rules which govern more traditional forms of media having less sway. The EU should use its position as a global bastion of liberal, democratic rights, to push for an internet that's reliable and safe. By drafting an online rights declaration, the EU could take steps to bring allies into line and start fighting against cyber-warfare, extending this to citizens to give them rights when they are online.

Practically speaking this could include the creation of a "traffic light" system which independent analysts can use to rate the reliability of sources so it's easier to identify inaccurate or genuinely false reporting.

The internet is a powerful tool, but one which has the potential to bring both positive and negative effects to society. The EU should stand up to ensure that individual rights are respected.

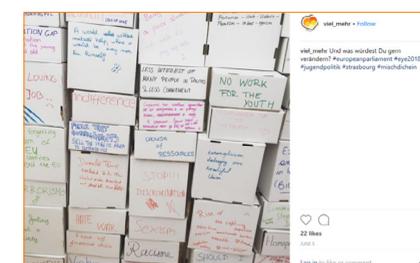
## 71. CREATE A YOUNG CANDIDATES FUND

Hannah

The EU should reduce financial barriers to formal democratic participation, which many young people face in early political careers. A young candidate's fund should be established to support young candidates.

There are too few young people who stand for their local or national elections. We need more role-models to take up positions in all levels of governance, from different backgrounds, different interests, abilities and identities. Otherwise, politics appear to be inaccessible to wider society.

There are some parties in Europe who have representatives in their late twenties and early thirties; they see the potential in young people. Yet, there are many Member States where this does not happen and the political landscape is shaped by elder men. Political parties and the EU must recognise the young support within each European party, and provide financial support to those young representatives who wish to run in European Elections.



### 73. COMPULSORY FIRST AID TRAINING

Christian

I think that the EU should establish a compulsory EU standardised first aid course, perhaps as a second phase of a driver's license.

In my profession as an ambulance driver, I see a lot of cases where people are standing around someone who is in need of first aid, unable to help. The reasons are numerous, yet the application of knowledge of the initial assistance until the professionals arrive may lessen the emergency of the case or even save lives. If everybody could provide first aid in an accident situation, there would be less casualties on the roads or in our everyday life situations.

This could be achieved by creating a pan-European movement to support the teaching of first aid in schools. The EP could call on European leaders to include such teachings in their curricula, and propose a European standard for first aid.

### 74. ENSURE TRANSPARENCY IN SPORTS

Idea heard in workshop

The EU should seek to increase transparency in sports to avoid scandals. It could do this by hosting debates on the issue and supporting stricter regulations to test athletes, particularly if they are taking part in Europe-based competitions.

Sports essentially lift our spirits, encourage comradery, competitiveness and togetherness, and also teach us values and ethics. An open discussion should also be introduced to expose the societal implications of sports corruption as well as how to respond to it.

A set of European rules for all sports clubs and a platform that empowers fans to report corruption could be put in place, so official bodies or journalists can further investigate. The EU should consider the creation of a totally independent organisation, consisting of lawyers, police officers and civil experts, which would specialise in fighting against sports corruption and making sports dignified and more transparent again.

## INTERVIEW

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**How important is an EU that practices the values of democracy and human rights, and how important is this in the wider world? Can you feel this in your work?**

*I think that, today in my daily work, I can say that we have very important projects within the European Union. I can give you two examples. We are working with the EU to take children and women out of the mines where they live as sex slaves or slaves in general. This way, we are working with the EU to protect children and women. We can give the women a new status, which will allow them to be able to reintegrate into society and the children can go to school or have the possibility to enjoy a normal meal. Today, I am very happy because these children are now among the best pupils in their region. We saw that these children had no life and the EU helped them to build a new life.*

*The second project that we are working on, in cooperation with the EU, is a project concerning the victims of sexual abuse. The purpose of this project is to emphasise that sexual abuse should not only be considered a physical affliction but as a violation of human rights. We also want those women who are victims of sexual abuse to reintegrate into society and be productive and independent. We want this new project, not only in our medical centre, but in other medical centres where it would be needed to be adopted as well.*

*These are two very strong examples which show that the EU can construct the basis, in a practical way, to defend human rights and the rights of the vulnerable.*

**Europe is currently facing decisions about its future. What would be your message to young people who enjoy a strong democracy, yet don't vote?**

*If we let others solve our problems without participation, then the problem of populism will increase, because a part of the population cannot express itself.*

*Today we have to pay attention! Democracy has to be alive every day. We have to protect and practice it every day. Or it will die.*

**Denis Mukwege,**

Sakharov Prize winner 2014 and founder of Panzi Foundation, Democratic Republic of the Congo

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### HANDLING TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

**The internet is as an engine for growth and the digital revolution has brought immense economic benefit to the EU in terms of increased productivity, innovation and the delivery of e-services and e-commerce. But along with all these advantages of economic opportunity, the internet also includes growing threats to our way of life.**

*Dangers which were once considered science-fiction fantasy are now frighteningly real, yet, many of these dangers still struggle to hold space within civic dialogue. Cyber threats are receiving an insufficient response from policy makers, putting our society in a vulnerable position. During the EYE, it was clear that many young people are demanding more education in this field through which we allow society to make informed decisions on the solutions to dangers posed by technological advances.*

*An understanding of the new online threats we face is essential to develop a response to them. The EU has to establish a strong focus on IT literacy, while mapping and calling attention to internet-infrastructure dependencies and vulnerabilities across the EU. Cybersecurity should be mainstreamed, so we understand the broader and systemic cyber risks, and can identify the most critical services, assets, and infrastructures for the EU to protect. Our goal should be to develop an effective cyber risk management strategy and accelerate cooperation among EU countries to use joint capabilities and establish standards in technological development.*

### 75. MAINSTREAM AND ALIGN CYBER SECURITY

Francesca

The EU should align cybersecurity policies with its export strategy and foreign, security and defence policy (PESCO), on a similar level to trade and development goals. Cybersecurity, then, is not only a technical problem, but rather, the EU acknowledges its broader, systemic risks to safety. One approach to tackle this issue is to identify the most critical services and assets which ask for protection. The next step requires EU countries to work closely together and create a network of joint capabilities. In this context, standards for IT products can be easily and efficiently established.

That is why we need to align the economic agenda (EU Single Market Strategy) with the cybersecurity agenda. We must not treat cybersecurity as a silo issue. Instead, the general public must understand that protecting the internet is both an economic and national security imperative. It is important to keep in mind that cyber risks affect all industries and sectors: from the Fortune 500 companies and smaller organisations with limited resources to EU governments, to international institutions and finally, to EU citizens.



### 76. MAKE CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION A STANDARD PRACTICE

Idea heard in workshop

EU Member States must be encouraged to launch cybersecurity education programmes from elementary school to university, and invest in cybersecurity research and development (beyond Horizon 2020). It is important to establish a common vocabulary, career progression pathways and support for young people entering this field. Furthermore, launching a broader cybersecurity awareness campaign for the public, beyond the "EU Cybersecurity Awareness Month" would make this an attractive and accessible programme for European citizens to engage with.

There is a widening gap between the demand for cybersecurity talent and the supply of a professional workforce. It is estimated that by 2020, two million more cyber-security jobs will be needed worldwide.<sup>5</sup> Pre-empting this, the EU needs to promote cybersecurity education and training.

In addition, more women and minorities need to be encouraged to pursue careers in cyber-security, which is equality important to accessibility.

## 77. PROMOTE EU INTELLIGENCE COOPERATION

*Idea heard in workshop*

The EU should consider creating its own version of the FBI to improve the existing EUROPOL organisation, using the existing structure with improved information sharing capacities. This would include a compliance policy.

Currently, a great deal of security cooperation is reliant on information being shared between Member States, and as has been tragically shown, this information may not be acted upon. By creating greater intelligence cooperation and a cohesive European body, the EU could take concrete steps to gathering and securing intelligence. This would have benefits for citizens and create an environment of greater security.

## 79. INVEST IN GENE EDITING TECHNOLOGY

*Idea heard in workshop*

If you are ahead of the curve, you can shape the curve. The European Union should invest significantly in gene editing technologies in order to avoid a brain drain to other countries such as the US or China.

Europe is extremely good at forming excellent research circles, usually through public institutions, which are paid by Member States. In addition, proper financial investments in research and industry is required in order to maintain leadership in this rapidly evolving field, and would allow the EU to keep hold of its negotiating power in deciding how this technology will be used and delivered to citizens.

The EU should seek to allocate funds, and support universities that are researching this technology and support this type of innovation within the EU.

## 78. PROMOTE EDUCATION ON MOLECULAR AND CELLULAR BIOLOGY

*Idea heard in workshop*

In order to prepare for the DNA revolution in the best way, and have a reasonable ethical debate, the population needs to be prepared. As this subject is very sensitive and a lot of biased information is circulating, citizens should receive proper education in molecular and cellular biology as well as genetics during their middle or high school training. All of these sciences are quite new and rapidly evolving, and should be taught in an updated curricula.

Gene editing holds incredible possibilities for medicine, agriculture and the environment, but also creates fears about potential dangers. This new technology needs to be drawn out in formal discussion and ethical evaluation. In Europe, gene editing is a highly sensitive subject and people often mix up several concepts, which could be deleterious in the long term.

In line with the previous idea, researchers or research institutions should be obliged to communicate on mainstream media to explain what they are doing and how their work will impact modern science, in order to avoid defiance within the population. The EU can promote the importance of this topic in curricula and create initiatives to spread knowledge.

## 80. CREATE A FREE ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE FOR EU CITIZENS

*Nikolaos*

The EU should fund a publicly owned enterprise that hires scientists, programmers and software designers to create a free anti-virus software and distribute it to citizens of Europe, for free. Open-source products have the benefits of being collaborative and ensure that systems are robust and adaptable to new threats. By employing the best of the best, Europe could provide an important public service to its citizens. In addition, purchasing anti-virus can be costly, meaning some businesses and individuals may choose to work and live without important anti-virus software and leave their systems and staff vulnerable to new threats.

One basic step for the majority of internet users is downloading an anti-virus software on their device. Due to the online-scams and lack of information, many citizens feel overwhelmed when choosing trustworthy and quality software that will protect them.

By supporting and creating a publicly owned organisation, this would ensure an available democratically accountable and citizen-focused anti-virus system, which would provide immediate, tangible benefits for the security of European citizens.

## INTERVIEW

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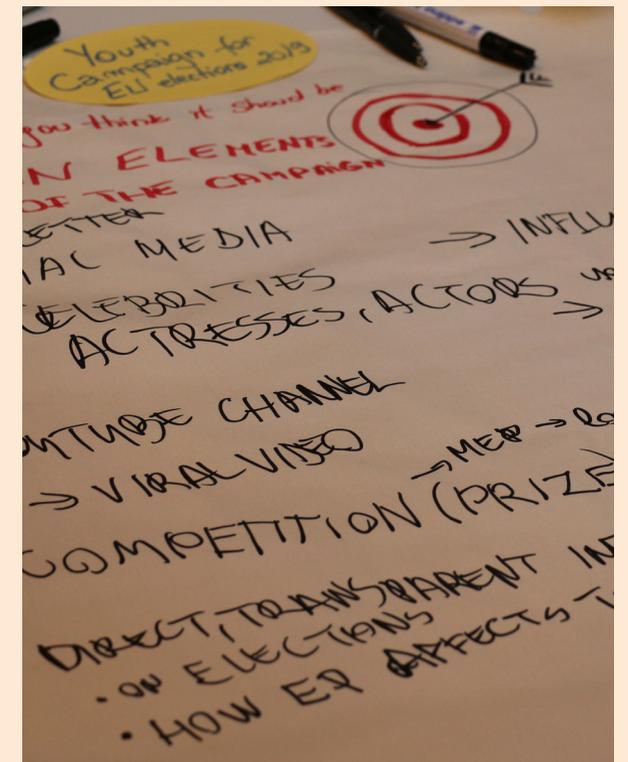
**What exactly can the EU do to tackle online abuse against women?**

*My one idea would be for online abuse to be formally recognised as a form of abuse of violence that women and girls face. We have events like the illumination of violence against women and Human Rights Day in December. Obviously, all violence against women is wrong but I think it'd be great if all political parties, all Member States and the EU institutions acknowledged that online abuse is a form of violence against women and girls.*

*I think the second thing the EU could do is definitely centered around transnational partnership. From my personal experience with online abuse, it was found that a lot of abusers were in America or in Austria but there weren't any resources within Interpol to work on this and I'm sure that those Member States have information about trolls in the UK or elsewhere so how are we sharing information around online crime?*

**Seyi Akiwowo,**  
Glitch!UK

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# YOUTH FORUM COMMENTARY

## SAFE AND DANGEROUS

Security is a major concern for many citizens. How can we bring a positive mind set to these discussions? Young people and youth organisations are recognised globally to be contributing to more peaceful and resilient societies. Europe, a continent of peace for several decades, can put young people at the heart of the solution. The European Youth Forum stands for youth, peace and security in Europe and the world.

Discussions at YO!Fest and the European Youth Event 2018 focused on issues related to Peace and Security within the context of a political crisis around European Union's (EU) external policies.

The existing political framework such as the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign And Security Policy is supporting the idea of societal resilience by deepening work on education, culture and youth to foster pluralism, coexistence and respect but without mainstreaming youth as actors and not only recipients.

The European Consensus on Development is providing a frame where young people are actors of change and development, and as such, are contributors to the 2030 Agenda, which is shifting from the discourses depicting youth as being victims of the contexts.

While the political agitation surrounding the asylum and external border management is continuing with fear instilled in the public opinion, the recent European Commission proposal on the next Multiannual Financial Framework on external issues is addressing youth in a limited capacity and mainly through the Erasmus lenses. However, the latest policy development on the field of youth peace and security are positives, the Council conclusions that provide Member States guidance to implement the resolution on the United Nations Security Council on Youth, Peace and Security adopted in 2015 and provide youth with the space to contribute to conflict prevention and resolution. It is essential that Member States to implement such conclusions build a secure, cohesive and harmonious society, putting youth at the core of a peaceful Europe.

Discussions at YO!Fest and the EYE 2018 provided a safe space for young people to organise and build upon their experiences on peace building and conflict prevention. Young people raised issues related to the current crises so called "migration crisis" along with raising obstacles preventing full inclusion of youth in the societies such as precarious working condition, socio-economic inequalities, educational structures and access to rights. To build more inclusive societies where everybody is welcome, it is crucial that we disconnect the migration debate from security concerns.

The activities at YO!Fest and the EYE 2018 challenged stereotypes and promoted intercultural dialogue, to highlight the need for building resilient societies, where every young people can fulfil their potential and enjoy their fundamental rights to the fullest extent, and the need to increase gender equality, and empowerment of youth and young women, with the goal of reaching their diversity.

Building from the ideas shared at YO!Fest and the EYE 2018, the European institutions and the Member States should work together to develop national strategies to implement the UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security, in a participatory way, where young people and youth organisations are involved in their design, implementation and evaluation.

It is key for European institutions to ensure that young people from diverse backgrounds are recognised and given adequate support to work on activities that prevent violent behaviours and discourses. This should be part of the funding provided by the Erasmus+ programme and its successor.



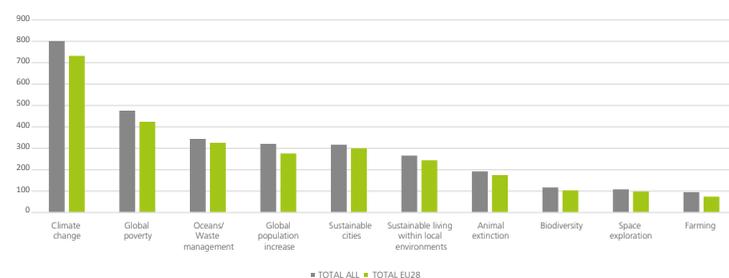
## 5. LOCAL AND GLOBAL: Protecting our planet

What can the European Union do to protect our planet? There is an urgency to tackle climate change, but many people still don't see it as a priority. The last Eurobarometer showed that, in the opinion of EU citizens', climate change is only the seventh most important issue currently facing the EU, while environment and energy supply ranked tenth and eleventh<sup>39</sup>. However, the danger is real, and we must act now if we want to avoid the destruction of our ecosystem and the endangerment of human existence itself. This includes not only the fight against climate change, but a path towards a more sustainable, healthy and fair lifestyle for all, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

The EYE 2018 agenda set a vision for these goals, from global to local, from Earth to space and everything in between. It made clear that to solve these problems, the inclusion and participation of all actors is necessary: global organisations, European institutions, nation states, regions and municipalities, companies, farms, research institutes, schools, NGOs and private citizens. Young participants take climate change and environment to heart; many have already adopted a more sustainable lifestyle than their parents or are willing to make the switch for themselves and their future generations.



LOCAL AND GLOBAL - TOP 3 IMPORTANT ISSUES



Instagram: @Mikeclaggphoto

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND FARMERS

The solutions to climate change are as diverse as the challenges themselves. Raising awareness about the problem is the very first step, but concrete actions should then follow. A turning point seemed to be reached when 195 countries adopted the Paris Agreement at the COP21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015. The agreement entered into force less than one year later. The countries who are party to the agreement committed themselves to limiting global temperature rises to well below two-degrees Celsius, and given the grave risks, to strive for 1.5 degrees Celsius in the near future. Fighting climate change becomes even more urgent in times of outspoken deniers. The EYE demonstrated that young people want to make their voice heard: climate change is a global challenge that does not respect national borders. Emissions and other consequences affect people everywhere.

*The pressure on political institutions increases with every centimetre that we lose from the polar ice caps. This section will present 20 ideas that include lessons from outer space, new diplomatic actions, and the impact of women in this battle. It discusses farming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and new laws that could help prevent deforestation of the rainforest in non-European countries. The EU managed to decrease greenhouse gas emissions by almost one quarter since 1990<sup>40</sup>. Due to recent technical innovations, less energy is being consumed and the use of carbon intensive fuels has reduced. But there is more to be done. Young people need to raise their voices, demand concrete actions, and come up with creative approaches to show that we must act now, before it's too late.*

#### 81. CREATE A EUROPEAN GREEN ROOFTOP PROGRAMME

Idea heard on panel

My idea would be for the EU to launch a campaign to promote the green use of rooftops in cities. This could include transforming current rooftops into public gardens, allowing their use for urban agriculture, or encouraging developers to create space on new buildings to maximise rooftop space.

Europe has cities of varying sizes, and much of the roof space is unused. However, much of this can be put to good use - a study in Bologna found that rooftop gardens could produce three-quarters of the vegetables consumed in them if all suitable, flat roof-space was used for urban agriculture<sup>41</sup>.

In addition to agricultural uses, rooftops could also provide communal gardens for residents and office workers to improve quality of life. This could be achieved by supporting a campaign and regulation to devote more roof space in buildings to green purposes.

#### 82. USE GREEN DIPLOMACY TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE CLIMATE IN MIND

Idea heard on panel

Another idea would be to promote climate diplomacy. This is a form of targeted foreign policy, to engage third country governments and non-governmental actors globally, in a collective will to produce fewer emissions and support climate-resilient development - bolstering the fight against climate change. This approach seeks to harmonise the interests of states while emphasising the importance of human welfare, the state of the environment and preserving planet earth. Climate diplomacy should be included in the Sustainable Agenda, in order to raise awareness at the political level and stress the necessity to react to climate change on every possible platform<sup>42</sup>.

When thinking about the solutions to climate change, we tend to limit the scope to the work of NGOs and activists. However, the Paris Agreement is a clear example where politicians can take important steps towards an environment-conscious political sphere. Despite this, young people still think there is more to be done. On the one hand, we are asking more from our decision makers, and on the other, we are asking more young people to become more involved and start raising awareness within communities and activist groups.

As Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary-General Envoy for Youth, said: "If all diplomatic exchanges also had that target of being eco-friendlier, imagine the impact that this would have on climate change."

<sup>40</sup> European Environment Agency, "EU reports lowest greenhouse gas emissions on record", <https://www.eea.europa.eu/media/newsreleases/greenhouse-gas-inventory-report-press-release> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>41</sup> European Commission, "Rooftop gardens could grow three quarters of city's vegetables", [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/rooftop\\_gardens\\_could\\_grow\\_three\\_quarters\\_of\\_citys\\_vegetables\\_409na2\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/rooftop_gardens_could_grow_three_quarters_of_citys_vegetables_409na2_en.pdf) (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>42</sup> Joint AFET/ENVI meeting - Climate Diplomacy <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/it/envi/home.html> (Accessed June 2018)

### 83. FEMINISM IN THE BATTLE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Kristy

The EU should promote measures both externally and internally which give women greater power when environmental crises arise - such as helping developing countries where agriculture is predominant become less reliant on a female workforce<sup>43</sup>. Internally, the EU can also make sure that women are adequately represented and given equal attention in this matter - for example by ensuring that 50% of the leading candidates of European political parties are female.

Following a report by the UN, we know that climate change is not only a crisis of the environment; it further accentuates inequalities. Young people perceive the battle against climate change as one that includes feminism, and not without reason: there is evidence to suggest that women are more likely to be affected by climate change. Studies by the UN have shown that approximately 80% of individuals displaced by climate change are females<sup>44</sup>. This phenomenon is taking place on a global scale and the consequence ultimately makes it harder for women to recover from catastrophes that destroy infrastructure, living- and working spaces.

We also see an intergenerational approach; women take care of their children, of parents, of older people, and it is reflected in their expenditure. If we focus on the links between climate justice and gender justice, this might be one of the first effective approaches to finding a sustainable, long-lasting solution which would give women the same economic power as men. As a global political institution, the EU is mighty enough to act on this and make global justice happen.

Feminism is undoubtedly an important tool in tackling global inequality and should be used to mitigate the effects of climate change.

### 84. SUPPORT TO YOUNG FARMERS AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Idea heard on panel

To tackle the issue of food scarcity, the EU can take action with three steps.

Firstly, farms should be provided with the infrastructure to use new technologies, in order to be able to produce enough food for Europe. Basic devices, such as broadband and GPS for planting, raising and harvesting crops, should be installed in rural areas.

Secondly, the European Union could provide incentives to citizens to become a farmer, for example, through start-up funds or a payment towards young farmers who wish to start their own agricultural business. This would help make new technologies affordable to large and small-scale farms.

Thirdly, new technologies should be incorporated into the curricula of agricultural education institutions. This would help raise awareness about efficient alternatives and provide young farmers with the required knowledge to use the most suitable technology.

Overall, the European model for farming and agriculture is very efficient and diverse. Europe is able to produce a large amount of food in a comparatively small area. Because of this, Europe can be an example for other regions in the world. Moreover, young people tend to think of the farm of the future as being technological, but also very diverse, taking into account organic production, sustainability and animal welfare.

### 85. FEWER MEAT SUBSIDIES

Noémie & Emily

Europe should take the lead in promoting plant-based diets, by shifting agricultural subsidies away from intensive livestock farming, to fruit and/or vegetable production. This step can be supported by increasing EU funding for research on the ecological production of plant-rich options and by imposing stricter limits on air, soil and water pollution, animal welfare and on the usage of antibiotics.

A large problem is the overconsumption of meat, which is unsustainable in many ways. Agriculture causes 10% of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions and much of our effort goes into meat production<sup>45</sup>. Land is increasingly used to produce feeding plants for animals rather than vegetables for humans to eat. Consuming the crops directly instead of using them to feed animals would decrease the amount of greenhouse-gas emissions in the atmosphere and liberate land for other purposes. Besides the gases which are emitted into the air in factory farms, animal waste is becoming too much for the land to absorb due to its large quantity, causing irreversible damage to the soil. Reducing meat consumption is one solution to minimising the impact of animal farming on our environment and producing more food, while ensuring a more diversified eco-system.

This trend is not only present in Europe, but also outside its borders. Rainforests and other biodiverse ecosystems are being undermined by the consequences of diets that enjoy meat, dairy and soy, that feed our livestock. Most deforestation for the benefit of keeping livestock occurs in tropical regions. For example, in Amazonia, 80% of deforested land has been converted to pasture for grazing animals<sup>46</sup>. Needless to say that the rainforest, one of the most important ecosystems on this planet, our green lung which has to be protected, is being destroyed.

### 86. PROMOTE BIODIVERSITY AND HIGHER STANDARDS FOR FARM ANIMALS

Marlene

The EU should set rules for higher biodiversity thereby discouraging farmers from creating monocultures.

The current structure of our countryside presents a serious problem. Enormous monocultures offer few habitats for wildlife and endanger biodiversity. Diversification in the countryside has many benefits: it protects our ground from erosion, brings back biodiversity and ensures its sustainability to name a few.

The EU should promote stronger cooperation with local conservationists and more organic farming to create a more sustainable environment and way of living. Such farms should also guarantee higher standards of animal welfare, e.g. outdoor areas for animals.

This would be an important step to sustainable agriculture as well as the protection of animal welfare, biodiversity and wildlife.



## INTERVIEW

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**What are the environmental issues that you saw on your missions to visit EU projects?**

*I saw a lot of farmers. In Zimbabwe, for example, the economy is based on agriculture and climate change is destroying the crops. Farmers are taught new agricultural methods because they follow traditional methods and do not know how to plant, they do it randomly. Climate change is affecting farmers because they cannot afford to sell crops, their yield is just enough for themselves and their families. If the crop is completely destroyed under the climatic conditions, there is no food for them. Many EU projects are trying to teach them how to prevent such cases or adjust with the weather. In Mauritius, I also saw a project called "Eco-school", where they empowered young children to avoid plastic and care for the environment. If children do not start taking care now, we are all going to be covered in plastic in the next decade!*

**Ellie Tomassi,**

Faces2Hearts blogger in east and southern Africa

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<sup>43</sup> World Farmers Organisation, "The Role of Rural Women in Agriculture", <http://www.wfo-oma.org/women-in-agriculture/articles/the-role-of-rural-women-in-agriculture.html> (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>44</sup> BBC, "Climate change impacts women more than men", <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-43294221> (Accessed July 2018); UN, "Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change", [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate\\_change/downloads/Women\\_and\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Factsheet.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf) (June 2018)

<sup>45</sup> Eurostat, "Agriculture - greenhouse gas emission statistics", [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Agriculture\\_-\\_greenhouse\\_gas\\_emission\\_statistics&oldid=367927](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Agriculture_-_greenhouse_gas_emission_statistics&oldid=367927) (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>46</sup> Yale, "Cattle Ranching in the Amazon Region" <https://globalforestatlas.yale.edu/amazon/land-use/cattle-ranching> (Accessed July 2018)

## RENEWABLE ENERGIES, SMART CITIES AND SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**Should the European Union become a green energy superpower? Energy costs take their toll on European industry and households. So how can we create a sustainable transition in the energy sector? We need to stop consuming polluting fossil fuels and greenhouse gases and seek to develop clean renewable energies.**

The EU wants 32% of its energy consumption to come from renewable sources by 2030, a new target included in the renewable energy directive, as part of its clean energy package<sup>47</sup>. A good transition should also create new jobs, to make up for the ones lost in declining industries. The problem is that renewable energies are still costly and current technologies don't yet guarantee the full coverage of worldwide energy needs. Some smart cities and urban areas that use data to improve efficiency and resource management, however, are already leading by example, helping us to imagine a different life. For this reason, since 2010, the European Commission has awarded some cities the title of "European Green Capitals".

However, at the EYE 2018, it was found that the key to success is making "green" technologies profitable for industries. We need to avoid a clash between the environment and industry. Finding eco-sustainable solutions does not mean destroying industry, but instead, building a sustainable industry. Young people are capable and want to lead the change, but they need to be empowered in order to do this.



## 87. SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE HOUSEHOLDS TO SELL ENERGY BACK TO THE GRID

*Claire & heard on panel*

The EU should support clean energy, such as wind and solar sources or the use of electric cars. Solar panels, for instance, should become more common among European households. Everyone could produce energy for their own house and if there is a surplus, it could be sold back to the energy companies. This practice already happens in some EU Member States like Germany, France and Italy.

The EU could allocate subsidies to similar practices in the next multiannual financial framework or alternatively lower taxation to reward the use of solar panels. There could be subsidies for electric cars, which need to be more widespread on the market and more affordable than they are now.



## 89. PROMOTE A EUROPEAN ENERGY COMMUNITY AND MARKET

*Idea heard in workshop*

Once clean energy is produced in sufficient quantities, it should be able to circulate between Member States. The EU should promote more connections between Member States in the form of a clean energy grid. An excess of clean energy produced in a Member State, such as wind or solar energy, could be exported to another, in a truly European energy market.

This would need greater cohesion and a closer union, to include the energy sector. The advantages would be the creation of a more efficient energy market at the European level and a decrease in energy expenses for businesses and households of EU citizens. It should include the ability to store energy efficiently.

Grids are an important way to provide secure energy to people and also offer a framework in which to pursue more sustainable energy and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

## 88. SET A TIMETABLE FOR ENDING THE USE OF FOSSIL FUELS AND LIMIT JOB LOSSES

*Idea heard in workshop*

The EU should prepare a plan with fixed dates to end the use of fossil fuels and coal mining. Some actions, for example, would include a progressive ending of the use of fossil fuels; sanctions on companies that don't respect the rules; a carbon tax (as is present already in some countries); and a tax on buying diesel cars.

It is necessary to change our energy consumption habits: instead of consuming fossil fuels, we should use renewable energy. EU dependency on gas and fossil fuels is not sustainable in the long run. The question is not whether cutting greenhouse gas emissions is the way forward, but when it will happen. This structural change could take us to a new industrial revolution.

The EU should also help in the creation of new jobs. In the transition away from the coal industry, often the ones who lose their jobs are not necessarily re-employed in new green jobs. There is a social duty on the EU and Member States to make this transition possible and at the same time protect workers; a timetable towards this would facilitate an organised, structured change.

## 90. EMPOWER EUROPEAN-SCALE INFRASTRUCTURES AND A COMMON POLICY FOR TRANSPORT

*Idea heard on panel*

A great source of traffic pollution is the large use of private means of transport and short-haul flights<sup>48</sup>. One way to reduce the problem is to empower European infrastructures, for example, high-speed trains as affordable substitutes or better coordinate private freight transport across Europe.

In this sense, it is necessary to regulate and coordinate traffic by air, rail or road. Such harmonisation would contribute to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. It could encourage, for example, coordination between transport companies to use the volume in trucks in an optimal way in order to save fuel. It would also provide European common standards for safety.

Of course, this would require funding and political cohesion, but it would provide EU citizens with cleaner, more efficient transport.



## FOOD WASTE, NO PLASTIC, CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION: CHANGING CONSUMER HABITS

Almost one-third of all food produced is lost or wasted each year, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)<sup>51</sup>. Around 88 million tons of food are wasted annually in the EU, with associated costs estimated at €43 billion<sup>52</sup>. In the EU, households are the number-one producers of food waste, while agriculture is second. Besides being unethical, food waste has a negative impact on the environment and economy because water and energy have already been wasted producing the food that is then discarded. Most food waste is unnecessary and caused by bad storage methods, exacerbated by a lack of quality education on food waste.

At the same time, Europeans produce 25 million tons of plastic waste annually<sup>53</sup>. Plastic is polluting our rivers, oceans and soils. The UN is running a campaign for clean seas and the European Union has this year launched a European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, with the aim of transforming the way plastic products are produced, used and recycled, and eliminating major sources of marine litter. In addition, access to clean water and sanitation is a human right and the risks linked to its shortage range from expanding deserts, to deadly diseases and conflicts.

Young people are asking for a change of mentality, starting from specific education on sustainability in schools and new rules to shape our lifestyle and save the environment.

## 94. PROMOTE A PLASTIC-FREE APPROACH

Idea heard on panel

The EU should seek to fund research into alternative materials to make plastic. For example, there is a kind of plastic made out of mushrooms, while bamboo can also be used for creating reusable utensils, which would help dis-incentivise the current, widespread use of plastic.

At its core, the issue of eliminating plastic pollution includes producing and using less plastic to the point of reaching a plastic-free lifestyle. While the complete and immediate elimination of plastic might seem impossible, it is feasible to reduce our use, recycle and find alternative eco-friendly sources to produce it.

Also, the EU could make it mandatory to label products, specifying if a product contains plastic, in which quantity and what kind of plastic - for example if the plastic is re-used or if it has been produced from sources which are less polluting. Another way to promote plastic-free products is to provide stores with plastic-free gadgets to give away, for everyday life.

## 95. FUND THE REMOVAL OF PLASTIC FROM THE OCEANS

Idea heard in debate

The amount of plastic in the world's ocean is estimated at 150 million tons. That is roughly one-fifth of the weight of all the fish in our oceans<sup>54</sup>. But how can we clean something as vast as an ocean? Speaking to Marcella Hansch, the architect and founder of Pacific Garbage Screening, it is to develop a non-polluting platform that could be installed in rivers and oceans to filter out plastics.

In the oceans, such a platform calms down the currents passing through a canal system and as a result, the plastic items, being lighter, slowly rise to the surface. There would be no use of nets, so fish can pass through the platform without danger.

The EU should fund joint teams and projects of engineers, architects and scientists to develop new solutions to clean our seas and take inspiration from projects such as these.

## 96. A NEW CULTURE FOR FOOD STORES AND TAXATION

Valeria

The EU should incentivise plastic-free stores, where all the items sold are non-plastic, while taking steps to support stores that implement policies to use less plastic. For example, the EU could call on supermarkets to create aisles of plastic-free products and ban plastic bags, and instead only provide cotton or paper bags for customers. It could then make plastic more expensive. For instance, it could encourage supermarkets to give money back to customers who bring back the plastic to the store to be recycled or reused. This policy is already in place in parts of Scandinavia, where a bottle is in essence "rented" with the deposit being repaid on return of the empty plastic bottle.

Food stores and supermarkets are vital in shaping the habits of consumers. Moreover, a lot of the products that we buy at the supermarket, including vegetables and fruits, are packed in plastic. In some cases, plastic bags are still available for single use.

Another key idea concerns taxation: taxes should be higher for supermarkets and companies that use more plastic, and less if they reduce plastic. In addition, those companies that still use plastics, or see it as a crucial part of their business model, could be incentivised to support projects that attempt to clean the oceans.

For those who are leading by example, there could be another kind of reward offered, such as a quality certificate or a star rating system for sustainable businesses, along with free training for staff on how to be even more eco-friendly. In this way food stores, supermarkets and companies become role models, taking their share of the responsibility and helping to educate people.

## 97. MAKE REDUCING FOOD WASTE LEGAL AND MANDATORY

Idea heard on panel

The EU should make it legal and mandatory for supermarkets to find ways to ensure that food waste is reduced.

Food close to its expiry date is often thrown away in supermarkets. However, in many cases the expiry date doesn't correspond to the actual date the food becomes inedible. Furthermore legislation in the EU Member States differs; the EU needs to harmonise these rules.

Legislation should also seek to ensure that food close to expiry is placed visibly on shelves, to take at a discounted price or, if expired, given away for free. For example, in France there is already a law that imposes rules on large stores to donate unsold food approaching its best-before date to charities and food banks<sup>55</sup>. The ideal situation is to avoid food waste entirely and make expired food available for free for people, and charities. In this way, it is possible to fight not only food waste, but also hunger and poverty.



<sup>51</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, "Key facts on food loss and waste you should know!", <http://www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>52</sup> European Commission, "Food Waste", [https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food\\_waste\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food_waste_en) (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>53</sup> European Commission, "Plastic Waste: a European strategy to protect the planet, defend our citizens and empower our industries", [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-18-5\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-5_en.htm) (Accessed July 2018)

<sup>54</sup> Pacific Garbage Screening, "Plastic in the oceans", <https://pacific-garbage-screening.de/en/problem/> (Accessed June 2018)

<sup>55</sup> The Guardian, "French law forbids food waste by supermarkets", <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/04/french-law-forbids-food-waste-by-supermarkets> (Accessed July 2018)



### 98. SIMPLIFY THE PROCESS FOR FOOD DONATIONS

*Idea heard on panel*

The EU could encourage new ways to share food. As the concept of a "sharing economy" becomes more widespread, it is evident that the financial benefits of this phenomenon are usually limited to those who have properties or cars. In order to create a truly "shared" economy, the EU should seek to make everyday items "shareable".

For example, there is an app called Too Good to Go now active in eight countries, which rescues leftover food by offering a platform between those who have a food surplus and those in search of good food for a good price.

The EU should support these initiatives from the outside and create a digital market for food waste, linking farmers, restaurants, food stores and consumers, where anyone with food surpluses can sign up to have their "waste" benefit someone who needs it.

### 99. SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

*Dina & Giusy*

Sustainability is an important concept for the future, and education is key as it is easier to internalise good practices at a younger age. This counts too for education on how to avoid food waste and plastic. The EU could help ensure that such topics are discussed at school. Schools could offer lessons where children cook and clean together, learn about the value of food, the negative consequences of not caring about the environment, embrace healthy lifestyles, and improve food management skills.

Sponsors could be involved to support such educational initiatives, for example, they could provide reusable bottles in schools. As part of this education, the EU could promote synergies between schools and national parks, in the form of summer camps to discover the environment.

Such initiatives could naturally instill in children respect for nature and the protection of animals that they will carry into adulthood.

### 100. DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF USING RAINWATER FOR PLUMBING

*Idea heard on panel*

The EU could support a scheme to harvest rainwater to use in toilets or for watering garden plants at a domestic level. This could include incentivising people to use water tanks which collect rainwater to use in their households.

Water should be a common good that is readily accessible to everyone, at fair conditions. Indeed, in 2010, the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognised the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realisation of all human rights. Currently, water sources are dwindling, and water prices can be expensive. This idea would help reduce the unnecessary waste of clean drinking water.



## INTERVIEW



### How can research from space help us to protect our planet?

*Research from space can help us to better understand our planet and how to protect it. Also, you don't see borders from space. You see a full entity, no nations. You see a planet in equilibrium, protected only by the tiny line of the atmosphere. You see the devastation that we are producing on our earth, too. But the earth is not going to die, she will manage. It is we who are going to disappear if we keep going like this.*

**Paolo Nespoli,**

Astronaut, European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA

Speaker at the panel "A spacewalker's life"



# YOUTH FORUM COMMENTARY

## LOCAL AND GLOBAL

We all know there is no planet B. But this cannot be limited to what our planet can cope with physically, we need to take a look at the bigger picture and shift our daily lives and actions towards sustainable development. There is no planet B with high youth unemployment, with rising inequalities, with exclusion of young people from decision making. Europe needs to take the lead in changing practices and situations contributing to inequalities and putting our planet in danger. The European Youth Forum wants to transform planet A and shift our systems towards sustainable development.

"There are no jobs on a dead planet." Such was the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) slogan for the Paris Climate Change Summit in December 2015. For ITUC this slogan demonstrates the urgency of tackling climate change and working on issues of environmental sustainability. For the European Youth Forum, this necessity of protecting the planet stems not only from questions from youth unemployment, but from concern for the rights and the wellbeing of this and future generations of young people. There is no youth participation, no democracy and no Europe on a dead planet either.

At the YO!Fest and European Youth Event 2018, there was a recognition that protecting our planet is an urgent and vital necessity to protect our future and that of generations to come. Sustainable development requires a re-evaluation of our relationship with nature. Discussions centred on addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, unsustainable consumption and the over-use of natural resources. Discussions also recognised that addressing environmental issues cannot be done in isolation from economic and social policies. On the one hand, a just transition to an economy not centred around fossil fuels requires social and economic issues to be considered side-by-side with environmental concerns, to ensure that people's opportunities for work and wellbeing are protected; on the other hand, the environmental impact of economic and social policies must not be outsourced or kicked down the road for future generations to deal with, to ensure the planet does not fall victim to our search for progress and opportunity. Several events and sessions within this theme focused on the internationally-agreed Sustainable Development Goals, recognising that protecting our planet is an integral part of a broader movement to set the world on a more sustainable path and to achieve peace, prosperity and wellbeing for all.

The European Union needs to be ambitious about stepping up action to protect our planet as part of efforts to work towards truly sustainable development. For that, the EU must focus on the following:

The EU played a leading role in the negotiations for the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015. Since that time, it has failed to play a leading role in the implementation of the agenda within the EU in a comprehensive and ambitious way. Taking forwards the

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at European level would provide the EU with an opportunity to address the challenges that Europe is facing in an integrated manner. A systems thinking approach is required, to encourage policy makers to look at underlying patterns and address the root causes of problems. The interlinkages between different policy areas and the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development must be taken on board by the EU to make the wellbeing of people and planet the ultimate goal of economic and social systems. The EU must put in place a comprehensive and ambitious sustainable development strategy to achieve this. Recognising interlinkages is also necessary in order to tackle multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, recognising the links between the impacts of climate change and women's rights, for example. Sustainable development can only be achieved through a rights-based approach and through ensuring that all sustainable development targets are met for all groups in society.

### Shifting away from unsustainable practices

Current and previous generations have put young people's future at risk through unsustainable economic and financial practices that have little regard for future consequences. Unsustainable consumption, production, trade and investment patterns are jeopardising the future of people and planet. In our current consumerist culture, it is not easy for everyone to live a sustainable lifestyle. The EU has a particular duty to tackle these and take urgent action to move towards equality in access to and consumption of



resources, within the carrying capacity of the planet. Discussions at the YO!Fest and EYE focused on addressing food waste and unsustainable food consumption, plastic waste, fewer subsidies for meat and a fixed timetable for ending fossil fuel extraction.

### Promoting and prioritising more sustainable practices

While putting in place measures to end unsustainable practices in extraction, production and consumption, the EU should also prioritise the promotion of and support to more sustainable practices. Young people and their organisations have a strong role to play in putting in place and promoting more sustainable and environmentally friendly practices, including through communicating about the intrinsic value of nature and the benefits of enough. Strong action by the EU and European governments is also required. The EU should support sustainable development education in formal and non-formal education, recognising the work that youth organisations are already doing to promote more sustainable lifestyles. Institutions and governments should also ensure that everyone has access to sustainable practices such as environmentally friendly transportation, by supporting and promoting sustainable and affordable public transport systems, for example.

### Promoting local and global responses

Sustainable development requires action at all levels, from local to global, as well as a recognition that actions at one level will have an impact on actions at other levels. At local level, young people are often taking the lead in changes that help set the world on a more sustainable path. Youth organisations are amplifying youth voices to collectively push for sustainable development at local, national, regional and global level. Support for these changes and space for these voices to be heard are crucial on the path towards sustainable development.

It is clear that today's economic, social and political system does not work for our planet or for people, particularly young people. Working towards transformational change, towards a system that puts the needs of the planet and the rights of people, rather than purely economic interests, at its heart has never been more necessary.

## Meet the authors



The European Youth Press (EYP), a 60.000 member strong umbrella organisation that gathers journalists and media makers across Europe, organises numerous events for young journalists, promotes the role of youth media and freedom of press in Europe and takes part in discussions about journalistic education standards and media policies throughout the European Union. The EYP put together a team of ten EYE reporters to draft a comprehensive report of the EYE.

Under the leadership of two chief editors, a team of eight generalists and specialist reporters from across Europe were brought together to collect, elaborate and describe the major thoughts and ideas from the EYE. This report contains the 100 most constructive of these ideas. The European Youth Forum contributed a commentary of two pages on each of the five themes.



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