European youth event

Draft Programme

Strasbourg
29-30 May 2020

#EYE2020

European Parliament

This is the first draft of the EYE2020 programme, featuring 35 activities organised by the Youth Outreach Unit of the European Parliament. These are complemented by activities organised by other units within the European Parliament, EYE partners, youth organisations and participants. The final version of the programme will be released in March 2020 and will include around 200 activities.

Contribute to the programme!
The call for proposals for other activities is open until 17 November 2019.
Visit our website (www.eye2020.eu) for more information.

Each activity has one or more thematic tag and format tag. These are the format tags:

#GetToSpeakUp
shape your recommendations for decision makers

#GetInspired
discover a new passion or dig deep into a subject

#GetItDone
turn your bold idea into a concrete action plan

#GetMoving
move and do some sports

#GetConnected
get together and network with other participants, speakers and decision makers

#GetSkilled
learn or train new skills

#GetArtistic
attend performances and take part in artistic activities

#GetInstitutional
get to know the European Parliament in a new way

Access to health:
A right for all or a privilege for the few?

More than 1.2 million people in the EU die prematurely every year. The reason these deaths are not prevented is not for lack of medical knowledge, but rather issues to do with accessible care options. What do you do when you get sick? Well, the answer to that depends to some extent on who you are and what type of healthcare you have access to. If you have private health insurance, the quality, price and waiting time might be different than if you had public insurance. Often the richer or more educated a person is, the better the options available to them. Primary care, in particular, could be improved – but what about other, preventive measures, such as providing every EU citizen with access to free sports facilities, or better education on what a healthy and well-balanced diet looks like? Should these measures be subsidised by health systems or reimbursed upon medical prescription? What about care for undocumented migrants? Should we deny access to them until they get their papers sorted? Women and LGBTI persons also have radically different experiences with the healthcare system depending on where they are. Should reproductive health rights across the EU member states be standardised? Is it not time to put the human being at the centre: shouldn't we all be able to see an expert, who is willing and able to help us, when we need one?

#HEALTH; #RIGHTS; #SOCIETY

#GetToSpeakUp

AI as a force for good:
Making sure technology serves the people

Believe it or not: Artificial Intelligence is as old as our use of computers. However, whereas the impacts of computers on our daily lives are pretty noticeable - it's not always clear where AI comes in. Considering that recent research developments suggest that we are on the brink of an AI breakthrough, now might be a good time to figure out what Artificial Intelligence is. What do scientists and tech experts mean when they say that AI might be as disruptive and innovative as electricity? In what areas will we see the biggest impacts and how can we use AI as a force for good? Could AI use lead to more effective and efficient humanitarian responses, healthcare, or environmentally sustainable farming methods? How do we make sure the AI Revolution will be equitable? What is the EU's role in this? Or the role of moral philosophers? How can we wisely direct technological advancements? Who can provide a strong ethical voice in the AI debate to ensure responsible AI use? Must Europe become an AI research and development giant, like the US and China, in order to lay claim to any ethical authority?

#INNOVATION; #SOCIAL; #SOCIETY

#GetToSpeakUp

Brexit:
Where do we go from here?

The relationship between the UK and the EU has always been a complex one. Perhaps the tension was unavoidable as the UK's application to join the European Communities was successful only with their third attempt. Even after the UK joined, their membership constantly seemed up in the air. Yet a decisive majority voted to remain in a first referendum in 1975. However, it seemed this first referendum did not fully resolve the question of 'should we stay, or should we go?'. Throughout the years, UK membership appeared to be defined by its half-in, half-out status, with the UK successfully negotiating several opt-outs of the European treaties. In 2016, the renewed question of 'in or out' was answered by out, and the UK started the procedure to leave the European Union. So, what happened between 1975 and 2016? What internal attitudes in both the UK population and UK political parties contributed to that shift? Was UK membership doomed to fail? And what will Brexit mean for the rest of the EU? How could it influence EU integration dynamics? Does it open the European political project to constitutional renegotiation? Will it pull the EU towards more flexibility and more membership options or will it lead to an ever-closer union? What lessons will the EU and its members draw from Brexit?

#DEMOCRACY; #WORLD

#GetInspired

#GetToSpeakUp

Budgeting:
Put your money where your mouth is?

We might have a lot of money compared to other parts of the world, but even our budgets are finite. Every cent and every euro spent on one project becomes unavailable from our collective piggy bank, so how do we decide where our priorities should lie? What should the EU budget and our national budgets be spent on? What areas should we invest in? Should we subsidize agriculture to ensure European food security? Should we get creative and find new ways to invest heavily in young people? Or do we need to more seriously consider our rapidly aging population, and rethink pension plans and healthcare? And what about climate change? Should we invest in climate research, or should the climate be at the core of all our budgetary decisions? And what can we do about research and technology - maybe investing heavily in those areas could resolve the roots of all our problems? Do we need to start thinking more radically, like by considering Universal Basic Income? How do we allocate funds for a future we can't predict? Or do we create our own futures by choosing where and how to spend our money? How do we balance short-term needs and goals with long-term investments? Should we stop spending so much money altogether, but focus on saving it and think about austerity measures? We'll never have enough money to invest in every good idea, so where should our priorities lie?

#ECONOMY

#GetToSpeakUp

Climate emergency:
Can we still save ourselves?

The climate is changing and we're all starting to feel it: extreme weather events, climate refugees, food insecurity, political unrest, melting of icecaps and permafrost, loss of biodiversity, rising sea levels... Climate change is real and it's everywhere! If we don't act soon, we're on track to see a 3-4°C increase in global temperatures in no time. What will the consequences be? Which world events are already results of climate change? How can we keep further changes under control while also limiting their effects? Is it possible to reverse the warming that has already happened? In this worldwide challenge, what is our individual role and what part should policymakers play? How do we make sure fighting climate change is equitable, as the world's richest have historically contributed most to the problem, while the world's poorest feel the greatest effects? How can we transform society to ensure we fight climate change? What is the role of technology and of science, such as geo-engineering? How optimistic can we really be in saving the world as a hospitable home for us humans?

#ENVIRONMENT;
#SUSTAINABILITY; #WORLD

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

Come together:
Meet, exchange and network
with like-minded people

Imagine each and every one of us is locked in a cubicle, working alone, without any contact with the world out there. Imagine an infinity of cubicles, and an infinity of persons, each re-inventing the wheel without having a clue that the person next door just did the same. Would you like to meet more people with the same concerns as you but from other European countries? Are you afraid that your projects do not have visibility at European level? Do you have a great initiative that could be inspiring for other countries or regions? You have an idea, but you're not sure what to do with it next? Do you need partners for a project? Would you like to find out if young people from other countries are experiencing the same issues and facing similar obstacles? Come and talk with like-minded individuals and organisations - you never know; you might meet the Batman to your Robin, the Lennon to your McCartney, the Holmes to your Watson, or simply someone who will listen to your visionary idea for a few minutes!

#PARTICIPATION

#GetConnected

Dealing with news:
How do we know what is true in this chaotic mediascape?

Where do you get your news? It seems like it's more and more difficult to access trustworthy news sources, while also being harder and harder to accurately fight algorithmic bias and discern what fake news is. Newspapers across the world are struggling to stay afloat resulting in mass layoffs of trained journalists, as well as paywalls. At the same time, it's easier than ever to post 'an opinion piece' and share it via social media - sometimes gaining thousands of shares. We are in the age of news quantity over quality. In this changed media landscape, how do we know whether what we read is real or not? Is there any place left for traditional journalists? Where do you think the future of journalism is going? How can we ensure everyone is able to access fact-checked news? As we are able to instantly share anything online - does this make Facebook and Twitter the newspapers of 2020? Or, are people realising the extent to which their newsfeed is biased and are thus turning back to more reliable sources? Should the responsibility to decide what news is fake, offensive or deserving of censorship be left in the hands of tech giants content moderators? And further, is access to news enough? Or do we also have to teach young people how to decode information correctly, considering that fake news can distort peoples belief even after being debunked? What would that media literacy education look like? How do we know what is real or true anymore?

#DEMOCRACY; #DIGITAL; #SOCIETY; #EDUCATION

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

Digital addiction:
Are screens making us sick?

The spread of the internet and digital devices have fundamentally transformed our societies. On a personal level, many of these social transformations have been positive: we can contact almost anyone at any time of the day, we can easily share our holiday pictures, we can look up any question we don't immediately know the answer to, we can check the weather before leaving the house to help us decide whether we really need that jacket or not. But, be honest: how many times have you picked up your phone in the last hour? And, what happens when you post a picture and no one likes it, even after refreshing your feed over and over again? Or when you hear the phantom sound of getting a message, and there's nothing in your DMs? Where does your account end and you begin? This side to the internet can cause loneliness, social isolation and damages our self-esteem. Our phones can cause anxiety, but not having our phones with us can too. How do we know if our relationship with tech has become problematic, or even somewhat addictive? Are measures such as a 'Digitial Detox' effective, or are they just a plaster on a bleeding wound? As our world is becoming steadily more vulnerable to, and dependent on, new technologies, would it even be possible – or useful – to re-learn to survive without them? Or should we rather reframe our relationship with the tools we have to encourage more responsible use? What would responsible use of digital technologies even look like – how could they best add value to our lives?

#SOCIETY; #DIGITAL; #HEALTH; #INNOVATION

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

E-citizenship:
How to get heard in 2020?

What makes YOU an active citizen? Are you standing up for a cause you believe in, taking part in local consultations, sharing online petitions, volunteering or staying up-to-date about what's going on around you? Or if you're old enough, are you voting in elections, convincing your friends to vote, joining political parties or even running for public office yourself? But what's the impact of these actions, and is that impact enough? What can you do to really make the world a better place? It's not always easy to participate. You might feel like there aren't enough opportunities out there for you, or that the spaces in which you could meaningfully contribute are hard to understand or hard to access. These barriers affect us all and are sadly limiting youth participation in public spaces. But hooray digital democracy is on the rise, and we all know young people love digital things! What do you think about electronic democracy? Do you think it would make participating in public life more accessible? What kind of digital tools or participatory mechanisms might bring young people closer to their public institutions? And how could we build trust in these mechanisms? What kind of e-citizenship would you be interested in?

#DIGITAL; #PARTICIPATION; #DEMOCRACY; #INNOVATION; #SOCIETY

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

EU-Africa:
A mutually beneficial partnership?

The EU is making efforts, as shown in its Africa-EU Strategy, to reshape the two continents' relations beyond the old prism of development aid - but there is still a long way to go. The continents' historical relationship has been marked by various forms of colonialism, and in 2020 we must ask ourselves: have EU member states truly managed to change the way they perceive African nations? How can we build a mutually beneficial partnership, while leaving imperialistic attitudes in the rear-view mirror? Is the African Union strong enough to be the African interlocutor in an EU-African partnership on genuine equal footing? Will the EU manage to go beyond short-term migration responses and rather concentrate on long-term actions to support socioeconomic, environmental, and political stability? How can the EU and Africa work together to foster sustainable growth and promote transformative, community driven development strategies? How could the EU best support Africa's economic growth through skill exchanges, entrepreneurship, good governance and digital infrastructure? How can we foster professional collaboration between young Europeans and young Africans? Are current bilateral trade agreements the best ones for the African continent to develop its own economies? What about the proposed continent-to-continent trade agreement? How can the EU help African countries develop their own agricultural value chain and produce high quality processed food for internal use and exports? Can African countries provide a good environment for EU companies to invest? How can Africa and the EU transform illegal and unsafe migration into an opportunity for both continents' economies and societies?

#WORLD; #ECONOMY; #MIGRATION; #DEMOCRACY

#GetToSpeakUp

Europe and the US:
What role for young people?

What is going on between the European Union and the United States? After decades of a close and productive relationship, things seem to be unravelling: threats of a trade war, diplomatic spats and the focus on what divides us, rather than on what unites us. How do young Europeans and Americans feel about this wall being built between us? Is it necessary to try and salvage the close relationship, or are we ok to grow apart? In any case, how do we make sure young people's voices are heard in these turbulent times? And how can we learn strategies of youth mobilisation, political activism and increasing voter turnout from each other? What did we learn from the European Elections in 2019 and how can we translate those lessons to the context of the upcoming 2020 US presidential elections? Let's connect with American students in Washington, DC and bounce some ideas off each other!

#WORLD; #PARTICIPATION

#GetConnected

#GetInspired

#GetItDone

Food of tomorrow:
Zero hunger and a healthy diet for all?

We produce enough food to feed 10 billion people, so why are hunger, malnutrition and lack of access to quality food still leading causes of death worldwide? Some answers can be found in food loss and waste, lack of fair distribution and the overabundance of processed foods. Not only is our food production not able to feed the people on our planet, but the production system itself has an enormous negative environmental impact. The meat industry contributes significantly to worldwide CO_2 emissions and pesticides pollute and destroy whole ecosystems. So, what will it take to feed the world's population in a sustainable way? Is it possible to have a sustainable global food production that ensures a balanced diet for all without a negative impact on our environment? What would that look like? Do we all need to commit to vegetarianism to eliminate the need to spend massive resources on feeding livestock? If we really crave a burger once in a while, could we not more seriously invest in, and develop, lab-grown meat production? Would consumers be willing to pay more for organic, local, and seasonal produce rather than be able to buy anything they want all year round? How can we remind people of the stocking, transporting and packaging cost of eating a tomato in January? How do we make sure that this system would not be only for the richest? Are we willing to undertake major changes to our entire food supply system to reach zero hunger and quality food for all that also benefits the environment by 2030?

#SUSTAINABILITY; #ENVIRONMENT; #SOCIETY; #ECONOMY; #WORLD

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

#GetInspired

Future of education:
What's worth learning in school?

When you were done with school, how prepared did you feel for the 'real world'? Did you know how to file taxes? Or even, that you had to? Did you know how to figure out your health insurance? What about how to approach finding a job? Chances are, you felt a little clueless - and to no fault of your own! As society changes quickly, educational systems are slower to catch on. Many of us have the feeling that what we learn in school is not actually what we need to succeed in our lives. When we think about the purpose of school – ideally, it should help us develop skills, values and attitudes needed to participate in our societies. So how can we reform educational systems to empower students? What kind of education would make young people feel like they could take on the challenge of shaping their societies? What are the skills students most need to learn? Should we focus on practical skills, such as money and time management or sustainable living? Or should we be developing critical thinking, creative problem solving, coping with failure and empathy amongst our students? Do our syllabi need to 'get with the times' and centre on using digital technology responsibly? Or, should we focus our energies elsewhere and try to get non-academic skills more widely recognised?

#EDUCATION; #SOCIETY; #WORK

#GetToSpeakUp

Green cities:
What should cities of the future look like?

Nearly three quarters of the EU population live in a city, and the sheer number of city-people is still on the rise. As the ecological footprint of urban areas is thus inevitably also increasing, we can address this by making our cities greener. A happy side effect of greener cities is that it also positively affects its inhabitants: the greener a city, the healthier its population. More good news: many European cities are already leading the way in becoming greener! Initiatives include increasing the number of green areas, putting low emission zones in place and banning polluting vehicles from city centres. In this shift towards a cleaner transport system and better air quality, cities must propose alternative smart mobility solutions to their citizens. How can cities encourage their residents to switch to public, shared or low-emission transports? How also to create smarter infrastructures for low-emission buildings, clean energy provision, and green waste and water management? As a citizen, how aware are you of your own ecological footprint? Do you feel educated enough on the topic? Could digital technology and smart city solutions help us become more aware and increase our well-being? If not, what might help? Many people are already aware of their ecological footprint and promote sustainable citizenship via collective action in their neighbourhood: what makes them succeed? And how to motivate others to do the same?

#ENVIRONMENT; #SUSTAINABILITY; #INNOVATION

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

#GetInspired

'I love my job':
Is a flexible and meaningful career an option?

Did you know that 'young people don't know how to work'? At least according to some older folk... We are criticised for having a bad attitude when going to job interviews, expecting too much creativity, too much independence, while also not taking any responsibility when things don't go as planned. Is this true? Are we wrong to expect to be fairly compensated for our labour? What about the expectation of young (mostly) women not to be harassed at the workplace? Or the expectation to occasionally be able to work from home, while also not having to answer e-mails until midnight? How do we square our expectations with the job market, without feeling too disappointed, unhappy, or even burned out? Is this the beginning of the end of the classic 9-to-5? Modern technologies are enabling us to work more efficiently, so why are we still working the same number of hours? What is a meaningful job anyways? Is it work that reconciles our values and interests - whether social, political or environmental - or maybe something that advances society? How can we turn jobs into attractive choices for young people to stay motivated and efficient while preserving our work-life balance and creativity? How can we adapt the labour market to allow more people to work comfortably and have more time for own interests, social ties or raising children? What do we need to do to ensure we all have jobs suited to our needs, interests and abilities?

#WORK; #SOCIETY; #INNOVATION

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

#GetInspired

In the shoes of an MEP:
Meet and discuss with European politicians

What does the life of a Member of the European Parliament look like? What do they do all day? How do they work? Whom do they listen to? How do they make the decisions that most affect you and your future? Why did they choose to run for the European Parliament? What do they think about the state of the EU? Or, about energy, or security, or the climate? If you have any questions for our elected officials, come to our MEP corner and have a speed-date with a European policymaker. Ask them about issues that affect you and get the chance to tell them what you would like your future to look like!

#DEMOCRACY; #PARTICIPATION

#GetConnected

#GetInstitutional

LGBTI rights:
We're queer, we're here and … is equality near?

The EU has a reputation as a leader in terms of LGBTI protections and rights. More and more countries are legalising same-sex marriage and adoption, or reforming gender recognition laws, but significant legal differences still exist amongst EU member states. But maybe granting rights and protections isn't really enough. Just because the European Parliament raises the rainbow flag on the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia - does that mean every EU citizen is in solidarity with LGBTI persons? Although legal frameworks for equality are solid groundwork, are these rights really respected and put into practice? How can we ensure that LGBTI persons feel equal within the EU? Why is mental health comparably so poor for LGBTI youth? Should we continue to focus our efforts on legislation, such as filling the gaps in EU anti-discrimination law? Or, should we rather tackle the roots of these problems, such as deep-rooted homophobia, biphobia and/or transphobia among certain members of our societies? If so, how could we best achieve this? Are awareness raising actions such as campaigns against hate-speech or employment discrimination, or supporting education initiatives in schools effective?

#RIGHTS; #SOCIAL; #SOCIETY

#GetToSpeakUp

Live fully:
What is a life well spent?

YOLO. This may be tongue-in-cheek but technically, it's not wrong - you do only live once. We're all aware that we have limited time on earth, but what do we do with that knowledge? How do we decide what to do with our time and how to live our lives? Thinkers since before Aristotle have been asking these questions, and there doesn't really seem to be one definite answer. Should we primarily be striving for personal satisfaction, for happiness – both physically and mentally? If yes, how can we achieve this? Is it important to explore the world, through travel or art, or rather advance our professional careers? What is the meaning of success? What place does community building, cultivating social ties or settling down with a family have? Should we all be volunteering and trying to positively affect other people's lives? Or is it more important to generally live a sustainable life and minimize our environmental impact? What does 'doing good' even mean? What's the role of religion in an age when young people tend to either be completely disinterested, or so totally committed to religion they are willing to sacrifice their lives for their beliefs? Where do, spirituality and mindfulness come in? Do we need 'something bigger' to identify principles and values that can guide us through life? How do we find meaning in our lives? What is a life well spent?

#SOCIETY; #CULTURE; #SOCIAL

#GetInspired

#GetItDone

Mass surveillance:
Yearning for some privacy?

You walk past a sign proclaiming, 'Smile, you're on camera!'. Your phone notifies you when it's time to leave your house so you don't miss your train. You were just telling your friend about the new shoes you want to buy and now there's an ad for those exact shoes on your Instagram feed. What the heck? In this digitalised world, every move we make and every step we take is tracked. Video surveillance of public places, as well as our personal data, is used for public security purposes. Digital companies want to bring us the newest technological gadgets, leveraging our personal information in advertising and market research. How far are we from Big Brother? Have you ever stopped yourself from looking something up on the internet because you knew 'they might be watching'? How do we balance personal privacy and public safety – and should we be consulted on how much of our privacy we're willing to sacrifice for the sake of public safety? Does the constant monitoring deprive us of our freedom, or does it make us feel safer? Would you trust an intelligent robot with ensuring your privacy, or are the robots themselves more vulnerable to mass surveillance? Would you consent to storing your personal information or passwords in an implant? Do you feel like your behaviours are already changing?

#SECURITY; #DIGITAL; #SOCIETY; #RIGHTS

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

Migration and integration:
Being European in 2020

People leave their home countries for all kinds of valid reasons: they want to study elsewhere, they are persecuted, they get an important job offer, their country is in war or they fall in love with someone of a different nationality or living elsewhere. As the world is becoming more interconnected, people may be moving more than ever before. European societies are becoming increasingly diverse with first, second and third generation migrants from European and non-European countries. As demographics are changing - are our cultures too? Is a European identity becoming more relevant than our national identities? Does being a citizen of an EU member state necessarily imply a European identity? If so, what does this European identity include, and how can this be part of our multiple identities? Will the tie to our communities of origin always supersede the ties to 'new' countries, and will this result in fragmented societies and lack of understanding, leading to cultural clashes, tensions and violence? Or is it possible to foster a common sense of being European through policies and programmes which will facilitate intercultural friendships, marriages and children beyond the existing communities and make everyone feel at home? Do all Europeans really feel at home in Europe and have the same experiences, with the same rights, freedoms and ways of life? What are some common values? Is it even necessary to have common values in order to share an identity with someone? Can we all rely on the same institutions, policies and laws? Do we need to share a common history and cultural heritage?

#SOCIETY; #WORLD; #MIGRATION; #DEMOCRACY; #CULTURE; #SOCIAL; #PARTICIPATION

#GetInspired

#GetToSpeakUp

Millennials and mental health:
Live fast, burn out?

There's a public health crisis developing in Europe and we're not really acknowledging it: our generation's mental health is deteriorating and affecting our lives in more and more domains. We are stressed out about finding secure work, depressed about the housing market, anxious about the environment and feeling increasingly isolated, despite having social networks connecting us with hundreds of people we met at one time or another. What's wrong with us? Or maybe, what's wrong with the world we are in? What are the causes of this mental health crisis and why are we so hesitant to seek help? Considering half of all mental illnesses have their first onset during adolescence, tackling this issue must include young people. Easier said than done though, right? How can we resolve this sweeping problem and what can change makers do to help us? Should they focus on prevention, for example, by raising awareness around the implications of social media use on mental health? Or, should we be focussing on accessible and affordable mental health care options? As we also know that there are significant differences in experience of mental health depending on gender, ethnic status and LGBTI identity - how can we make effective programmes both broad and targeted? What do we need to do so we all start feeling better?

#HEALTH; #SOCIETY; #RIGHTS; #SOCIAL

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

Modern slavery:
How do we stop it?

When we hear about slavery, many of us might think of this is a historical atrocity which in 2020 is a non-issue. If only this were true. Contemporary slavery runs rampant around the world. An estimated 40.3 million people are in modern slavery around the world, 10 million of whom are children. Modern slavery can take many forms: human trafficking, child labour, institutionalised forced labour, debt bondage, domestic servitude... It's not uncommon that well renowned companies and corporations, many of whom produce products we use in our everyday lives, uncover cases of modern slavery in their own global supply chains. The pervasiveness of modern slavery means that we endorse it by buying products manufactured with illicit labour. EU policies sometimes also play a role in this: free movement and the relative lack of border control pave the way for the development of highly sophisticated illegal business models that include forms of modern-day slavery. How can we best address and stop human trafficking and sexual exploitation in our Union? What can the EU do to curb this abuse? What should external and internal policies focus on? Are enough resources being allocated to ensure a fair trade environment and effective product traceability? Is fair trade labelling the solution to incentivise consumers to make ethical choices? And why does it feel like no one cares about the 40 300 000 individuals who are subject to modern slavery today?

#ECONOMY; #WORLD; #SOCIAL; #RIGHTS

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

Open mic:
Make yourself heard!

Do you have something you feel you have to say? A radical opinion? A call for common sense? A news story? A personal anecdote? Don't be shy and come and speak up! This is the space for you to jump up on stage and grab the mic. You'll get two minutes to share your idea, proposal, concept or express yourself in whatever way you like. No need to sign up or register... drop by and speak out!

#PARTICIPATION

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetInspired

Perception of migration:
The line between compassion and fear

We regularly see images of overcrowded boats sinking in the Mediterranean, improvised refugee camps and chaotic crowds of people around fences, border controls, or soup kitchens. Many of us feel empathy or compassion in response to these pictures – but some of us feel fear, or worry, or disdain. We may feel sorrow or shame when hearing stories about exhausting journeys, or when we learn about inhumane conditions in European reception centres. On the other hand, we might also feel nervous about foreign 'invasions', loss of our cultural identities, competition for jobs and an impact on the welfare state. Even if we are not xenophobic, some of our compatriots might be - and thus we may realistically fear conflict. These complicated and conflicting emotions make us all react differently to the changing demographics of our countries and continent. Some of us want to do everything to integrate migrants into our societies, but this may prove difficult when others do everything to reject migrants. So, what should we do? How can we be in line with EU law and its founding values of respect for human rights and solidarity, while not acting against the well-being of our own citizens? How can politicians and journalists talk about migration in Europe based on facts and data? How can the EU avoid that citizens exercising their rights and acting in accordance with EU values are criminalised when assisting migrants? What shall we as European citizens do when faced with such situations? Is it useful to sign petitions such as the citizens' initiative 'We are a welcoming Europe', rescue migrants at sea, host asylum seekers, give money to people living on the streets? How can we ultimately avoid not only the cultural clash with migrants, but the division of our own societies?

#MIGRATION; #SOCIETY; #SECURITY; #WORLD

#GetInspired

#GetToSpeakUp

#GetItDone

Populism:
A dangerous path or an intriguing opportunity?

Political landscapes are changing. Our leader figures seem to be feeling bolder to attack the system, their opposition, the press and anything else they disagree with. Both the political right and left are calling for the complete overhaul of the 'corrupt', 'elitist' and 'out of touch' political establishment. Polarising language is being used to pit 'the true will of the people' against political institutions. And it's working. Election results both in and out of Europe are showing that these ideas resonate with many people, and so populists win elections, enter parliament and make the left-right political divide seem outdated. Often, the claim that they are taking back control targets the EU, putting Euroscepticism at the heart of their populist message. But how and why do these populist movements emerge? Why are they so attractive to voters, and are these parties attractive for young people specifically? What makes their strategies so successful? What does the populist surge tell us about the state of our democracy? Does it spell out disaster for our democratic societies or does it show the need for something to be put back on track? If so, what actions need to be taken to renew the democratic process? And what is the EU's role and relevance in this challenge?

#DEMOCRACY; #SOCIETY; #PARTICIPATION

#GetInspired

#GetToSpeakUp

Rich-poor divide:
Increasing concentration of wealth or inclusive growth?

Income inequality in Europe is on the rise. The European debt crisis and the Great Recession added urgency to the need to address inequalities and to respond to the middle-class households that feel left behind. At the same time a sustained period of economic growth has helped lift millions of people out of absolute poverty in emerging economies. There are general downward trends in world hunger. However, even in Majority world countries, the benefits of economic growth have not affected all equally and income inequalities have risen further. There is an increasing number of billionaires, while others are still starving for lack of food and unable to seek necessary medical care. Whom is economic globalisation really benefitting? Evidence suggests that the more economic equality exists in a country, the happier and healthier its citizens, the stronger the social cohesion and economic growth and the more stable the society. Narrowing the economic gap between citizens is slowly becoming a priority for policymakers across countries. How can they best resolve these inequalities? Should we be addressing globalisation, technological change, skill mismatches or inadequate social and economic policies? Should we focus on redistributing existing wealth by taxing the rich, rather than relying on philanthropy? Should we reform the public spending system to ensure a fairer welfare state? Is it possible to establish a system where inter-generational social equity becomes a reality; where employment, health, social protection, education and participation in society are accessible to all; where prosperity is shared; and where social cohesion and political stabilities are restored? What can we do to make this a reality?

#ECONOMY; #SOCIAL; #SUSTAINABILITY; #WORLD

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Rural renewal:
Young people, we need you in the fields!

The countryside sure seems so far, so different and so isolated from today's city life. In Europe farms are getting both fewer and larger, and the farming population is ageing. Fewer young people are taking over their family farms and are instead choosing to make a new life in the city. This reluctance is understandable: working in the fields through rain and shine is tough, the hours are long, the income is low and the marketplace is uncertain. However, we may need farmers now more than ever as the world population continues to grow. And we all know that in order to grow we certainly need good food to eat. So how do we ensure that the world population will be fed? How can we encourage young people to become farmers? What are the barriers to new entrants and what are the challenges facing existing young farmers? Can the challenge of bringing engineering, artificial intelligence and environmental entrepreneurship to farming attract a younger generation? Do we invest in drones and other technologies to increase our yields? How can we ensure these choices we make do not deplete our natural resources? How effective has EU support for young farmers been so far? What is the role of the EU and the Common Agricultural Policy in this, and is its proposed reform enough? What do you imagine the future of agriculture to look like?

#WORK; #SOCIETY; #INNOVATION; #SUSTAINABILITY

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Safety first:
More or less weapons?

We can't foresee the future, but things are changing, and things are changing fast. We feel increasingly insecure due to possible threats by state or non-state actors, wars, terrorism or personal attacks. Everyone wants to feel physically safe and know that their loved ones are too - so the question is, how can we best achieve this on a European level? Well, we could create a strong European Defence Union, or even a European Army. The budget for defence could be expanded to include research on military AI and robotic technologies, as well as proactive tactical military interventions. Or, we could approach the issue from the other side and argue for stricter arms control or even working towards the total elimination of weapons. Efforts for the non-proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons are going strong: NGOs are pointing a finger at unethical arms sales in conflict zones, students are calling to eliminate private ownership of semiautomatic weapons and the 2017 UN Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty was the first legally binding document with the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons completely. Efforts to decrease the criminal use of weapons are a good start but may only tackle a symptom of the bigger issue. Is a weapon-free world a naive dream or a necessary goal to stop the spiral of increasing violence and defence spending? What should the EU's stance on global gradual disarmament be? What should we use our defence budgets for? How can the EU balance defending its freedom and way of life, while not proliferating violence? And what position should the EU take towards movement who are aiming to relax gun control in Europe? How can we ensure we are all feeling safe in our own countries?

#SECURITY; #ECONOMY; #SOCIETY; #WORLD

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Science slam:
Discover the technologies that will change the world

We're in the age of the fourth Industrial Revolution! Science and technology can benefit our daily lives, help us philosophically reframe our existence and reshape our social structures. Artificial intelligence, virtual reality, drones, quantum computers: which technologies do you think are most likely here to stay and change our lives forever? Young researchers present their findings in a clear, concise and entertaining way. The audience votes for the most promising young scientist.

#INNOVATION

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Slow shopping:
Can we adapt business models to sustainable consumption?

Many of us are becoming more aware of the responsibility we have when buying a new t-shirt, a piece of fruit or a new mobile phone. However, just because we are feeling more responsible, doesn't mean it's always easy to make decisions in line with our morals. We usually don't know where the products we purchase have originated from. Where have the raw materials come from, and who mined them? Do all workers along the supply chain have access to fair and safe working conditions? What about extreme forms of exploitation, such as modern slavery and child labour - how can we ensure our products aren't contributing to these human rights offenses? And what about the environment? Has the production of our goods wasted water or other resources, spilled dangerous chemicals or emitted tons of greenhouse gases? What should we do with our products when we want to throw them out? How can we ensure they don't end up polluting the ocean? How can we ethically dispose of clothes, electronics, furniture? There are many questions, and very few answers. How can producers restructure modern supply chains and production processes to make products sustainable, affordable and attractive to consumers all at once? Would you switch to 'slow fashion' and buy longer lasting, locally produced, better quality clothes, but pay more for them? Would you be ready to subscribe to circular fashion and give multiple lives to your clothes by renting, swapping, repairing, and customising them, in the name of sustainability? Would you buy only second-hand? What changes are you willing to make in your purchasing behaviour?

#SUSTAINABILITY; #INNOVATION; #WORLD; #SOCIETY

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Sustainable and reliable energy:
How to achieve it?

Whether we like it or not, we need energy - and we need a lot of it. Not only do we need a lot of energy, but we also need a sustainable and reliable supply. We are setting goals to reduce our carbon footprints, are moving away from fossil fuels, and are expanding the use of alternative sources of renewable energy. We are considering the environmental impacts of our decisions more and more and are thus intentionally choosing 'greener' products with lower energy costs. Some of us are even urging our universities, and corporations, to divest from fossil fuels completely. Although sustainability is a top priority, so is the assurance that our energy supply is constant, secure and affordable. We need sustainable and reliable energy not just for energy's sake, but also to facilitate economic well-being, social development and environmental protection. So how can we achieve this? How can we ensure all countries have access to affordable, consistent and green energy? Should we invest in innovation and research of renewable energy sources? Should we better support businesses that are developing and providing cleaner energy production and storage solutions? What about nuclear energy - might it be an acceptable short - or long-term solution to our world energy problem? Should we encourage education programmes to foster a general public understanding of the global energy challenges and to provide energy and engineering-related training to young entrepreneurs who wish to venture in this field? How do we ensure that we are striving towards solutions?

#SUSTAINABILITY;
#ENVIRONMENT; #SECURITY;
#ECONOMY; #WORLD

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Trade and corruption:
Deal or no deal?

In theory, free trade and corruption are incompatible. Reality, however, paints a different picture: the 33 countries classed as having limited or no enforcement of anti-corruption laws represent more than half the world's exports. Often, these same countries where corruption is rife are also poverty-stricken and riddled with human rights violations, such as modern slavery and child labour. One would think that opening to investment opportunities and trade might facilitate economic growth and alleviate poverty. The more a country has access to trade and the world markets, the more they would have to assimilate to global trade rules. However, if the pre-existing situation is already vulnerable to corruption, increased access to trade might enable more officials to accept bribes from foreign actors. So, what's the right way forward? Do trade agreements and opening up international trade in fact bring about a stronger rule of law by increasing competition and economic activity in these countries? Or, do we implicitly support corruption and human rights abuses by doing business with these countries? If we impose trade sanctions or restrictions on these 'more corrupt countries' – does that then not punish an entire country for the activities of its elites? What is the morally right thing to do? In deciding whether to trade with 'corrupt countries', where should the EU stand? Deal or no deal?

#WORLD; #ECONOMY;
#DEMOCRACY

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Vaccination:
Freedom of choice vs public welfare

Vaccines are one of the greatest public health achievements in history - they helped save countless lives. Smallpox has been eradicated; polio is on its way out. Many public authorities across the world have made childhood vaccination mandatory, to speed up the elimination of life-threatening illnesses. The World Health Organization is working towards bringing accessible routine immunization services to even more countries, in efforts to save millions of infants from preventable deaths. Even though we have the scientific know-how that could quickly eliminate many more pathogens, why are some people fighting the idea of vaccinations? Why is the anti-vaxxing movement fighting so hard to keep its children unimmunized? Why do some parents argue that vaccines are 'intrusive' and hold unknown, dangerous side effects? This movement has gained traction over social media where more and more individuals are on a misinformation campaign to 'save children from vaccines'. Can we isolate the root of this movement to social media specifically? If so, what responsibility do social media companies have in treating preventable measles outbreaks? And what about the young people who believe public health consensus over their parents' scepticism - should they be allowed to get vaccinated without their parents' consent? The WHO has placed this movement among the top ten global health threats in 2019, as rates of some illnesses are rising again, when due to vaccines, they had been nearing eradication. How should public authorities tackle the tricky challenge of respecting individual choices, while safeguarding public health? How can we stop this misinformation campaign?

#HEALTH; #RIGHTS; #DIGITAL; #SOCIETY; #EDUCATION

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Waste:
Buy less, or dispose better?

Our consumption of natural resources has spiralled out of control. It's become clear that something needs to change: if not in our pace of consumption, then at least in our methods of disposal. We haven't really been critically thinking about what happens to our waste after it's picked up and 'dealt with'. The way it's been dealt with has negatively affected ecosystems, biodiversity and other natural resources: our world is littered with junk. This madness needs to stop. We need to find a way to decrease our waste one way or another. One possible solution lies in the circular economy concept: waste can be reduced by designing long-lasting and reusable goods made from eco-friendly or recyclable materials. Recent EU legislation and some business experiments are promising in this regard. Will we be able to slow down the production model? Or is this change fundamentally incompatible with the capitalist economic system? Will business innovators be able to design recyclable plastics or green alternatives to plastics that are profitable for them and convenient for consumers? Is it all up to the good will of industries, or can innovative European regulation be a model? And what should we do about the plastics and waste that are already causing problems? Should our first step be in education, so that policymakers, industry, and consumers understand the long-term win-win-win of a circular economy? Will consumers be willing to buy less and pay more for sustainable goods? Will retailers switch to selling returnable products or to providing more bulk options? Will governments invest in better and uniformed recycling methods, subscribe to international agreements and enforce laws towards businesses and waste diversion? What should we do to effectively reduce, reuse and recycle?

#SUSTAINABILITY; #ENVIRONMENT; #SOCIETY; #INNOVATION

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Wonder Women:
Can't we just all be equal?

It's 2020 and everyone is equal. Discrimination on the basis of gender is prohibited in the foundational treaties of the EU and in the European Convention on Human Rights. From a legal perspective, gender equality may be ensured, but are we really all equal? Studies and statistics clearly say no. Women are at higher risk of poverty, earn less money, have less leisure time and are victims of violence at much higher rates than men are. Why is it so difficult to achieve gender equality? What can we do about this? Should we more seriously address the application of the law, or our attitudes in general, rather than gaps in the legislature? Think about gender equality at home. Women still tend to contribute much more to household tasks. Why is this normal? Why is it ok that women are expected to manage chores at home? This in addition to having to think about paid work – in which women are still massively underrepresented in leadership positions. Why do we still picture a man when we hear 'manager'? What is the role of gender-neutral language – is it a gimmick or a necessary measure? Maybe a way forward would be in looking at our personal, linguistic and societal biases about gender and take it from there. Should we prioritise changing social norms by educating children to what inequality looks like today? Or, should we instead address the symptoms of the issue and tackle gender differences in employment opportunity, personal well-being and financial security? Should there be social funds allocated to women working at home? How can we respect and protect all women, no matter their background, age, nationality, religion? What does it mean to be a feminist in Europe today? It's 2020 and why have we still not figured this out?

#RIGHTS; #SOCIETY; #SOCIAL

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