



IDEAS FOR A BETTER EUROPE

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EYE2014 Report

Report elaborated by the European Youth Press
with commentaries by the European Youth Forum







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Foreword by Anni Podimata and Othmar Karas

Vice Presidents of the 7th legislative period of the European Parliament, responsible for Communication

The European Youth Event (EYE 2014) was unprecedented. For the first time in its history, the European Parliament (EP) opened its doors to thousands of young people from across the continent and asked them to present their ideas on Europe and its future. In a unique way, roles were turned upside-down during the EYE: MEPs were listening, and young people were leading the game.

The result of the three-day event was a wide variety of stimulating contributions that have the desire for change and innovation at their core. We are certain these ideas can be a source of inspiration for all newly elected as well as re-elected Members of the EP. We are certain that this is only the beginning of a fruitful dialogue and that this was only the first EYE the European Parliament will have organised – it's up to the new term MEPs to now take the lead and continue the dialogue with the youth of Europe.



Foreword by Klaus Welle

Secretary General of the European Parliament

The EYE 2014 was a tremendous success. The authors of this report, who come from the European Youth Press, have impressively summarised the rich sweep of ideas that young participants from across Europe brought forward during the EYE weekend.

The success of the EYE owes a great deal to the Parliament's political leadership which pursued this initiative, the Parliament's services who ensured its realisation, our partners, the large number of volunteers and of course most of all the participants themselves who engaged enthusiastically with the content of the EYE from first to last.

An overwhelming number of the participants surveyed in person and online said they believed the EYE should become a regular event. Parliament's leadership has heard that call and decided to establish the EYE as a regular component of an open and continuous two-way communication between MEPs and young people, as well as a platform for young Europeans.



Waiting for the EYE opening ceremony

Ideas for a better Europe: the EYE2014 Report

A better Europe? Almost 70 years have passed since the end of the Second World War, and European countries today act not only as respectful and peaceful neighbours, but have constructed a common political system and integrated it within their own societies. But are we taking it for granted? What ideas does the current generation of young Europeans have for the next steps in the European project?

The European Youth Event (EYE), organised by the European Parliament (EP) in close cooperation with the European Youth Forum (YFJ) and nine other partners, took place in Strasbourg from 9 to 11 May 2014. It brought together over 5,500 young people aged between 16 and 30 from all EU member states and beyond to answer these questions, exchange ideas, and discuss their visions of a better Europe. The event offered more than 200 activities in varying formats, and featured some 500 speakers, moderators and facilitators, including Members of the European Parliament. The activities centred on five main themes; Youth Unemployment, Digital Revolution, The Future of the European Union, Sustainability, and European Values.

Variety in terms of format ensured that participants, speakers, and MEPs were able to interact in an unconstrained and fruitful way; there were hearings, debates, question and answer sessions, workshops, and various role-play games, which allowed participants to experience the working processes of the EU by taking on the role of a Member of the European Parliament.

During a Euroscola Special, over 600 European school students experienced a day as an MEP,

raising questions linked to their concerns for the future of Europe, working in committees, coming up with diverse proposals covering everything from active citizenship to renewable energy and youth unemployment, and voting not only on sensitive issues ranging from which languages should be used in the Parliament to the introduction of the euro but also on their own proposals.

Innovative formats such Ideas Checks and Ideas Labs turned around the classical role-distribution of politicians speaking to audiences into making political decision-makers listen to young participants' as 'idea catchers'. They were thus particularly valuable in giving young people the opportunity to contribute effectively with their ideas.



Report Introduction

By young people, for young people

As a youth event, it was vital that young people and their organisations were at the centre of the planning and execution of the EYE. From the outset, the European Parliament partnered with the European Youth Forum, the platform for youth organisations in Europe, in order to ensure that young people were at the heart of the event.

The European Youth Forum brought the successful 'YO!Fest' to the EYE. Standing for 'Youth Opinion', the YO!Fest is the annual open political festival of the Youth Forum, combining political debates, workshops, and activities with free concerts and cultural and sporting activities.

An integral element of the EYE, the YO!Village took place in front of the Parliament, and showed that a different approach to political engagement is possible. Youth organisations from all over the continent, as well as civil society organisations and corporate partners, contributed to the YO!Fest by organising activities and interactive stands, creating a vibrant atmosphere in the YO!Village. Live music, theatre, and circus performances took place alongside spirited topical debates on a range of issues, from the idea of lowering the voting age to 16 to multiple discrimination and the impact of youth work and youth co-operatives. Informal educational activities took place in every corner of the YO!Village, inviting participants and visitors to learn about European processes and campaigns and interact with over 50 organisations represented at the EYE.

Furthermore, numerous youth groups participating in the EYE had the opportunity to stage their own workshop or even their artistic performance during the event. These youth

workshops and artistic performances (dances, musical and band performances, theatre plays etc.) as well as several more playful programme elements during the EYE2014 (such as the digital gaming activities iDance, or the group board games Eurocracy and EuroCulture) provided a less formal and creative possibility of interaction between young participants during the EYE.

An open and inclusive event

Reaching out beyond the officially registered EYE participants was an important aim of the EYE 2014, in order to allow the inclusion and participation of a diverse as possible public during the event.

With the YO!Fest public concerts in the City of Strasbourg and Wacken, the EYE reached well beyond the 5,500 participants, enticing an additional 4,500 people to the European Parliament and the Youth Forum. The concerts provided a hook to reach out to local people in Strasbourg and the less engaged young people, and motivating a significant number to participate in other YO!Fest activities.



Sign interpretation at the EYE 2014

Balloons showing the European Youth Forum pledges to the new MEPs

Similarly, the EYE related activities and performances hosted by the City of Strasbourg, an official partner of EYE, assisted in bringing the event closer to the local population.

Young people, who did not have the chance to attend the EYE2014 physically, had the possibility to follow and participate in the event online. The EYE had a strong virtual presence; many of the panel discussions were web-streamed or had tweet walls, which ensured an alternative means of audience participation and allowed those who were interested but not present to ask questions and voice their opinions. Active social media channels also meant that these discussions continued after the sessions, and the event itself, were over. Websites and social media were used before, during, and after the EYE as channels to address young people's concerns and show their political engagement, ensuring their voices were heard and facilitating interaction - not only between their peers, but also with European leaders. Over the three days, the hashtags #EYE2014 and #YOFest generated over 12,000 tweets.



Young people engaging in developing a more prosperous Europe

The core aim of the European Youth Event was to demonstrate that young people are willing to engage in developing a brighter future for a more prosperous, inclusive, innovative, and sustainable European Union, and that they are an invaluable source for ideas on how to achieve this. There was genuine enthusiasm for the sharing of ideas at the EYE, and many participants expressed a desire to be more involved in EU decision-making processes. As Peter Matjašič, President of the European Youth Forum, commented:

"Young people today are too often maligned for their lack of interest in politics and motivation to vote. But what we saw this weekend were young people from all or no political persuasion coming together full of interest, enthusiasm and bright ideas [...] The common theme was the desire of the young people attending for their voice to be heard loud and clear by European leaders."

This report is the joint effort of the European Youth Press and the European Youth Forum to collect the young people's ideas and ensure that they are not lost. It is based on contributions from the EYE reporters who covered the various activities during the event.



Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, discussing the new Erasmus+ programme



Youth Unemployment New perspectives for a blocked generation

At the European Youth Event, finding people who are young, qualified, and unemployed did not take long. “How many of you are currently unemployed or under-employed?”, asked Nazan Gödkemir from ARTE, moderator of ‘Beat Box Europe - The art of staying’. It took several seconds before the first hands went up. Many of those who were present have earned good university degrees, spent semesters abroad, interned, worked for free, speak several languages, and are eager to work in a country that is not their own. Yet, roughly a third of the people in the room raised their hands, meaning that they struggled to find a job in the last year or are currently unemployed.

These hands, and the stories behind them, reflect the burning problem of youth unemployment in the Eurozone where, according to Eurostat, the unemployment rate among young people was at 22.9% in February 2014. Looking at these figures, it is important to understand that differences in the extent and reasons for unemployed youth among member states are so diverse that a ‘European answer’ is not likely to be found - a view that was shared in many debates at the EYE. With youth unemployment at 56% in Greece, 49% in Croatia, but only 7.8% in Germany (the lowest among all EU states), the army of the unemployed is not represented equally throughout Europe.

Youth Unemployment in the European Union

Nevertheless, the impact that youth unemployment has on all European countries is significant, as may be illustrated by examples from Germany and Spain. This latter country, the situation of which was debated at length at the EYE, is experiencing a massive change in

population, as young people leave the country in order to seek jobs elsewhere. Eric Labuske, a panel speaker and activist for Juventud Sin Futuro, a youth development organisation in Spain, has seen the impact of this mass emigration:

“Everyone is leaving Spain to seek a better life abroad”. He spoke from experience, having started up his own business in France rather than Spain; “In France costs are relatively low, but in Spain it is impossible for young people to be self-employed unless they are rich”, he said.

Another popular destination for young Spaniards is Germany, the country with the lowest unemployment rate, a booming economy, and the promise of a better life for many. At present, however, Germany has closed one of its job programmes that help people like Eric Labuske to find work abroad. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young people from struggling EU economies have found themselves stranded in Germany since the government quietly stopped accepting applications for a programme called ‘The Job of My Life’, which was supposed to run until 2018.

Youth Unemployment

Having run out of funds and become overwhelmed by applications from all over Europe, the failure of this initiative shows that migration is not a real solution to youth unemployment; rather, these problems must be dealt with by each member state.

Overcoming the skills gap

One of the issues is that national education systems simply do not offer training in the skills required for the labour market, leading to thousands of unfilled positions across the continent due to a chronic skills gap. Experts present at the EYE warned that this growing «skills mismatch» cuts young people off from their future. Anna Ludwinek, from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), said that young people were hungry for guidance regarding the skills they need for the job market:

“Young people and the industry are actually on the same page in highlighting what skills are necessary, she noted. But education partners are the ones who really don’t grasp this problem.”

Boryana Stancheva and Eva Parvanova, from the Bulgarian-Romanian Interuniversity Europe Center (BRIE), tackled this problem in their workshop. They want to develop a European Framework of Reference for Common Employability Skills -in short, FORCES. Boryana Stancheva thinks that the outcome could benefit students across Europe:

“The goal is to make a blueprint to regulate employable skills; so that it doesn’t remain some vague description, which differs for each employer, and so that students know what to work on. In an ideal world, we believe, it should even be included in university curricula.”

Young EYMD journalist reporting on a panel



Others believe that the solution to the skill problem is shared educational objectives across the EU, which was also supported by French Socialist MEP Catherine Trautmann stating that:

“What’s important is that we give priority to a number of shared educational objectives across the Union, based on what is needed to get people into employment.”

But policymakers, as well as youth activists, are divided on the right way to bridge the skills gap, and sceptics warn against placing unreasonable expectations on the EU in terms of education and training policies. Mikkel Barslund, researcher at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), said that there was little desire to share power over education policy with Brussels:

“I think people have too much faith in what the EU can do here. I don’t feel that there is that eagerness in the member states to work together in forming education policy.”

Programmes to gain more experience

Young people, finding themselves in a situation where the EU has too little impact on education and the member states are reluctant to change, are beginning to become more proactive and find solutions for themselves.

The Agros Youth Group from Cyprus, which facilitated an interactive workshop as part of the EYE, identified three key areas in which young people can involve themselves and thus increase their likelihood of finding employment: European programmes, volunteering, and lifelong learning.

“Education is very powerful, but you don’t always get a job when you get out of university. Everybody is studying at university now, so it is very competitive. Instead, you need to be researching something you love, and we are not educated enough to know how to get there, to get a job”, said Alexis Orias from the United Kingdom.

Many workshops and Ideas Labs at the EYE favoured a bottom-up approach, where young people have their say on the design and content of educational and work programmes. Sebastiaan Rood, representative of Nationale Jeugdraad, believes that only youth engagement can solve the problem.

“One of the crucial things is not only to talk to them, but to have youngsters in the boards of education institutes, because at this moment they don’t have the ability to influence the structuring of programmes”.

Inclusion: an important part of EU programmes

While it is certainly true that these proposals could lead to success, what must be borne in

mind is that such policies also, in many cases, contribute to social stratification. Even though volunteering assists in personal development and allows for networking, many young people simply cannot afford to make such an investment in terms of time and resources. The same goes for Erasmus+ opportunities, in that the grant often does not cover all of the costs associated with studying or volunteering abroad; as such, participants often have to depend on their family’s resources. Education has always come with associated costs and now, at a time of high unemployment and wage cuts, many families struggle to support the education of their children. According to Jana Sikorska, a member of OBESSU’s taskforce from Slovakia, the costs of school trips, projects, and learning materials can often add up to over 1,000 euro per year. As Radka Pudilova pointed out:

“It is vital to think how we can ensure that the programmes and opportunities offered in the European Union are as inclusive as possible; otherwise, young people will simply have to rely on luck and good connections to gain employment”.

Increasing digitalisation in all professional sectors leads to another question regarding competence: What should we do with people who are not able to obtain all of the above mentioned skills, who then cannot keep up with this faster and more complex working environment? The European Commission has predicted that there will be almost one million job vacancies in Europe by 2015, as employers struggle to find staff with digital skills. According to its Digital Agenda Scorecard, the number of ‘digital’ jobs is growing by more than 100,000 a year, but the number of IT graduates and skilled IT workers is falling behind the pace.

Youth Unemployment

Circus performances by the European Federation of professional Circus Schools (FEDEC)

The over-qualified, unemployed young person is just one aspect of this, and may even be a temporary phenomenon that will pass, in time. The neglected, and potentially more dangerous challenge, is semi-skilled, manual workers; people for whom no labour market in Europe holds possibilities any more.

The importance of understanding social inequalities

During the EYE, various Members of the European Parliament did not tire of preaching of the dangers of extremist parties and the importance of voting, forgetting that a large part of the group they were addressing were the wrong people. The participants who attend such events are generally already more interested in politics than the average European citizen. Many participants expressed frustration regarding the hopelessness of their situation, and Mercedesz Oszlanczi, a participant from Hungary, said that:

“Even though we have some solutions, such as the Youth Guarantee and university-based services for students, I simply do not see an end to this; in spite of this, however, the EYE participants are still the privileged ones”.

While the European Union offers a number of programmes for students, young workers and entrepreneurs, it is important not to forget those who are more receptive to the simple slogans offered by extremist parties as the economic crisis continues. Thus, fighting youth unemployment will require an understanding of the growing social inequalities within and among European member states, rather than a focus on any lack of skills on the part of individuals.



Although increasing unemployment was largely a result of the recession in 2008, it has continued to rise even after the economic turbulence has settled somewhat. In order to not only find solutions, but to also prevent future unemployment among young people, a greater understanding of the issue is needed.

Agne Paksyle from Lithuania believes that the biggest problem is the lack of collaboration between governments, educational systems, employers, and youth.

“There is a huge gap between educators and employers which creates a mismatch between the skills they have and the abilities their employers require them to have. Schools and universities provide students with academic knowledge and exclude hands-on experience. What I suggest is creating an easily accessible and understandable comprehensive information system that provides young people with all of the necessary information: career prospects, job forecasts, labour market demand, employers’ satisfaction with graduates from different programs, she said.

Thinking out of the box – Youth Unemployment

Some examples of the ideas brought forward and discussed by young participants during the EYE:

New Marshall Plan for Europe

Recovery plan of up to 2% of the EU's GDP directed towards support for young people and the creation of new jobs.

Public Investments

EU support for research and job creation in the field of green economy.

Education grants

Access to free and quality formal and non-formal education for all; comprehensive education grants, especially for children from low-income families.

Basic income

Receive an unconditional basic income from birth to death. Introduction of the comparable minimum wages in all EU countries.

Mobility

Increase mobility of young generation by more and better language education, mandatory exchange year for every European in high school, extensive funding of student exchanges, better recognition of diplomas and certificates and the encouragement of inter-company exchanges across the European Union to provide young Europeans with intercultural and language skills that they need to compete in a globalised economy.

Education systems

Harmonise education curricula across Europe, develop shared educational objectives across the EU and install dual education systems all over Europe that create more effective links between education and job markets.

Internship database

Central European database for internships (with feedback and grading function to communicate and compare quality of internship opportunities).

Financial incentives

Financial rewards for companies that employ people under 25, tax reduction for small and medium companies.

Equality

Penalize all forms of discrimination (race, gender, age etc.) through employers.

Public Investments

Better support for young entrepreneurs and new co-operatives, e.g. tax reductions or strategic consulting.

Quality Jobs for all

– A commentary by the European Youth Forum

In February 2014, around 5.4 million young people under 25 were unemployed in the EU, comprising 22,9% of young people¹. The youth unemployment crisis has had a profound effect on young people and the societies in which they live. Young people are experiencing increased level of poverty and social exclusion and they are more and more likely to be in low-quality and precarious jobs. 42% of young workers in Europe have temporary contracts, which compares with 11% of adult workers². In addition, young people often find themselves victims of prejudice and discrimination on the labour market. In some EU Member States young people do not have the same right to a minimum wage and social protection as the older population.

The answers given to the youth unemployment crisis should not be based on the ‘any job will do’ approach. The right to decent work and protection against unemployment are fundamental human rights and being able to find quality-work is essential for young people in order to allow them to participate fully in society and ensure their autonomy.

Youth Unemployment at the EYE

Youth Unemployment was undoubtedly the issue that figured most prominently at the EYE. The reality young people face when entering the job market is unenviable. Young people put forward a range of ideas during the EYE to address the youth unemployment crisis.

The ideas ranged from a ‘New Marshall Plan for Europe’ to create six million jobs for young people, to official recognition of non-formal education and guaranteed social protection for entrepreneurs. Digital tools were also highlighted as a means to increase mobility along with accessible childcare to guarantee equal opportunities for all.

European Youth Forum and Youth Unemployment

The European Youth Forum advocates for EU action on the following points to attempt to reverse the trend in youth unemployment

• Investment in Job Creation

The European Youth Forum supports ideas that would reverse the trend from austerity to measures at European and national level boosting a job-rich growth, based on social and environmental standards. Recent austerity measures have not only failed to solve the issue of youth unemployment but studies have shown they have actually worsened the situation and have placed the future of an entire generation at risk.

• Quality Jobs

Young people in Europe have the right to quality and stable employment. A quality job entails the right to social protection, job protection, a non-discriminatory minimum wage and good and safe working conditions.

A first step to quality jobs could be quality internships; in this regard the Member States are failing young people, having agreed on an insufficient recommendation leaving room for abuse of the internship system.

• Youth Guarantee

The Youth Forum recognises that the Youth Guarantee can provide an important opportunity for youth organisations, social partners, civil society organisations and European, national and regional policy makers to bring forward a comprehensive strategy for tackling youth unemployment. However, to be fully implemented, there needs to be significant investments and the 6 billion euros planned is not enough³.

• Youth entrepreneurship

The Youth Forum affirms its belief that young people deserve the opportunity to make a positive impact on society, as well as to create stable futures for themselves via entrepreneurship. However, young people often find themselves disadvantaged and cannot afford the low-paid and irregular working hours involved in the early stages of establishing a micro-enterprise. Resources and support must be made available for young entrepreneurs.

• Recognition of Non-Formal Education

Finally, according to the Youth Forum, non-formal education (NFE) also has a vital role to play in preparing young people for

the labour market. Participation in youth organisations is particularly valuable in developing social capital and in creating new vocational paths, especially for NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), early school leavers and young migrants⁴. Experience in youth organisations and the skills developed through NFE must become more recognised by employers and formal education providers.

¹http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-01042014-AP/EN/3-01042014-AP-EN.PDF

²European Trade Union Institute, *Benchmarking Working Europe 2012*, ETUI, Brussels

³ILO (2012), *Eurozone job crisis: Trends and Policy responses*, International Institute for Labour Studies, Geneva

⁴Youth Forum Commissioned Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth organisations on Young People's employability: http://issuu.com/yomag/docs/reportnie_print





Photo shooting at the EYE Social Media Lab



Digital Revolution The Future of the Internet

The 21st century has brought with it an ever-increasing dominance in terms of usage of digital technologies in every aspect of our lives; on a personal level, this applies to studying, professional activities, and leisure time, but it also extends to nation-states, international organisations, and institutions. That technology has permeated our thoughts, lifestyles, and culture to such an extent, however, has led some to begin to question our relationship with it.

Does technology control us? Are we being controlled by others as a result of the technology we use? What happens to the data that our devices collect about us? New technology is commonly supposed to change our lives in a variety of ways, as was the case with medicine, transport, and communication during the 20th century. In the case of communication, written methods have, of course, existed for millennia; but the appeal of and speed at which innovations such as social media have taken over people's lives has given new life to the term 'revolution'.

How deeply embedded in society is this digital revolution? If we are to look at it from a positivist perspective, could it advance the famous ideals of the French revolution of 1789? Liberté, égalité, fraternité - freedom, equality, and brotherhood?

Liberté (freedom)

The individual versus the system, technology versus content; these debates take place both online and offline, for the internet is no longer a passive space. Today, users act as both consumers and contributors, spreading

information to a worldwide audience. The internet offers countless democratic possibilities for communication which is not defined by physical borders, but shared interests. This freedom is challenged by actors who aim to use the information of users gathered from social media platforms, e-mail accounts, and personal blogs.

According to the Oxford dictionary, 'freedom' has many definitions: it is «the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants» and «the state of being unrestricted and able to move easily». Bearing this in mind, the following topics were highlighted at the EYE in reference to the digital freedom of individuals, both on- and offline.

Watching those in power

The internet has undoubtedly opened up a space for independent citizen journalism, a form of reporting which is frequently conducted by ordinary members of civil society. An oft-cited example is the use of social media during the Arab Spring of 2010; here, the significance of social media platforms, in distributing news and making the voices of the people heard, was demonstrated in multiple countries.

Digital revolution

As a result, social media is often regarded as an enabler of freedom of speech in undemocratic countries and, therefore, commonly supported by democratic societies.

The NSA and data protection

The most intense debate concerning the personal freedom of internet users began last year, when the whistle-blower Edward Snowden precipitated the NSA surveillance scandal; ever since, the issue of data protection has been widely discussed at various levels. Several proposals have been put to the European Commission in an attempt to initiate a data protection reform by the end of 2014, calling for the right of citizens to have their data deleted and to have increased access to their own data.

The NSA scandal has proven to be a politically sensitive issue. While some European leaders have been pushing for a strong and united political response to the United States, developments on both national and international levels reflect rather different tendencies. For instance, and in spite of the EU's rhetoric (which mainly supports the privacy rights of European citizens), France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and several other European countries have been carrying out mass surveillance programmes themselves.

On 12 March 2014, the EP voted on the European Commission's proposal for a Data Protection Regulation, with 621 members voting for and 10 against. The major question - 'How do we preserve privacy while simultaneously allowing authorities to perform their roles?' - remains unanswered, however. Surveillance cameras and monitoring contribute in the fight against terrorism and serious crime, as was the case with the recent attacks in Boston; however,

Taking the floor during a session



a study in the UK showed that such cameras have little impact on the overall crime rate.

The topic was discussed at length in a panel discussion entitled 'Eagle Eye - Big Data Under Control?' at the EYE. A major conclusion of the discussion was that big data is a kind of new currency that people use to pay for services; they use an e-mail or social media service for free, but give their personal data in exchange. As Carl Fridh Kleberg, an international news reporter for the Swedish news agency TT, and one of the speakers on the panel, stated:

"You don't pay for things on the Internet because you are not the customer, you are the product".

Participants to the EYE voiced strong opinions on the importance of data protection. During the Role Play Game simulating the Parliament plenary session entitled 'Digital duel', it was repeatedly described by the attendees as one of the most important rights of EU citizens.

"Data protection is fundamental; it is a prerequisite for the security of our citizens as well as their right to privacy. Better data protection will improve citizens' trust in the digital market, which will result in a boost for our economy", explained Constance, a participant playing the role of a representative of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe in the simulation.

Technology versus content

During the 'Brave New World' Ideas Lab, a diverse group of students shared their views on the topic of 'digital revolution'. A lot of their criticisms were directed towards international organisations and their lack of unambiguous privacy policies.

According to the students, 'digital revolution' should be defined in relation to both where we stand now, and what the consequences of subsequent developments might be for the future. For example, a Twitter user should not focus on the speed at which their messages may travel through our globalised community; rather, they should be concerned regarding the use of Twitter for political discussions, and how this will alter our conceptions of 'debate' in the future. The next generation will not associate a debate with a three-hour conversation. Should we, then, hold innovators responsible for the 'right' or 'wrong' usage of their applications? Their technologies do not come with a manual, and rightly so; protection of free speech remains crucial to democratic society.

Building smart cities

One aspect of freedom is that of 'smart cities', a concept very few people are familiar with. The term 'smart city' is used to define the linking of public services in order to increase efficiency

and strengthen economies. Indeed, each inhabitant of a city is concerned with this issue through transportation, administration, or water and electricity use, to name a few. Step by step, cities are becoming 'smart cities', and are using digital technology to achieve this. As Ska Keller, Member of the European Parliament from the Greens/EFA, said:

"Smart cities certainly aren't dangerous; rather, they create a lot of new opportunities and possibilities. It's more a question of keeping up with data protection where it matters".

The process of creating smart cities seems to be attractive and adapted to our modern societies, but there is no doubt, due to the inherent danger of the loss or theft of data, that such development must be controlled.

Egalité (equality)

The digital revolution also offers the possibility of increased equality in terms of opportunities and communication. Free digital platforms can facilitate democratic participation and encourage citizens to voice their opinions on different topics. One solution might be to introduce electronic voting systems.

"Sometimes people are too lazy to go to the polling station, or they just work all day and simply cannot vote, even when they want to. Today, it is possible to achieve many things within a secure online environment, such as banking operations, so European countries should make it possible to vote online or through smartphones, even when you are in another country", Jean-François Gerard, from ARTE, said at the closing ceremony.

In order for this to happen, however, issues of equal access and education have to be dealt with.



Young MEPs discussing with participants the «smart cities» of their dreams

Digital revolution

In addition, the question of data collection has a bearing on not only the issue of freedom, but equal rights as well.

The digital literacy gap

A challenge for the educators and governments of today is the growing digital literacy gap, in that people from certain generations or social groups are exempt from being educated in navigating the web and using digital systems. Stephen Clark, Director for Relations with Citizens within the Directorate-General for Communication of the European Parliament, sees a clear generational divide among the people that grow up without technology, although he is quick to note that this cultural disparity does not necessarily mean that such people are incapable of learning and adapting.

Closely related to digital literacy is the idea that internet access is a human right, as proponents argue that it is essential in order for people to enjoy freedom of speech; in 2010, Finland was the first country in the world to make broadband a legal right for every citizen.

Education: Is the future online?

As with many other functions of public institutions, education is increasingly being

transferred to the online world. The idea of online, open access courses allows students from around the world to make decisions on courses and timing, assess the relevancy of the content flexibly, and repeatedly access materials free of charge.

Open educational resources and massive open online courses have recently been touted as a new trend that will make education more accessible to everyone, and participants at EYE came together to discuss the possibilities for such courses. While the number of higher education students has reached 200 million, and is projected to increase to 400 million in Europe by 2030, creating opportunities for further development seems to be the goal for years to come.

Most participants were primarily concerned with whether open access to higher education courses could boost their job prospects, and whether such courses could provide quality education. The outcome of the discussion did not offer definitive answers to these concerns, but the lack of digital literacy, deficiencies in equipment, and ICT orientation in the educational systems of member states were indicated as the primary challenges to developing online open courses in Europe by the participants.

Fighting criminality by collecting personal data?

Cyber criminality has, without a doubt, changed the law; not only on the level of nation-states, but also in terms of Europe itself. Consequently, it is not surprising to find great interest in problematic cases that have been dealt with by the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European Union.



Participants experiencing how technology and fitness can go along with the iDance Machine



Simply put; every time a citizen's data is gathered and utilised by a police force, we face a conflict between the right to personal privacy and the need for public security.

Some might argue that if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear. But do we need our personal information to be accessible to everyone? The European Union, has until now, preferred to rely on compromises between freedom and security, rather than addressing problems directly. Even if we ignore the numerous concerns, questions, and anxieties over illegal misuse of personal data, one crucial thing is still apparent; in spite of the fact that the European Union continues to attempt to clarify legal boundaries and promote awareness of behaviour in the online world, it has somehow failed to come up with practical solutions. The issue of anonymity was raised in many of the activities at the EYE.

“It is crucial for a lot of people that their anonymity is protected online, that they have the right to remain anonymous”, said Gregor Schamschula, one of the participants.

Fraternité (brotherhood)

Do increased opportunities for participation also lead to greater cohesion in society? The search for a feeling of acceptance is common to all humans, and is challenged more than ever by the borderless nature of the online sphere. However, institutions such as the European Union have attempted to appeal to citizens across the continent and create a sense of 'brotherhood', in which young people participate in higher education exchange programmes and politicians stand together against the financial crisis.

The game industry hopes to impact society

A rather surprising perspective could be found in the many panel discussions and workshops at the European Youth Event that revolved around the topics of programming, educational games, and the game industry in general.



Rapporteur exposing ideas from EYE panels at the closing plenary

While it may seem odd to associate these topics with the concept of a unified European identity, reading between the lines offers some insights:

“For decades, game developers and gamers have perceived video games as a means of entertainment. Inevitably, sceptics insisted that video games were producing a generation of alienated, anti-social, aggressive young people, said game design consultant Konstantin Mitgutsch. Today, we are moving towards the development of educational video games that make you move, make you think, and make you avoid conflict. We are developing video games which are more than simply entertaining, but could lead to a revolutionary milestone in education and impact society in a positive way”, he continued.

A real dialogue between politicians and citizens?

Could digital solutions truly bring different groups of people together and thus facilitate societal cohesion? The Union feels abstract and distant to many EU citizens, and they don't see its impact on their everyday lives.

“Current digital platforms are about delivering a message, not about conversation. GovFaces uses the power of social media to connect citizens and politicians. Politicians have Facebook and Twitter accounts where they talk, they post photos, but they do not interact.

On GovFaces, however, they cannot broadcast, but only interact”, said Connor Sattely, Chief Operating Officer of GovFaces.com.

Here, the politician has a profile, and citizens add questions, ideas or proposals, which can be up-voted or down-voted. The politician can then answer the questions with a written answer or a video message. Currently, 45 politicians are using the platform to interact with citizens.

In a fast-changing global community where everyone is immersed in data, where information travels around the world in seconds, and people from different continents can connect with each other by simply clicking a mouse, the potential impact of the internet on the future of our world is top of the agenda in the European Union.

“I believe that through virtual spaces, young Europeans can communicate their ideas freely, irrelevant of where they live”, said Benedicte King from the Ludwigsbourg Initiative.

According to her, the increasingly powerful online communication system could serve as a bridge between different cultures, ideas, and people from all over Europe, and could begin to shape the future of Europe in collaboration with the young people that will be responsible for it in a few years' time.

Thinking out of the box – Digital Revolution

Some examples of the ideas brought forward and discussed by young participants during the EYE:

Digital rights

The rights of internet users should be global and equal, and the equality of information as well as the right to privacy and data protection should be a human right.

Media free zones

Create Media Free Zones to be able to have a break from IT.

Digital education

Teach digital skills as well as awareness about digital rights and data privacy in school to raise generation of holistic digital experts.

Investments

More investments in new European digital technologies as well as EU funding of NGOs working on the improvement of data protection.

Digital constitution

We need a European convention for the digital future, consisting of citizens and representatives of all spheres of society from all EU countries in order to create a digital constitution. This constitution should set out the enforceable rights individuals should have regarding digital communication, i.e. the right of access, the right to business but also the right to privacy and data protection. Furthermore, it must set out the maxims for a genuinely European IT infrastructure.

Technical innovation

More EU innovation & cooperation in the field of internet security and cloud; Support to create a piracy risk indicator as well as a European antivirus programme that should be affordable if not for free.

Wi-Fi for everyone

Free and open Wi-Fi and Internet everywhere and for everyone.

Privacy & data protection

Create a European Citizens Protection Agency (ECPA) that is responsible to secure the EU citizens' rights for online safety and privacy! Europe should be the digital leader with an expertise and focus in privacy protection and security, defining higher security standards for software and hardware producers.

Transparency

Create an independent EU media channel for more transparency.

Open access

Open access to knowledge and research publications, encourage open source software and free culture (film, music, games).

Shaping the future of the internet

– A commentary by the European Youth Forum

Young European citizens are among the most connected and skilled internet and new media users in the world. In more than 25 countries the penetration of internet use amongst young people exceeds 95%, while approximately 63% of people aged 16-24 are already using mobile internet⁵. Youth has become the most relevant target group for internet and content providers and one of the most active groups producing and disseminating information through new media. Ensuring reliable and fast access to the internet, the right to privacy and data protection, freedom of expression and citizen participation are some of the main concerns that have been expressed by young people and youth organisations in Europe over the past few years.

The EYE was an opportunity to address the so-called “Digital Revolution” and to use the occasion as momentum to open-up decision-making processes regarding the future of the internet to young European citizens. The 5,500 young people present in Strasbourg were joined by hundreds of connected Europeans.

A Digital end-to-end Youth Event

The European Youth Event was conceived under a digital end-to-end participation format. Before, during and after the event participants were able to interact and provide ideas using digital tools. Furthermore, the social

media profiles of the European Parliament and of the European Youth Forum enacted a live conversation during the event in order to open the event to young people that weren't able to be in Strasbourg.

Young people had the opportunity to share their views on the digital revolution during the three days of the EYE. Participants engaged in discussions on the power of social media to open up political processes and increase participation of citizens as well as the complex issues of big data as a modern currency and the impact on internet users' rights.

The European Youth Forum and the Digital Revolution

Navigating the vastly complex and continuously developing area of the digital revolution is an enormous challenge but one that the European Youth Forum is committed to engaging with. The European Union needs to take a pro-active approach to communications, ensuring that the rights of its citizens are protected and that policy remains relevant and current. In particular, the Youth Forum stresses the following:

• A rights-based approach

The development of new media policy and internet governance must be a user-centered process, maintaining a focus on democratic values, freedom and human rights, as well as giving equal web opportunities to all.

• A transversal and comprehensive perspective

The Digital Revolution should not focus only on getting every European digital, but also in creating innovation ecosystems to engage long-term solutions to the most urgent problems facing young people. Developing reliable internet policy at the European Level is the first step to fostering the creation of tools that would allow young people and youth organisations to co-create meaningful projects.

• Involvement of Youth Organisations

Young people and their organisations have a role to play in advocating for the rights of young people online and offline and should therefore be recognised as an important stakeholder in the process of discussing the rules governing the internet and new media policy. Youth organisations bring a very specific and essential youth voice to on-going debates.

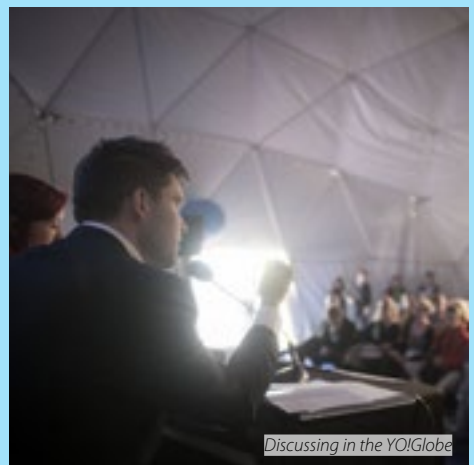
• Digital solutions to urgent issues facing young people

The need for quality jobs, quality education and, overall, stronger autonomy and inclusion in society should steer the priorities of the Digital Agenda at the European and National levels. In terms of employment, new media and information technologies are crucial in fostering innovation and youth entrepreneurship. Education has also been recognised as a crucial factor for the integration of new media and the internet into our lives.

• New media and non-formal education

Increasingly, education has been recognised as the crucial factor for the integration of new media into our lives. However, access to internet is either non-existent or insufficient in many public schools across Europe. The Youth Forum sees reforms, in terms of e-learning, digital access in schools, e-books and e-materials as well as the integration of new media into curricula, as essential to ensuring that current and future generations are equipped to face the challenges of the society they live in. In particular, youth organisations should promote digital media skills for young people through non-formal education.

³Digital Agenda Scoreboard 2013: <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/sites/digital-agenda/files/DAE%20SCOREBOARD%202013%20-%205WD%202013%202017%20FINAL.pdf>





The Future of the European Union: Can the younger generation make it better?

The European Union is developing continuously, as it has ever since its inception. The participants to the EYE were invited to engage in discussions, panels, role-play games, and many other activities, with the goal of considering what the future has in store for the EU.

When the European project was founded in 1952, it was Robert Schuman's dream that it would eventually evolve into a deeply integrated Union; it was – and still is – however, impossible to foresee all of the challenges that this would entail. During an ideas check session aimed at raising citizens' awareness of the need to balance democracy and efficiency, young idea-givers and policy-makers were brought together to discuss potential reforms within the context of European integration. One of the most prominent issues on the agenda was how to include young people and members of marginalised groups in European legislation.

Is European politics elitist?

Monika Kalinowska, a young participant from Poland, drew attention to the question of the professionalisation of politics and the widespread assumption that, as she framed it, European politics is for 'the rich':

"The elitist cloak of European politics creates far more controversy than any lack of transparency with respect to the European Council. While any recommendation to make EU politics more inclusive and less elitist can easily ensure higher levels of public support for certain political actors, it fails to capture the complexity of politics in general."

While the intention was for idea-givers and policy-makers to share the floor equally, Anna Burek noticed that the policy-makers had a tendency to pay less attention to those who were attempting to offer solutions;

"The ideas given by the idea-givers were hardly discussed – they were voted as good or bad, not much more," she said.

Soetkin Verhaegen from Belgium agreed:

"We have to be aware that those meetings are mostly about chattering and empty promises; at the same time, however, the fact that they exist means that we're taking a step in the right direction."

Suggestions from participants in the event included promoting gender equality, a united Europe in terms of both politics and economies, and youth mobility. Many of the participants thought that the sharing of economic and political interests is one of the most important benefits offered by the EU.



The Future of the European Union

A Union for whom?

The participants in many of the activities mentioned several threats to the Union's existence; the worst of these included the marginalisation of smaller countries, the rise of nationalism, and Euro-scepticism. When discussing the EU's weaknesses, the overall feeling was of a lack of European 'pride' and common external action, rather than unity.

"It's crucial that young people start thinking about the weaknesses and threats to the European Union, because then they can overcome them. It's also important for young people to hear and understand the arguments of both Euro-sceptics and pro-Europeans", said Federico Guerrieri, the Secretary General of the Young European Federalists (JEF), during one of the sessions.

During a quick-fire style session, each member of the discussion panel was allowed to speak for two minutes; eight speakers from various fields, including Members of the European Parliament, youth activists, and journalists, commented on a wide range of topics, covering migration, elections, quotas for women, education, and youth unemployment, among others. One of the topics discussed was the role of young people in the European Union, which sparked a great discussion in the chamber of the European Parliament:

"Saying that young people are the future has often been a way of saying 'you get to make decisions tomorrow,'" said Emma Mustala, from the Finnish National Youth Council.

Peter Oomsels, the Vice-President of JEF Europe from Belgium, suggested the idea of a new central government for the Eurozone countries:

"We can't manage the currency of 18 countries while making decisions for 28"

A coloured cheek for a colourful weekend



Some topics were discussed with the audience, who had the opportunity to ask questions and vote on proposals from the idea-givers. While the improving of awareness of the right to privacy online proposal was approved of by 83.7% of those who voted, the voting on a gender quota removal had a much closer result – close to half of those who voted agreed with removal, 35% were against, and 17% abstained.

"If I got a job, I would wonder if it was simply because I was filling a quota, or if it was due to my qualifications", said M. Mehmood, a panellist from Denmark, commenting on the idea of introducing quotas for women in employment.

Education on the agenda

'What Education for Europe?', which was the topic for a pre-lunchtime discussion at the YO!Globe on 9 May, could be read as a question or, alternatively, as an exasperated plea, depending on your country, age, and economic philosophy. The audience of 60, predominantly current or future university students, were able to express their approval, or lack of, using paper signs which, ironically enough, used a concept taken from the website that serves as the greatest threat to any kind of study or concentration – Facebook likes.

During the event hosted by ESU and OBESSU, two organisations which represent students at schools and universities across Europe, the wind shook the white tent of the YO!Globe violently at times, and gave everyone present a vivid idea of what it would be like to live inside a golf ball.

Inevitably, the subject of money, and the question of who pays for education, came to dominate the conversation.

“Education is not free, someone has to pay for it - like your parents paid for yours with their taxes”, said Federico Potocnik, who advocates a form of delayed payment for university, a remark that prompted one audience member to shout out that such a step would constitute progressive taxation. *“The more responsibility you give the state, the less you have yourself, and you become a pawn for politics”,* Federico Potocnik added.

Thomas Maes, Secretary General of the Young European Socialists, outlined a series of points which emphasised the dangers of viewing education as a factory for labour:

“Education should be a path to fulfilment, and charging for it is a way to ensure that inequality will persist throughout the ages”, he said.

A forest of ‘likes’ were raised by the crowd and the debate, though technical at times, reinforced the central concern of students around Europe; that education in the twenty-first century is inevitably intertwined with fears of how to pay for it.

Equality

An important part of the discussions of the EYE was the issue of inclusion, and how to ensure

equal rights and protections for everyone, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion. Alva Dahn from Sweden said:

“All of the problems we have with discrimination, I think we can solve by educating people; it’s all about not having enough knowledge. We have to educate people so that they understand what an immigrant actually does, so that people don’t buy into the propaganda - that immigration is all about us gaining or losing money - because it’s about so much more. Immigration is also about gaining or losing culture - mainly gaining”.



Two young artists performing in the circus show

The Future of the European Union

Connecting over the Atlantic

The purpose of 'Strasbourg Calling', a videoconference moderated by Andreas Galanakis, Policy Director at the American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union, was to investigate and discuss relations between the EU and the United States. On the European side were participants of the EYE, while American students represented the USA. Together, they discussed the issue of surveillance in light of the NSA revelations, what measures to take in order to end poverty, joining forces to thwart terrorism, and how to respond to the threat of Russia. While there was an agreement that the NSA affair had become, in essence, a media circus, the issue of ending poverty sparked a lively debate across the Atlantic; in the end, the consensus was that pooling resources with the US was fundamental in tackling global poverty.

Dealing with Euro-scepticism

With large areas of Europe struggling with soaring youth unemployment - as high as 60% in some regions - there are fears that growing political disillusionment in young people, coupled with the proliferation of Euro-scepticism, may serve to undermine the future of European integration. There are, however, those who make it their business to engage young people with the workings of the EU, striving to stem the tide of political apathy. Alesandra Kluczka, coordinator of the 'Y Vote 2014' campaign, is one of them:

"With the European election of 2009, the turnout was only 29% among young people. The main problem is a lack of information - they don't feel represented, they don't feel understood. Workshops like ours inform young

Young participants taking the seats of MEPs in the plenary chamber



people about how the EU functions, which encourages them to participate directly. Also, if you start voting when you're young, you're more likely to continue to do so when older", she said.

Alesandra Kluczka was still carefully optimistic about the future of the EU:

"There are threats of nationalism, Euroscepticism, and radical movements; but when I look at young people in countries like my own, Poland, I realise that we are the generation with the opportunities our parents didn't have. Now we have a border-less system, and are enjoying a longer period of peace than any other continent. We shouldn't be so pessimistic; Europe has achieved a lot".

Working together to resolve youth unemployment

With the present economic and societal crises, the need for citizens' cooperation seems to be more crucial than ever. In this context, non-governmental organisations which seek to cultivate proactive attitudes among young

people play a crucial role in European society. Youthnet Hellas, for example, which was awarded the European Citizens' Prize in 2013, encourages young people in Greece to be more proactive in seeking out opportunities for work. Due to a youth unemployment rate approaching 60%, two choices emerge for the country: take action, or languish in the status quo. In this sense, voluntary action appears as a way to overcome the barriers which prevent an active participation in community life. Becoming a volunteer does not necessarily mean working without getting paid; rather, it is a matter of adopting a positive attitude towards society.

Manos Pavlakis from Youthnet Hellas pointed out that young people can improve their situation by taking one or more of three paths: education, employment, and voluntary action. To tackle the problem, Youthnet Hellas has taken an active part in 172 projects over the last five years:

"It is important that young people understand that they have a lot of options by getting involved in activities," Manos Pavlakis said, and continued; *young people in Europe share common needs, interests, and concerns".*

Board games for understanding the EU

The use of games for learning about the European Union and the diversity of the member states was a prominent feature of the EYE. The Eurocracy game, developed by Jaap Hoeksma, aims to explain the Lisbon Treaty:

"The EU is a democracy consisting of 28 smaller ones; it is a new form, which is complicated, and therefore it can best be explained through a game", he said.

Hans Christian John, co-founder of Move On Europe, an online platform promoting greater co-operation and integration in Europe, led the 'More Democracy Please!' discussion. In this game, each participant came up with a word or phrase that represents what Europe means to them; family, freedom, opportunity, and multiculturalism were all invoked, and as Hans Christian John noted down the words, he observed that:

"Nobody knows what Europe is - it's messy, but it's nice!"



Participants watching and cheering during a spectacle in the flower bar

The Future of the European Union

Based on the initial discussion of what the EU stands for, the participants moved on to discuss the democratic foundations of the Union, the legislative procedures, and the democratic legitimacy of European institutions. The participants proposed the need for a convention on civil rights, and suggested that European issues should be discussed at a national level in each member state. Participants also questioned whether the fact that the Commission is not directly elected creates a democratic 'deficit', and it was proposed that the Members of Parliament should be open about who they intend to vote for as president of the Parliament before the elections. As the workshop was wrapping up, Hans Christian John said he would pass the ideas on:

"We need to let the future Members of Parliament know about your ideas. What they will do with them, I don't know."

Intervention from the audience



Thinking out of the box – the future of Europe

Some examples of the ideas brought forward and discussed by young participants during the EYE:

Have a voice

More young people are needed in politics to express and address the young generation's interests and challenges. Increase youth representation in the European Parliament – introduce quotas for young people under 30. Have regular events like EYE 2014 to get young generation heard. Extension of the vote to all 16 and 17 year olds across Europe.

One EU voting system

Equal voting systems in all EU countries. Make online voting possible. Transnational lists for parliamentary elections (especially for leading candidates).

European mobility

For the young generation there needs to be a European Student Transport Card (Interrail Card), which integrates national and international mobility programmes.

Social Europe

Europe as a global role model in defending and ensuring the protection of human rights, and playing a profound and active role in promoting progressive social policies. Internally, EU ensures (e)quality of life for every European citizen by introducing unconditional basic income, and common or at least comparable minimum wages.

European identity

Create a democratic Union by strengthening representative, participatory and direct democracy. Enhance exchange programmes between European youth in order to enhance mutual understanding and foster a common European identity, or introduce one year of European travel, in which everyone who has completed a qualified education (vocational training, degree) gets a grant to travel Europe for 12 months as long as s/he is willing to participate in voluntary work for at least 7 months of that trip. There will be a database of volunteering opportunities.

Education

Political and civic education as primary objective in secondary school, including compulsory units about the values, history, functioning, as well as duties and responsibilities of the European Union and its member states, preferably online and interactive to meet other students from all over Europe

Speaking with one voice

The European Union should speak with one voice about migration, economic and foreign policy as well as international affairs. Competition among member states should be reduced, instead solidarity enhanced.

United States of Europe

Europe must finally overcome national boundaries and become a state in its own right. A central European Government and a European president shall be elected directly by the people. Create a European Nationality (passport, common values, knowledge about other countries, mobility, etc.). Introduce a European national holiday that is celebrated every year Europe-wide.

Transparency

Adopt stronger regulations for lobbies to limit their influence and increase transparency of political decision making process.

Investments

Invest more money into communication of the achievement and objectives as well as responsibilities of the European Union.

A stronger and more democratic union

– A commentary by the European Youth Forum

In February 2014, around 5.4 million young people under 25 were unemployed in the EU, comprising 22,9% of young people¹. The youth unemployment crisis has had a profound effect on young people and the societies in which they live. Young people are experiencing increased unemployment. The European Youth Event highlighted that European Union matters for young people. Nevertheless, young people do not want any kind of European Union, but one that provides a vision as well as answers to their expectations.

The EU is at a crucial juncture with the current financial and monetary crises. Young people are facing the consequences of the crisis and austerity already today, being more and more exposed to unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. In addition, the current intergenerational dynamics are outsourcing one generation's problems to the next one, as shown by current crises and unsolved ecological problems. Therefore, it is important to bring young people to the core of the EU agenda and start a reflection on the place of young people in society if we want to be able to meet the challenges the European Union is and will remain confronted with in the coming years.

The Future of Europe at the EYE

Young participants at the EYE debated the future of Europe in a large number of activities. They highlighted the need for EU institutions to be more accessible, more transparent and closer to the (young) citizens, envisaging an increased role for the European Parliament.

They emphasised the role of the media, social media and of citizenship education to better explain what the EU does, and the need to pro-actively increase young people's weight in European decision-making. Quality Jobs were also high on the list of concerns raised by young participants, articulating that current austerity measures are detrimental to social policy, at a time when one out of four young people is living in poverty.

The European Youth Forum and the Future of Europe

The European Youth Forum is proud of what young people have shown in these debates: their engagement, their vision, but also their realism and their ability to propose concrete measures to the EU. We are also happy that many of our demands for the next mandate of the European Parliament and European Commission, as expressed in our campaign LoveYouthFuture, were strongly echoed in Strasbourg.

Indeed, we are convinced that for the EU to improve the situation of young people in Europe, it needs to urgently take action on the five following topics:

• A More Democratic Union

The European Union needs to strengthen its democracy, both fostering the use of the European Citizens' initiative and towards the creation of transnational election lists for European Parliamentary elections and the direct election of the European Commission's President. To ensure young people are

heard, it is also essential that European and national parties include more young people as candidates to electable positions, and that Member States of the European Union lower the voting age of European Parliament elections as well as all their elections to 16 years of age.

• Sustainable New Growth

The way out of the crisis and, in a broader frame, the future of the EU also lies in creating new growth, following a socially and environmentally more sustainable development model. Entrepreneurship and the green economy thus have a huge importance for youth autonomy, either as businesses established by young people or as a source of employment for young people. We call on the EU to combat youth unemployment and support a more sustainable economy. The EU should push the Member States towards more sustainable models of economy. In parallel, it should ensure that the quality of jobs created matches minimum standards. Notably, systems of minimum wages need to be established, as well as a European status for interns.

• A Stronger Union

For young people's expectations to be met, it is also crucial that the European Union takes a leap forward. Many challenges can no longer be handled by the Member States alone, notably in terms of economic, fiscal, environmental, social and employment policy. The EU should seize to their full extent the competences it already has, to strike a new and fairer balance between austerity measures and social policies. Similarly, we expect the EU to make



bold use of the provision included in Article 165 TFEU to "encourage [...] the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe", and reinforce the space for young people in European democracy.

• New Resources for New Investment

The European Union will also need the means to act on such crucial topics, and this means new resources for new investment. The European Union should be given the ability to raise its own resources through direct taxation on environmental impact and through a European financial transaction tax.

• A Social Europe

Finally, the European Union has set standards for the defence of human rights, and built on the values of democracy and the rule of law, allowing generations to overcome old antagonisms and live in peace. In parallel, it has developed a European Social Model covering the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of health, allowing its citizens to live in dignity. It is essential for new generations to benefit from this *acquis* and therefore it is crucial for the European Union to firmly stand by these values and to ensure that social reforms will not be at the cost of young people.



Participants and an EYE volunteer attending a panel



Sustainability Creating a greener Europe

Sustainability is a broad topic that covers a wide variety of issues – from how to secure energy resources and possible solutions to the problem of overfishing, to public spending, control of financial markets and world trade. Participants at the EYE tackled the theme with enthusiasm, contributing to debates and ideas labs and gaining inspiration from sharing of good practice amongst peers. They focus on how to embed the idea of sustainability into the economy, environment, and society, thereby creating a better Europe.

Europe - eco-friendly and sustainable?

In one of the sessions, some 60 participants from many different countries had the opportunity to present their views concerning a more sustainable and eco-friendly Europe. 18 year-old Philippe from Switzerland said that we must stop talking and instead send a clear message, and Imogen from the United Kingdom added that she would like to think that, as a young citizen of the European Union, she could have an impact on its politics regarding sustainability.

At the end of the session, the participants came up with five visions for European sustainability. These included the concept of a 'zero waste' society, which centred on the design of entirely recyclable products, new ways to produce energy, an emphasis on local food production, and the creation of a sustainable transport system at the European level. Some of the most frequently highlighted aspects were the need for better understanding and education regarding the environment and sustainability, the issue of access to clean water, and that tackling the issue requires collective action at a European, rather than national, level.

Theatre and role play on sustainability

A valuable addition to the EYE was the political theatre piece 'We've got a Crisis' by Wolfgang Wiegard, Chairman of the German Council of Economic Experts. With the support of three actors, the play dealt with complex issues such as the conversion of nonperforming real estate loans, the negative effect of snowball systems, and the question of the further existence of the Euro in a whimsical and humorous manner. The roughly 110 participants were treated to live music, videos, and a spontaneous sing-along.

In a role-play activity focused on the environment, climate, and sustainability in the European Union, participants at the EYE were invited to take on the role of Members of the European Parliament. Divided into the seven European Union party groups, the participants discussed the 2030 framework for climate and energy policies, based on real-life legislation. One of the participants, Hanan Kostet from Belgium, was of the opinion that the EU should focus more on giving benefits to initiatives that support and focus on green solutions, rather than penalising those working against sustainability.

Sustainability



“The EU has the power to influence this through a shift in the mentality of consumers, by pushing research and development towards greener solutions, and by thinking long-term. We need a big change - otherwise the situation won’t improve”, she said.

The ‘MEPs for a day’ adopted three ambitious targets for 2030; a 55% reduction in greenhouse gases, renewable energy usage at 45%, and overall energy savings of 40%. To finance these achievements, they adopted a Member State responsibility to cover extra costs, and suggested a reform of the EU Emissions Trading System by introducing a minimum and maximum price for carbon emissions. The hotly debated topic of biofuel resulted in a vote to maintain incentives to, for example, contribute to easing poverty in the developing world. Moreover, the authorising of shale gas extraction was delegated to the community level.

Fair Trade

Fittingly, considering that 10 May marked the annual World Fair Trade Day, a debate organised by the Fair Trade Advocacy Office discussed the relationship between Fair Trade and the EU. In his opening remarks, Alexander

Flores, a member of the Fair Trade producer organisation ‘Aprainores’, based in El Salvador, talked about the importance of Fair Trade for communities in developing countries, stating that equitable payment is essential for development at both social and individual levels.

“You are also helping the kids from these families to go to school”, he said.

Regarding Free Trade Agreements, Alexander Flores stressed the importance of taking basic human rights into account, ensuring decent working conditions, and prohibiting child labour in developing countries. International aid should focus more on the transfer of knowledge and technological innovations than on money.

Climate change

An important issue in the discussions over the two days of the EYE was the climate, and what the European citizens themselves should do to lessen their impact on the environment. The Young Friends of the Earth Europe organised an interactive workshop where the participants, divided into groups representing the continents, were invited to discuss the responsibilities of Europe in terms of climate change:

“Even if the problem is not affecting us now, it will affect a lot of people in the future”, said Cahner Max from Spain.

While Joost de Moor from the Netherlands said that:

“Governments need to push to change the behaviour of humans in order to ensure that citizens begin to take more responsibility.”

Call for incentives and support for fishermen

In a panel discussion on the future of sustainable fishing, participants noted the recent achievements of the EU with regard to legislative changes, but also the great challenges involved in implementation and achieving a common EU policy, in spite of the fact that some countries are much more affected than others. The participants criticised the strong lobbying which recently led to the rejection of a phase-out of destructive deep-sea bottom trawling by a thin majority in the Parliament, and it was felt that the issue should be put on the agenda again. Moreover, many participants, in particular those of southern European origin, called for more incentives and support for fishermen in their countries, in order to, for example, earn a living with fishing tourism. They felt that the quotas and excessive EU regulation negatively affect their communities. Panellists and participants alike suggested greater flexibility with regard to quotas so that less fish is thrown back into the sea, and for incentives for a diversification of the European diet towards other fish species.



Another glimpse of the circus show in the flower bar

Three EYE volunteers in one of the many helpdesks around the Parliament



Standing up for the environment

Energy security, the transition to renewable energies, improvements in energy efficiency, and tackling climate change were at the heart of another panel discussion titled 'We've got the power...!'. One of the key issues discussed by participants and panellists involved the challenge of achieving energy security while respecting the relevant economic, environmental, and social aspects of sustainability. With the current diplomatic crisis between the EU and Russia, the question of reducing European dependency on Russian gas and oil was raised. One of the solutions suggested was to look to Canada and its vast oil and gas resources; but are the tar sands being exploited there, and are the tremendous social and environmental impacts of the difficult extraction process acceptable to the EU, which aims to be a global leader in sustainability? Kait Bolongaro, living in Paris, France didn't think so:

"If the European Union doesn't stand up for the environment, who will? The recent softening of opinion regarding the proposed Fuel Quality Directive, which will allow tar sands into the EU, should be repealed."

A greater consensus was achieved on the importance of fostering renewables and an increase in energy efficiency; even the panellists asked for more youth participation on such issues.



Sustainable organising

Organising an event as big as the EYE requires a great deal of logistics and planning in order for it to be as sustainable as possible. Ewa Iwaszuk, a volunteer with International Young Nature Friends, shared a few ideas for making the EYE greener:

“The big question is how to bring 5,500 people together for an event that only lasts two days. Everyone is flying, but the organisers should think about the carbon footprint and encourage people to take the train. I know that only a few people took a Eurorail ticket.”

While there was a lot of food on offer at the event, Ewa Iwaszyk would have liked to have seen more options for vegetarians and vegans:

“I think that most of the food sold during this event is produced locally, which is good, but there should be more on offer for vegans and vegetarians”.

“On the global political stage, the European Union is trying to act as a role model in terms of climate issues; it would be great if this awareness was also reflected at events like this. Organising such a huge youth event could be a source of inspiration, it could even be possible to arrange it as a zero-carbon event,” she concluded.

Thinking out of the box – Sustainability

Some examples of the ideas brought forward and discussed by young participants during the EYE:

Reduce waste & emissions

Aim to achieve a 'zero waste' society by 2030, with standards of 100 % recyclable products, longer life cycles of products and the development of new recycling methods. Reduce emissions by reducing packaging and transport. Effectively combat redundant pollution, e.g. through education. Ban plastic bags in stores.

Common goods

Clean and free available water for all. As a natural resource and as a human right it shall not be left to the private market.

Social Europe

Europe has to effectively help those states affected the most by the rising sea levels as it has a historical responsibility in the process of global warming.

Transport

There should be a European high speed rail network that is subsidized in order to make it affordable and considerably cheaper than flights. This network may not only focus on the European center but must also reach the periphery in order to promote sustainable transportation everywhere.

Sustainable food

Emphasize the idea of regional, seasonal and organic food production (no GMOs), develop «Food Miles» system (= Costs of food include its hidden costs, e.g. welfare of animals), adopt a unified waste policy for food industry, educate people about food production and food waste and give incentives for a diversification of the European diet.

Incentives

Give benefits to initiatives that support and focus on green solutions, rather than penalise those working against sustainability. Give, for example financial incentives for sustainable consumption.

Education

Better understanding and education regarding the environment and sustainability. Sustainability will be an elementary school subject. In public media there should be more information about sustainability and ecological transition in EU.

Ecological and social footprint

We need a transparent system for companies engaged with sustainability and human rights. This system measures the companies' ecological and social footprint.

Renewable energy

Support affordable, renewable energy and complete ban of nuclear power. Make a plan to have coal-free, green energy supply by 2040 if it is to remain a trustworthy advocate of CO2 reduction. Invest in sustainable development, e.g. research focused on new ways to produce green energy, by binding plans in an international context.

Economic measures

Abolish all exemptions for energy intensive industries – let those pay which are most responsible for climate change.

Young people holding the key to a more sustainable future

– A commentary by the European Youth Forum

The startling figure that 29.7% of young people in the EU aged 15 – 24 are at risk of poverty or social exclusion puts the global development agenda into a stark context. The failure of governments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals or to agree a real and binding commitment on climate change are not 'southern issues' but very real challenges also facing the current and next generations in Europe. The recognition by the Rio +20 conference of the synergies between sustainability and the global development agenda was an important step forward, cementing the interdependencies between people and the environment. The new 'Sustainable Development Goals', once defined, will shape the lives of young people in Europe and the world aiming to address amongst others, poverty, education, healthcare, employment and environmental challenges.

The current debate on the new Global Agenda is therefore central for young people. The European Youth Forum aims to ensure that young people and youth organisations are considered indispensable actors in both the development and implementation of a global agenda that is able to deliver on the improvement of the situation of young people in Europe and around the world while clearly taking their rights into account.

Sustainability at the European Youth Event

The EYE provided the space for young people to discuss and share their visions for sustainable development. The debates analysed complex issues such as energy production and use, tax evasion and the instability of financial markets as well as exploring alternative strategies such as co-operatives. Young people identified sustainability as one of the most important issues affecting young people around the world and challenged decision-makers to take pro-active and urgent steps to mitigate climate and human catastrophe.

The European Youth Forum and the new global agenda

The European Youth Forum considers the following to be essential elements of an effective post 2015 sustainable development agenda:

- **An ambitious new global commitment on sustainable development**

The European Union must play a leading role in securing a far-reaching global agreement that emphasises the accountability of governments and includes effective enforcement mechanisms. To successfully address the complex and interrelated economic, social and environmental challenges confronting the world today and to deliver on the ambition of eradicating poverty through sustainable development,

“business as usual” is not an option.

A fundamental shift in world leaders’ approach to the global challenges is needed to build a transformative agenda for young people that helps create the Europe and the world they want. The new agenda must comprise clear and measurable goals that quantify progress towards eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development by 2030. The development of such an agenda must be rights-based, non-regressive, universally accepted and applied.

• **Comprehensive investment in young people as key actors in ensuring sustainable development**

Young people aged 15–24 make up approximately 18% of the world’s population. Real investment in young people is essential in order to enable them to take a decisive role in the post 2015 agenda. Investment in Quality Education is crucial. By 2030, universal and free access to quality formal and non-formal education at all levels must be guaranteed. Quality Education is learner-centred, inclusive and norm-critical, empowering young people to be active global citizens. Equally, investment in Quality Jobs is a pre-requisite for sustainable development. By 2030 decent work must be guaranteed for all young people including a decent and fair wage, safe working conditions, representation and social protection.

• **Engagement with young people and youth organisations.**

Achieving quality youth participation is vital in order to foster a culture of responsible, proactive and democratic citizenship. Young people must be empowered and included in social, political and economic decision-making, including their meaningful participation in the formulation and implementation of development-related policies and actions. Youth organisations are an essential partner in developing sustainable youth participation processes. They must be recognised for their role in empowering young people through non-formal education and should be considered a constant partner in decision-making processes.



The YO!Village tents in front of the Parliament

• Significant shift in investment and world trade models

Real progress on sustainable development requires a radical shift in the way global investments and trade are managed. Accountability and responsibility must be at the heart of any model adopted and the global community must be led by the principle of international solidarity. A concerted effort must be made involving key actors such as the ILO and the WTO to tackle distorting and unfair subsidies and promote Fair Trade. In tandem, better regulation and supervision of the financial sector must be prioritised and just taxation systems put into place.

• Changing consumption and production patterns

Unsustainable consumption and production patterns need to be tackled urgently. The EU has a particular duty to take action, being responsible for a disproportionate level of global consumption. Consumer education is urgently needed. Citizens need to be made better aware of their responsibilities and the consequences of over-consumption of energy and resources. In parallel, the promotion of alternatives that ensure greater efficiency and a more equitable distribution of consumption must be prioritised. Youth Organisations are a key resource in this, using non-formal education as a proven and effective tool for social change.



The Magic Mirror provided space for lively debates in the YO!Village

#EYE2014 Tweets

Giada Emer @emergjada
@EP_YouthEvent

This should be the beginning! Thank you EYE2014 for your motivation

Pauline Gessant @paulinegessant

It seems that a lot of young people at #EYE2014 are in favour of a more integrated Europe. A lot of hope for the future!

michael mayer @mayer_michl

Please stop promoting Erasmus, mobility and interns as a solution for youth unemployment-it's not! Jobs are!
#yftt #eyestream

Clément Arbib @clearbib

#Digitalrevolution We must protect Intellectual Property for the future of our technologies
#EYE2014 #EYEstream

Line Kuppens @linekuppens

EU anthem @pack_doris singing wholeheartedly! Proud of Europe!

Victor Sole @sule25

We have to build a strong European civil society aimed to defend EU's values and goals
#EYEstream #EYE2014

Natalia Raczynska @raczynskan

@EP_YouthEvent simply amazing!

Elise Drouet @lilite5

Aleksandra Kluczka
#EYE2014 participants share common values
#genderequality, innovation, #mobility

Ali Riza Babaođlan @alibabaoglan

We are very excited to participate #EYE2014 in discussions and hear ideas for a better Europe!

@EP_YouthEvent @Europarl_EN @coe

Androulla Vassiliou
@VassiliouEU

Many ideas voiced for a better Europe. I love seeing young people involved & actively participating.
#EYE2014

David Clark @david_byc

Excellent weekend at @EP_YouthEvent / YO!Fest thanks to everyone who organised it

@Youth_Forum #EYE2014 from @bycLIVE

Raffaele De Marco
@mr_amsterdam92

Great experience, great days, great nights! Merci Strasbourg!

Jaume Duch @jduch

«Feel Europe, live Europe, love Europe.» Happy Europe's Day to all of you.

#EYE2014 #YOFest

@AnniPodimata

Line-Mari Saether
@LineMariSaether

The unemployment in Europe is not the youth's fault. We need an inter-generational perspective to tackle the crisis

European Youth Press
@youthpress

I am still alive and full of energy - that is not a matter of age

@pack_doris #EYE2014 #eymd



European Values Global Player – Fair Player?

While the level of diversity amongst the speakers at the EYE left much to be desired, that of the activities in the programme was far more satisfactory; from panel debates regarding Europe's position as a good neighbour and valuable contributor to the world, with a particular focus on the Ukraine, to Ideas Labs centred on European values in the 21st century, many key issues were discussed.

Gender equality and inter-generational solidarity

Gender as a sociological problem was highlighted during a discussion led by MEP Doris Pack, which focused on exactly how the younger generation may, in the future, bridge the gender gap. The session was entitled '50/50 participation in our generation'; unsurprisingly, however, the panel consisted of three women, and the female to male ratio of the audience was somewhere in the region of 4:1.

"We have to involve men in this fight", said panellist Paula Nehrer, of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

Looking closely at the composition of the 500 speakers at the event – the ration of men and women being 2:1 - however, one might argue that men were adequately represented, and that it may be more relevant to ensure that women are allowed to take on the title of 'expert' in an official European event such as the EYE.

Bearing in mind the ageing population of Europe and a current average age for MEPs of 55, participants and organisers agreed on the importance of fostering an inter-generational dialogue – particularly with regard to

decision-makers.

"I do not want to focus on any age border. It is all a part of personal and cultural opinion, said Sofia Valenti from Italy, during the workshop which focused on overcoming prejudices against other generations."

According to Hu Hao, born in China but living and studying in France, Chinese parents are giving up everything to bring up their children.

"Young people, however, don't really appreciate that", he said.

On the other hand, French student Benjamin Ahamada, born in Cameroon, has had quite a different experience:

"We don't have the same relation to the elderly as young people do in France. We don't have stereotypes and never disrespect old people".

Political comedy

"This is a rather unusual show - if I can even call it a show. I don't usually have people taking notes about what I say. Also, 11.30 am is not usually joke time", said Andy Zaltzman, commenting on his speech 'Can we laugh about everything?' at the EYE.

European Values

Political comedian, Andy Zaltzmann

It certainly was unusual; a thoroughly interesting experience for the audience of 100 young Europeans who listened and laughed during the 90 minutes of discussion about the purposes and limits of comedy.

“Comedy is pointless; it is not intended to be offensive, just funny. But whether or not it actually is offensive is up to the observer”, explained the British comedian, who describes himself as a pessimist.

The talk, translated simultaneously into several languages, engaged the audience and amused the interpreters, but also raised serious questions about humour. Are there limits to comedy? Can comedy in fact be harmful when addressing societal problems? Tragedies and human suffering related to current or past wars, the group agreed, are topics not to be joked about. Issues around them, however, such as political events, can and indeed should be addressed by comedians who, according to Zaltzmann have an element of responsibility in their work. He said that he himself sets his personal threshold by asking himself whether he would deliver his routine to his mother.

Overall, the audience appeared to appreciate the political comedy:

“It was great; it was a mixture of jokes and some really good points about comedy. It was good that there was a lot of laughter. It cheered me up, and I’m looking forward to talking with other people about comedy and how far you can go with it”, said Daryl Chou from Austria.

Reality check: walking in someone else’s shoes

During the second day of the EYE, a play titled ‘European values: reality check’ took place in the



YO!Village, inviting about 30 EYE participants to watch and become ‘spect-actors’ – audience members who also act, and have the power to change the course of the narrative.

It started of with a performance by the actors, depicting an orchestra in rehearsal and the communication difficulties that arose between musicians who were not satisfied with one of them. Vasya, a shy and timid boy from Belarus, was bullied and teased by the other because of his nationality, and it was shown how they ignored his desire to demonstrate his talent. Later, the audience was encouraged to change the fate of the protagonist and imagine how they would protect themselves from intimidation if they were in Vasya’s shoes. The same performance was staged again, but this time the viewers could stop it at any moment, replace Vanya, and act instead of him. At least five of the participants played the protagonist, and the strategies they used to counter the bullying ranged from making jokes to flattering the bullies. Some of the EYE participants remarked that they had been discriminated

against in the past, and this play showed them alternative ways to react, other than verbal aggression.

Human rights, freedom of speech and hate crimes

In spite of the fact that it overlapped with other themes to an extent, the concept of 'European Values' highlighted issues such as hate speech and cyber-bullying, giving participants the opportunity to discuss the regulations and policies set by the EU with regard to the internet, as well as how we might raise awareness through initiatives such as the Council of Europe's 'No Hate Speech' campaign.

The European Parliament has set itself the goal of promoting human rights causes throughout the world, protecting minorities, and promoting democratic values (not least as regards freedom of information and of the press). In terms of the digital media revolution, the situation is increasingly volatile at present; new methods of restricting freedom of thought are being developed, as are new ways to circumvent these restrictions.

Within the EU itself there exist many forms of legislation which regulate freedom of expression; in some countries, press freedom is extremely limited and journalists must censor their own work, while the situation is far worse outside the EU.

Olivier Basille of Reporters Without Borders, addressed the importance of new and social media in reporting on conflicts, drawing statistics from the RWB's Press Freedom Index for 2014 which show that 17 journalists and 10 netizens have been killed since the beginning of the year; another 174 journalists and 166 netizens have been imprisoned. The index, which is published every year, measures the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. It reflects the degree of freedom that journalists, news organisations, and netizens enjoy in each country, and the efforts made by authorities to ensure respect for this freedom.

While all of these incidents occurred outside of the European Union, Basille stressed that it is not always necessary to look outside of Europe to find human rights violations with regard to press freedom; rather, more than half of the EU countries are placed in the middle of the index.



Talking about experiences of discrimination – the Living Library organised by the Council of Europe

Russia and the European Union

A recurring theme in the discussions regarding freedom of speech and online security was the protection of whistle-blowers. As Oliver Basille stated:

"In Europe and in European politics, there is definitely a lack of civil courage. In this case, the courage was on the side of Russia - we didn't manage to give shelter to a man who revealed that we were all spied upon."

European Values

The audience, consisting of several hundred young people, showed their approval with a sustained round of applause.

In Russia, the situation is particularly bad for the media. Kirill Koroteev, a member of the Russian organisation 'Memorial', which was awarded the Sakharov Prize in 2009, explained that, due to the rapid development of the internet, it has become increasingly difficult for the Russian government to block content; thus, they simply change the structure of the media institutions. The situation for homosexuals in Russia is critical at present, as a young woman in the audience pointed out. Not even the police will protect them from persecution.

"The impunity of the police is probably one of the biggest problems Russia is facing today," said Kirill Koroteev.

Multiculturalism and the winds of populism

Along with immigration, the issue of 'the dark side of globalisation' was also discussed, with a particular focus on human trafficking. In one of the Ideas Labs, the 40 participants were invited to come up with innovative ideas and solutions for creating a better Europe. One of the ideas involved creating European meeting points, not only for young and mobile citizens who are able to move around Europe, but also for elderly people and socially excluded groups in the European public sphere. The most popular proposal was the introduction of a minimum wage in all EU countries and free education for all. At the end of the session, opinions were split:

28 year-old Robin van Leijen from the Netherlands said that, in his view, the focus for the future should be on multiculturalism:

"It should be seen as an opportunity, not a threat."

In connection to multiculturalism and the winds of populism sweeping through Europe, some participants at the EYE also discussed the current situation for immigrants in the EU, both in relation to human trafficking and in terms of people who flee their homes, in search of a better life in Europe.

"I found the debate interesting; coming from Italy and living close to Lampedusa, I am very aware, and see this every day," said Sofia Valenti, and continued: *Single Member States cannot solve the situation on their own. Europe must act together as a whole, and the EU must invest much more in humanitarian assistance."*



Thinking out of the box – European Values

Some examples of the ideas brought forward and discussed by young participants during the EYE:

Involvement

Foster an inter-generational dialogue involving young people – particularly with regard to decision-makers, e.g. by having regular events like the EYE 2014, also on regional levels

Against hatred

The root of the problem with hate crimes against LGBT individuals has to be addressed in order to effectively reduce hatred towards minorities.

Europe for the people

We want an EU in which people are more important than banks and affairs.

No Fortress Europe!

Europe must respect human rights when conducting border controls. Solidarity principles, ethics and shared responsibility to host refugees need to be reinforced.

Exchange and experience

Some ideas: 1) EU sponsored border dinners: Citizens of two countries are transported to a mutual border where they meet and share home-made food and local drinks while getting to know each other; 2) Mandatory European youth exchanges to experience a different part of Europe and in the long run create friendships all over Europe; 3) Creating European meeting points, not only for young and mobile citizens who are able to move around Europe, but also for elderly people and socially excluded groups in the European public sphere

Democracy ranking

The European Parliament should publish a yearly democracy ranking for European states, with those states that fall below a certain line having to defend their policies in front of the European Parliament. If they fail to convince the Parliament, financial transfers should be blocked. The European Parliament should gain the right to suspend the membership in the EU if a country violates European core values.

Values protection

Europe needs a strong code of conduct when it comes to business with third countries, especially those with a disputable reputation regarding good governance and human rights. This should especially apply to arms exports. Moreover the EU institutions have to block cooperation with dictatorships (i.e. trade agreements), even if they are strategic economic partners

Equality

Promote gender equality at all levels of society, equal access to education and jobs, irrespective of sex, gender, religious or ethnic background.

Education

Free education for all, including universities. Introduce a school subject "Europe today" about European history, values, human rights and languages to foster common awareness of our shared values and create a European identity. The EU should also sponsor online education on political and civic aspects accessible to all schools and universities.

Responsible taxation

Enforce high taxes for products that do not respect workers' rights or environmental rules.

Participation, inclusion and youth rights

– A commentary by the European Youth Forum

It is at times of crisis that the values of the EU are most questioned - what should the EU do and not do and in what way? Should the EU focus on doing what it has traditionally done best or should it do what has the greatest beneficial effect on most people? How can the EU ensure its actions do not have unforeseen adverse effects on its citizens, especially the next generation - its young citizens?

The Youth Forum believes that, in the rush to exit the crisis, the EU has left its young citizens behind, with the result that their rights are being trampled upon. Young people are being told that they are responsible for pulling themselves out of the crisis - through unpaid internships & expensive training/education for example. The consequence of this is not only the risk of a lost generation of young people, but that this generation becomes hopeless about any future and will predominantly be drawn from the existing socio-economically disadvantaged - exacerbating even further the existing gap.

However it is clear that Europe-wide problems, such as job security, unemployment, need Europe-wide solutions. Right now, the rights of Europe's young people can be best protected through action at European level.

European Values at the EYE

In order to ensure there is no lost generation in the future and to ensure Europe stays true to its values - the Youth Forum believes the EU needs to take a positive step forward in ensuring the

fulfillment of the rights of its young citizens. This was reflected in the discussions at the EYE - for example a Czech Youth Council discussion about the different aspects of participation and a debate about implementing youth quotas in the EU. The Youth Forum also focused on the multiple discrimination that young people face - whether being gay, disabled, socio-economically disadvantaged etc.

The European Youth Forum and European Values

Ensuring a new EU that remains true to its values and ensures the fulfillment of the rights of its next generation will not be easy. It will require a change of perspective on how the EU acts and a reflection on the consequence of these actions across generations. For example the EU will need to ensure the voices of its young citizens are listened to in the making of policy and legislation affecting them. It will mean less top-down decision-making and more direct democracy. It will mean more investment in young people's present to ensure a future where everybody has a chance to fulfill their potential:

• Investing in youth

The European Youth Forum believes that the EU should focus its resources on supporting environmentally sustainable economic growth and social cohesion that puts human beings and their needs at the centre of decisions that pay special attention to youth and their organisations. The new EU should focus on

innovation, cohesion and youth. Specifically investing in quality education, fighting youth unemployment, orientating youth towards green jobs and supporting young entrepreneurs.

• **A balanced budget focused on growth**

Member States should strive for positive mid and long-term balanced budgets without undermining the welfare state, avoiding that today's generation of young people are burdened by having to pay tomorrow for today's debts.

• **Youth participation**

The EU can best fulfill the rights of young people through ensuring their deep involvement in decision-making regarding policies that affect them - nothing about us, without us. It is beyond time that the EU takes concrete steps to implement its Lisbon Treaty obligation to encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. Among others, we call on Member States of the EU to lower the voting age to 16 in all elections, including the European Elections. Political parties should also be encouraged to have more young candidates in elections.

• **Recognition of the European Youth Forum**

As the platform of youth organisations in Europe, the European Youth Forum is and should be even more sustainably recognised by all EU Institutions (including the Parliament) as a key partner and maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with them on all policies and measures affecting youth.

• **More direct democracy**

To ensure more direct involvement of European citizens, the European Youth Forum supports the creation of transnational election lists for the European Parliament elections.

The Youth Forum and its members, youth organisations from right across Europe, are not alone in believing this. 240 candidates for the European Parliament and 85 elected MEPs from right across political groups and countries signed up to many of these ideas through the LoveYouthFuture campaign.





250 volunteers from Strasbourg helped out during the EYE



Ideas today, actions tomorrow: Young people for a better Europe

As the end of the European Youth Event drew near, the collected ideas for a better Europe were presented by rapporteurs during the closing session in the European Parliament's plenary chamber and handed to MEP Doris Pack, Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education and representative of the European Parliament.

Even after this intense weekend, filled as it was with discussion and debate, role-plays, live cultural and sporting performances, not to mention the nights with concerts and parties, Sunday morning saw the chamber packed with participants who were keen to listen to and comment on the ideas that had been proposed and conclusions that had been drawn during the past two days. Thus, the 'official closing' of the event became yet another debate, offering much food for thought and triggering further discussions.

Ten rapporteurs presented the main ideas from the five themes of the EYE, and the audience were given an opportunity to offer their own thoughts and suggestions.

Johanna Nyman, from the European Youth Forum, presented the ideas for a better Europe in regards to Youth Unemployment, focusing on the responsibility of the EU to act in relation to this issue:

"The policy in the EU should focus on creating quality jobs for young people. We need a 'New Deal' in Europe, we need to invest in youth and create a new social contract. The European Youth Guarantee can be a solution to youth unemployment, but more resources must be invested; young people need to be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The strongest message that we wish to send is that youth unemployment cannot be seen as the fault of young people, but is the concern of society as a whole. We need to see actions now", she said.

Jean-Francois Gerard, from ARTE, offered some ideas in connection to Digital Revolution, and mentioned that the participants at the EYE had expressed a strong interest in greater digital opportunities. The first idea was to create a piracy indicator; a small computer window that will, when up- or downloading a file, notify the user if they risk violating copyright law. The second idea was to create a European antivirus: countries would share technology and understanding in order to create a single, affordable antivirus programme, thus protecting European citizens from viruses and spyware. The third idea was to develop digital democracy so as to allow citizens to vote online.

Ada Reichhart gave a few ideas regarding the sustainability of the EU, drawing on her experience working for the City of Strasbourg. The focus was on the fact that the current environmental crisis is a social problem, and must not become an economic one too.

Report Conclusion

“For a better Europe, we must change our everyday behaviour; to reduce energy demand, to rethink our system of production and consumption, to invest in renewable energy research, and thus commit to the energy transition.”

Regarding the future of Europe, Paul Girard, representative from l’Institut d’études politiques de Strasbourg et de l’École nationale d’administration (IEP/ENA), noted that it is crucial that we raise awareness among European citizens of all ages regarding the risks of giving away personal data online. He also called for a standardised European elections system and the establishment of a common energy market to avoid dependency on non-EU countries, such as Russia, that may put pressure on EU Member States.

László Földi, from the Council of Europe, shared his reflections and ideas for a better Europe under the umbrella of European Values by focusing on the following issues: European identity, Europe in the world, the challenges for Europe, human rights, freedom of speech, hate speech, youth participation, and opportunities for young people.

“Europeans must reconsider what it means to be European in the 21st century; the Union is a stronghold for human rights and democratic values and is, as such, a destination for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. It is also a place in which nationalism, extremism, and intolerance are seeing revivals at the present”.

The two moderators, Katarzyna Morteń from the European Youth Press and Peter Matjašič from the European Youth Forum, invited the participants to write down their own ideas for a better Europe and deposit them in the ideas-box placed outside in the YO!Village.

These ideas will be put on display in a temporary exhibition in the House of European History.

In the early afternoon, as the participants started making their way home, many questions still lingered: Why did so many of the Members of Parliament cancel their attendance at the panels? Where was the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz? Where was the diversity of the European Union - a concept that so many of the activities touched upon, but which was not always reflected by the speakers? After three days of passionate discussion, it was clear that the young attendees wanted to engage in European politics, and while many great ideas for a better Europe were drafted by the nearly 5,500 participants over the course of the event, it is now up to the elected Members of Parliament to act on them.



The idea box getting filled with proposals for a better Europe

Facts & figures

5,380 total number of EYE participants (all aged between 16 and 30)

5,135 participants from the EU

92 participants from candidate countries

153 participants from non-EU countries

600 young people participating in Euroscola special

10,000 people participating in the Yo!Fest activities (incl. concerts, party)

± 500 speakers, moderators and facilitators

250 volunteers

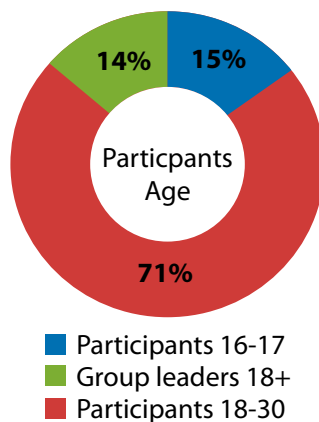
More than 200 activities in various formats

14,000 tweets with #EYE2014 sent out in 3 days

Participants' nationalities



Participants' age



Thank you to all the official EYE 2014 partners!



EYE website

<http://www.ey2014.eu>

EYE on facebook

<http://epfacebook.eu/ey2014>

EYE on twitter

https://twitter.com/EP_YouthEvent
#EYE2014

Watch the webstreamed activities

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ey2014/en/streaming.html>

Report elaborated by the European Youth Press
with commentaries by the European Youth Forum, June 2014

