

# A New Narrative for Europe

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CONGRESS-PAPER

## A NEW NARRATIVE FOR EUROPE

COMPLETE RESULTS

hosted by:



## The Participants



Samuel Acker, Germany  
Margreth Adamson, Estonia  
Heta Alanko, Finland  
Anastasia Altyinnikova, Sweden  
Roxana-Elena Andrian, Romania  
Nikolaos Avramidis, Greece  
Tobias Bachert, Germany  
Aurelija Baltikauskaite, Lithuania  
Sofia Barbeiro, Portugal  
Simona Barkauskaite, Lithuania  
Marcel Bau, Germany  
Adi Bjelosevic, Denmark  
Adam Bucko, Slovakia  
Levente Cipak, Hungary  
Carly Cummins, United Kingdom  
Kim de Bie, Netherlands  
Laetitia de Groot, Netherlands  
Ludvig Dietmann, Sweden  
Alastair Dolbear, United Kingdom  
Samah Fatchat, France

Jorge Fernandez Gomez, Spain  
Inês Ferreira, Portugal  
Gabriela Gabriel, Cyprus  
Beppe Galea, Malta  
Salvatore Galluccio, Italy  
Jean Paul Gauci, Malta  
Tim Gemers, Belgium  
Arthur Gopak, Netherlands  
Pierre Guichard, France  
Amadeusz Hoang, Poland  
Tina Hocevar, Slovenia  
Sandra Jarrige, France  
Marek Kopanicky, Slovakia  
Andrea Kovarova, Czech Republic  
Liene Ieva Kraupša, Latvia  
Marvin Kubis, Germany  
Erica Lee, Ireland  
Tiit Liblik, Estonia  
Sofia Lopez Piqueres, Spain  
Emil Svaneborg Mathiasen, Denmark

Petya Miteva, Bulgaria  
Roberto Monti, Italy  
Eibhlis Moriarty, Ireland  
Hannah Vera Müller, Austria  
Michalina Nadolna, Poland  
Carlo Nakhnoukh, Italy  
Fabiola Nardò, Finland  
Vladislav Nedeleev, Denmark  
Anja Nikic, Croatia  
Artis Ozolinš, Latvia  
Fanni Perlaki, Hungary  
Elisa Pipiko, Greece  
Sanja Sinobad, Croatia  
Simon Smets, Belgium  
Lenka Svobodová, Czech Republic  
Bogdan - Costel Ursu, Romania  
Ajda Vodlan, Slovenia  
Jean Wivenes, Luxemburg  
Cem Yurt, Austria  
Anika Zlateva, Bulgaria

### As Moderators:

Nicole Herbert, Marie Bornickel, Lukas Pollmann, Julia Schöfer, Eric Ehses, Patricia Weykopf, Boris Kagan, Paul König, Charlotte Schulz-Knappe, Yasmeen Babar, Andreas Christ.

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## PREAMBLE

We, the Youth of the 28 Member States of the European Union, came together in Bonn (Germany) to acknowledge that the future of Europe is defined by our actions and is of our common concern.

We wish to underline the importance of the promotion of the European identity based on common cultural and historical heritage of Europe, to strengthen the inclusive Europe based on the promotion of Human Rights, Equality and Tolerance and to endorse the fundamental values of democracy and individual freedoms.

Furthermore, we believe that there are many urgent environmental issues that Europe will be facing in the decades to come. Environmental change permanently casts its shadow over Europe, and therefore it is something that we will inevitably have to deal with together. However, we believe in a bright future, and we believe that the EU can - and should - play a crucial role in a sustainable future.

The last years have shown to us that the European Union needs to strengthen the economic integration of its members into one common framework if it wants to protect its single market from interior and exterior crises. There were huge differences in how strongly the member states were affected by the turmoils of the last financial crisis, which shows to us that there is a strong need for European economic solidarity and cooperation.

We have combined our thoughts on these issues in this new narrative for Europe.  
to...

have resolved the following new narrative for europe.

to reflect on our views about the living conditions in the European Union, and  
to foster  
to reaffirm



# ECONOMY

## Introduction to the Economy Narrative

In the area of economy, we would like to see the EU take actions in the followings fields;

From our positive experience of the single market we see that a trading agreement with the USA could be beneficial for the European economy and its citizens. However, we are concerned that our current levels of health, environmental and food standards could be compromised in the process and that competition caused by the implementation of the agreement could equally have a negative impact on European economies. We hope that future negotiations will be more transparent and that potential lawsuits also be filed in existent institutions. We think that even a united Europe should not forget its ideal of independence and strength that are crucial in serving as an important economic counterbalance.

We think that Europe has the potential to become an idyllic place to live. This could be achieved by supporting entrepreneurship on a European level by raising awareness, training citizens and building opportunities. We support implementation of standardised regulations on virtual currencies and a single digital market.

Five years later some European countries still find themselves struggling with the challenges of the debt crisis. We think it important to tackle (youth) unemployment, bureaucracy and public debt. However, the EU should also not forget the dangers of private debt, especially for public morale. We also think that the persons responsible for the crisis should be held accountable and reprimanded. Measures ought to be taken to tackle brain drain in affected European member states.

The benefits of the European single market are plentiful. However action should continually be taken to strengthen and further develop the single market project. There are still differences in the quality of products in each member state. We seek equal standards across the EU. It remains difficult to return products when online shopping. For a functioning single market this issue should be addressed. In the past the EU already diminished irksome transaction fees, however this should be taken even further, for example in the field of personal banking. To ensure fair competition in the single market, tax policies should ideally be harmonised.

## TTIP

We believe that for future trade agreements with third countries, the European Union should ensure that the negative effects for European enterprises are minimised as far as possible. For example, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership has many potential benefits, but the European Union should sign trade agreements with careful consideration in order to ensure that both sides benefit from such agreements.

We believe harmonisation, convergence and mutual control of laws, regulations and standards are needed while maintaining the high European standards of product quality. For example, for environmental regulation of production processes, the European and American legislation differ tremendously, and this could lead to a price distortion negatively effecting European producers. This is why the European Union and the United States need to agree on a common framework for environmental regulations before the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership comes into effect. The need for harmonisation also applies to fields such as workplace security and other legislative requirements regarding production processes.

Since all European citizens are affected by trade agreements, it is necessary to make the negotiations fully transparent and give Europeans a chance to participate through public debate. After every negotiation round a report with the names of participants and the topics discussed shall be published and there should be time left for public debate in the European Parliament. It is very important that parliamentary participation is already possible in early negotiation phases for trade agreements. Furthermore, not only economic considerations but also the maintenance and strengthening of democratic progress should play a role in the drafting of future trade agreements of the European Union. It needs to be ensured that parliamentary democratic

decision making is not hindered by investors filing lawsuits because of their private interests. The current draft of the TTIP provides private investors with the possibility to present their legal cases against administrative decisions by member states to private courts instead of public courts. We see this as a possible threat to the public interest of member states.

More trade also means more competition, especially for unskilled or low-skilled manual workers. Thus it has to be ensured that those European citizens are protected from the harmful effects of new trade agreements by being provided with a sufficient transition phase to find new jobs in case they become unemployed. They need to receive state-funded training so they can continue to play a productive role in the new economic environment.

In order to increase the competitiveness of local producers, further financial and educational support should be provided to all interested enterprises. To ensure that the European Union does not become over dependent in the supply of vital products from abroad, a minimal supply of vital industries such as the energy, food and defence industry has to stay on European soil and under the jurisdiction of the European Union.

Entrepreneurship Stimulus Plan

### Making a European dream a reality

Currently the European Union is struggling to get more jobs due to slowing economic growth, and the previous measures did not succeed. Therefore, instead of budget cuts, the EU could start stimulating entrepreneurship among member states. Thus, we thought of the ways of doing it, but before that, we designed a proposal to facilitate the entrepreneurial activity in Europe.

The document addresses the following issues:

- Lack of awareness about entrepreneurship
- Insufficient training for various age groups
- Lack of accelerators
- Absence of centralised authority to inform about new ventures and business angels etc.

We believe that the following initiatives would solve the outlined problems:

- Creation of a centralised online information bureau. It would educate aspiring and existing entrepreneurs about upcoming business events, business plan competitions, startup bootcamps etc.
- Foundation of an online start-up platform for entrepreneurs and investors. It would enable matchmaking between the EU start-ups with investment funds or other funding sources such as venture capital, private equity funds etc.
- Provision of informal entrepreneurial training for various age groups. It could take an initial format of the Bloomberg Techstars show, prominent European investors and/or entrepreneurs, who would mentor people with bright entrepreneurial concepts. Within the course of 3-6 months, entrepreneurs would actualise their ideas.
- Assistance of the existing business incubator and accelerator programs. There are already multiple initiatives, which already exist, but very few entrepreneurs are aware of them. Thus, the EU could use its administrative resources to spread the word across other European countries.
- Introduction of crowdfunding platforms curated by the EU. This would attract new entrepreneurs from outside Europe as such platforms would be more legitimate compared to existing analogues (e.g., KickStarter or IndieGoGo platforms).
- Introduction of the Pan-European regulation of other virtual currencies (e.g., Bitcoins, Litecoins etc.). This move would stimulate the expansion of the digital economy in the European Union. While the virtual currency might not last, the technology that used in the transactions for virtual currencies will remain.
- "Eurovision" for EU businesses. Make a show of the business plan competition, which could adopt the concept of certain shows for example: Shark Tank or Dragon's Den. Aspiring entrepreneurs would be presenting their concepts in front of a panel of self-made business people from Europe to receive funding and/or training. This show would bring awareness about entrepreneurship in Europe.

We hope that these steps would unlock tremendous economic development and would improve the quality of life of all European citizens.

Means to improve the situation in the wake of the Eurocrisis.

An initial recommendation would be to employ smarter austerity measures in order to decrease debt while at the same time implementing a plan of action to stimulate growth and innovation.

In a Europe where the economy is playing an increasingly important role, it would be advisable to reprimand those responsible for knowingly mishandling public funds and for corruption issues in order to set a precedent and avoid similar crises in future.

Together with the existing banking union we support the creation of a fiscal union for the members of the Eurozone. The anticipated future outcome of this would result in further integration and an overall strengthening of the Eurozone.

In order to address the issue of youth unemployment, which has reached unprecedented levels in various EU member states, a pan-European unemployment platform should be initiated. This would allow for unemployed EU citizens to register themselves directly with a database of employers across Europe in order to increase their chance of finding relevant work throughout the European Union. Youth unemployment is a critical issue, which must be dealt with in order to avoid 'brain drain' and future economic decline.

In striving for equality across the EU the creation of a price control mechanism, which could regulate price levels of vital products throughout member states, would ensure regulation of costs of living and living standards.

To alleviate social and economic inequalities further among citizens a guaranteed minimum income in each EU member state would appear to be another rational suggestion.

### A New Narrative for Single Market

Some costumers are currently misinformed of the product they are receiving. There is an imbalance in the quality of products of the same brand name in different countries, most notably food products. A solution could be an introduction of a common agreement among members of the Single Market so companies have responsibility for exporting the products of equal quality to each country. EU citizens should be informed about their rights as consumers, and also about the steps they can follow should they have suspicions regarding the quality of the products that they have bought. Sanctions such as fines should be applied to the companies, which continue to treat EU countries differently.

Although a lot has been done in improving services and making them more available to EU citizens, there is still room for improvement. EU citizens have to pay additional fees for services when they are visiting other EU member states. An example of this is ATM charges. We suggest an agreement among EU member states to gradually eliminate these fees.

When it comes to online shopping, there is a lack of trust among the people and the EU should take further actions to make this both safer and more trustworthy. Currently it is complicated to return products and receive a refund since refund policies differ from company to company in EU states. We suggest a standardised system for returning, exchanging goods and refunding. We see greater potential in the online market and the EU should take measures to fulfil its full potential.

Currently academic degrees among EU member states are not fully recognised and valued and this makes the movement of people more complicated. We also have concerns regarding so-called "brain drain" of people from the less developed countries. Extensive "brain drain" has serious short-term consequences, but more importantly long-term repercussions for affected countries. EU countries should provide jobs and opportunities for young educated people. We recommend that EU countries keep a record of people who immigrated, their age, profession and other relevant information. If it becomes apparent that people of certain profession are leaving the country in very high numbers, the country should write a report concerning this problem and stating which measures they plan to take in the future to avoid extensive "brain drain".

# ENVIRONMENT

The future environmental challenges are well known and frequently discussed in public. We were raised in the consciousness of climate change and the effects our current lifestyle has on all living things. However, we have to recognize that sufficient steps have not yet been made to tackle the arising issues.

## Pollution

One of the main causes of the global warming is air pollution. The European Union can do a lot to both improve the current situation and ensure better future trends, and can even serve as an example for other states and nations. This can be done by following and implementing stricter, more considerate policies and regulations regarding the environment and adopting preservation of nature including plant and animal species as key goals.

In view of the high cost of travel, as well as climate change issues, car sharing has become more popular than ever before. By using this alternative, one can reduce up to 50 % of the pollution of carbon dioxide, compared to the average.

By using bicycle sharing stations, air and noise pollution from vehicles will be reduced, as well as greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. Bicycle sharing stations enable people to pick up bicycles at any self serve bicycle station and they can then be returned to any other station. This makes bicycle-sharing ideal for point-to-point trips.

We are aware that several cities in our respective nations have taken steps in this direction, but we believe they are still insufficient and that there is no coordination at the community level.

In our opinion investments are necessary to enhance the service, to extend it out of the city and to make it more effective to combat traffic and pollution resulting from it.

We also believe that there should be more control on the EU multinational corporations producing abroad and not following EU environmental regulations. In fact, not only are we affected by pollution produced outside the EU borders, but we also must take partial responsibility.

Taking into consideration successful environmentally friendly initiatives implemented at all levels (local, regional, etc.) throughout the EU, we believe that it would be highly enriching to share them. For this purpose, we suggest the creation of an online platform that streamlines information and allows the exchange of experience and projects among the participants.

## Climate Change

The European Union has the potential and the obligation to be a world leader in addressing climate change. We propose that the EU adopts strategies in order to prevent climate change where possible by addressing the underlying causes.

We believe that the EU should strive to do this in cooperation with other countries and organizations around the world. Unfortunately, it is already too late to prevent some effects of anthropogenic climate change. Therefore, we firmly believe that the EU should aim to adapt itself to the consequences of a changing climate. The European Union should invest in its infrastructure to adjust it to extreme climate phenomena events. We also believe that the EU should invest more in research which will look closely at new ways of doing this more successfully. The EU should encourage and support green initiatives that are set up by its citizens.

We are convinced that EU policies regarding climate change which have been adopted should be enforced more strictly. In this respect, we believe that the EU should stick to its 20%-by-2020 ambition, but should be

more ambitious in the decades to come. We are of the opinion that non-renewable energy sources, including fracking and nuclear energy, could be temporary solutions in the energy transition, but 100% renewable energy should be our final goal.

### Waste

Since consumption and production are growing exponentially, so is the amount of waste produced. This is a problem that we, as a union, must undertake measures to deal with.

The EU should aim at implementing a harmonized labelling and recycling system in all EU member states. For that, the EU should release guidelines of components that must be used in packaging. Simultaneously, the amount of resources utilized in the packages could be greatly reduced. Another way to encourage recycling is to offer incentives such as deposit-refund systems (DRS). These should be promoted and extended to food and beverage containers throughout Europe.

Not only do we need an organised system and a stricter control of the recycling and waste management, but also a European authority in charge of ensuring the sound functioning of said system.

Another topic of our concern is the low degree of responsibility of firms and industries in the managing of the Waste, Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and hazardous waste. To reduce waste, producers of electrical and electronic equipment should also be responsible for making long-lasting products, that is, for tackling the planned obsolescence.

### Resources

The EU should place the careless management of our resources on top of its agenda.

Water has to be recognized as a Universal Human Right and therefore the EU must ensure that all citizens have access to it. Moreover, it is important that we have a better management of this resource.

Contributing to the reduction of water consumption can also be achieved via the reduction of the intake of meat, as its production requires a large amount of water. Hence, we would like the EU to encourage its citizens to consume less meat.

Since about 90 million tons of food is wasted every year in Europe, the EU should on one hand reassess the laws on expiring dates and on the other hand the disposal of the excess food. In this light, food-sharing could be an option.

In addition to that, we are concerned with the current functioning and mechanisms of the Common Agricultural Policy. We believe that a reform is highly necessary, for monoculture kills the biodiversity and interferes with the natural life-cycle of flora and fauna. Avoiding monoculture is also a way to reduce the tremendous use of pesticides that greatly affects nature.

### Energy

As it is not possible to switch to a 100 % green policy in a short period of time, we would like to aim at a realistic solution that involves non-renewable energy sources as an in-between solution with the goal of reaching a higher percentage of renewable energy than those proposed for the 2030 framework.

The EU should harmonise the home-production of solar energy via a regulation, as well as by promoting this environmentally friendly energy system.

We would like to consider food leftovers as a source of energy (biogas) and not as waste. The EU should create guidelines to implement an organic waste collecting system.

### Awareness and Organization

Lastly, we conclude that the conduction and communication of the efforts undertaken by the European Union present a problem in itself.

Citizens need to realize that every action matters and that the EU cares about their concerns. Secondly, we should not underestimate the significance of education and information. The EU has to set up guidelines to allow its citizens to compare products and make them accessible for everyone.

We strongly believe that the creation of role models along with sparking motivation for environmentally-friendly actions is important

Besides monetary incentives, the EU should explain to its citizens why their environmentally-friendly actions are significant, so that they act in this specific way by themselves. Furthermore, citizen participation will encourage self-responsibility for their environment and to further mutual cooperation between citizens and decision-makers. Alongside with a more democratic union, high-quality information on environmental issues has to be accessible, simple and present for everyone.

EU countries should share their experiences in the field of environmental exchange programmes, so EU citizens can learn and help each other and gain experience when it comes to environmental issues on an international level.

The EU can and should be a leader in dealing effectively with environmental issues, so that it can stimulate others to improve in order to build a more sustainable world.



# SOCIETY

## Political System

The European Union has been an amazing contribution for over more than 50 years to peace and cooperation on our continent. Although peace has been taken for granted for several decades, considering the current crises at the borders of Europe, striving for peace has never been more prominent. We, the Erasmus generation, have never known conflict thanks to the European community. We tend to think about Europe as an economical and political unity, but we must never forget the basics. In the present situation, when conflicts at the borders seem to be deepening, it is necessary to rethink the whole European political system. The main goal should be to create a European Union which is efficient, effective, strong and able to react immediately as a unified community.

We are surrounded by major powers with which we have to work and even compete with. In this globalizing world, individual member states cannot speak with a same major voice as if they would act all together. Unity makes strength and has never been more important and needed. We have to bear in mind that there still are various flaws in the European system. The main issues which we have to deal with are the complexity and the efficiency of the European institutions, the lack of one European voice in various domains and the lack of one powerful political leader who represents the EU as a whole, especially in foreign policy.

The hierarchy between the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council and the Council of Ministers might look very complex to many people. Creating a European law generally takes one and a half years, and the cooperation between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament is never easy. Comparing law making in the EU and in an individual member state, one notices Europe works at a slower pace. Things can be made a lot easier.

The lack of a real European figure who would represent the Union as a whole towards the outer world is a point that paralyzes the EU. The separation of power between the President of the Council and the Commission makes the EU look divided. The Union needs one person who would represent both institutions, a leader who could talk with the heads of state of the major world powers at the same level. We need a figure which combines the powers of both institutions. This president should be elected directly, to enable a more profound bond with the people of Europe.

The Commission should act more like a real government, elected indirectly by the European citizens and not by the member states. At present, even if your party becomes the biggest formation in Parliament, it is still the European Council who appoints the President of the Commission and the national governments appoint the members of the Commission according to their own interests. People feel their votes are not taken seriously, and this encourages Euroscepticism to rise. Striving towards a real parliamentary system with a real majority and opposition would make it easier to either reward or punish the Commission for its work at the end of its five year term. In this way citizens get a clearer view on what they are voting for and what they will get in the end. The Commission can work more effectively and implement a more cohesive policy if it were to consist of fewer parties, who have an ideological affiliation, instead of having 28 Commissioners from all member states and from all political parties.

One of the major flaws of the EU is the lack of a common strong foreign policy. Due to the fact that the foreign policy depends on unanimity in the Council, it is de facto impossible to act in a strong and effective way.

If we act all together, we stand stronger towards our foreign partners. The main problem is that the member states always put forward their national interests. We should find a way to promote a more common view and to put forward our common European interests. If everyone thinks only of his own interests, in the end nobody will get what they want and no real clear policy can be created. The current crises close to our borders show us how weak we are if we all act on our own.

In the 1950s the Pleven Plan almost created a unified European army. This missed opportunity still has its repercussions today. The lack of a common military force prevents us from acting, if necessary, in a firm way. If Europe wants to play its role in world politics, an army is needed to protect our own interests, although this does not mean Europe should become an aggressive world power. To have a stick behind the door always helps to protect your interests. An army can also help to develop the role of the EU as a peacekeeper or peacemaker and deepen our cooperation with the surrounding countries.

One of the symbols of European bureaucracy is the dualism of Parliamentary activities in both Brussels and Strasbourg. It is irrational and goes against the principles of efficient governance, and is one of the main symbols Eurosceptics use in their fight against the EU, claiming it to be a waste of money. Although the financial factors are not primarily our concern, the EU has to be an example of efficiency and rationality. Centralizing all institutions in one place is the only proper solution.

Over the years the EU has changed substantially and mostly in a positive way. Big and good reforms take time, but we put our hopes into an EU which will be able to tackle the numerous challenges which lie ahead of us.

### Political Participation

Political participation is a cornerstone of the democratic values throughout the European continent as it guarantees individual freedom and safeguarding of human rights.

The concept of political participation includes the different ways citizens take part in the political life of their country or the international institutions they are part of. This participation takes the form of continuous involvement in politics inter alia voting in elections and joining the various civic society organizations.

Currently, Europe faces a considerable decline in political participation and civic involvement. As a matter of fact, the European Parliament elections of 2014 saw the lowest on record voter turnout of 43%. Such a low rate of participation raises concern and might be indicative of the weaknesses in EU policies.

In order to tackle the issue of declining political involvement, it is essential to identify the background of this tendency. The main reasons were pinpointed to be the lack of identification influenced by an insufficient educational programme concerning the European Union as well as the lack of communication between the European Union and its citizens. Having said this, the means to fight against this tendency were found out to be education, new European regulations as well as social events and initiatives.

The decline in political participation throughout the European Union Member States inter alia derives from the lack of European identity. Such concept is based on the common set of values as well as the cultural and historical heritage of European citizens. The European identity is a foundation of the feeling of shared responsibility for the political system of the European Union. Through the acknowledgement of the shared responsibility for the future of Europe, the European citizens are more likely to build a civic society based on European values of democracy and solidarity.

The notion of identification should not only be tackled on a national level but rather from a European perspective. Although the European Union member states have a diverse history and culture, they share fundamental values and thus should aim to improve cross-national European relations in order to achieve common

goals. Recognizing the sovereignty of member states, the European Union should strive to build a coherent European political system based on shared democratic values. In fact the European Union's motto, "Unity in Diversity" is indicative of the idea of the preservation of national identities of member states in pursue of the creation of the coherent European identity.

Further reasons for the decreasing level of political participation was identified to be the lack of sufficient communication between the institutions of the European Union, its representatives, and European citizens. The available resources of mass media, such as the Internet, TV and press, are not sufficiently used by the EU. As a result, the citizens are not aware of the current issues that the EU institutions are dealing with and challenges with which the EU is faced. This limited knowledge leads to citizens' ignorance of their very own influence and further adds to the narrow scope of European identity.

The responsibility of this current situation may also be attributed to the inefficient or even non-existent educational programs concerning the *raison d'être* of the European Union. Education is a necessity. We have to start educating children from an early stage so that the younger population associates itself with European society and its values. As a result, the promotion of the EU, with its structure and policies, may add to the creation of the inclusive European community in which every citizen feels accountable for the future of the EU as a whole. Once achieved, this is likely to bring economic prosperity, and political stability and at the same time strengthening the European position, as a political institution in the international arena.

Acknowledging the above-mentioned, the new narrative for Europe should entail the following proposals:

Education is the basis to build Europe's future. This can be achieved by a mandatory EU-program in schools that would be included in civics. Elections for the European Parliament should not be the only time when you actually care or know about what Europe does. Education in high schools should not only be about what the EU does but also what you can do for the EU.

The importance of a two-way communication must be enhanced. The information needs to be where the citizens are. The majority of the people today are at the internet and in order for the EU to be seen, they have to develop their presence online. It has to be easy to reach the Union and feel like you directly can communicate. PR and web campaigns all over Europe should be established, and the technology more developed.

The contemporary European society is faced with a technological development of an unprecedented scale. In regard to this change, there comes the question concerning the ways in which the information and communication technologies (ICT) influence the concept of democracy - the cornerstone of the European political system. Nowadays the internet, as a platform of communication and exchange of information, may also be used to pursue the rise of political participation through the introduction of the concept of E-Democracy. The concept entails new ways of involving people into the political processes through the means of e-campaigning, e-voting and e-government. In particular, E-Democracy can be applied within the political process of the European Union. The European Commission is thus advised to consider its usage as a way to build a system giving citizens new voting platform that would make them relate to the EU agenda.

Being the bridge between the European Union and its citizens, communication thus plays the key role in making them conscious of the EU. Although the European resolutions have a far-reaching impact on national legal systems, it is through communication that the EU citizens are informed about the laws that are passed. In order to raise awareness about the debates taking place in the European institutions, it is essential to distribute leaflets on a regular basis outlining the most important issues and laws of the EU. In addition, political debates of the EU politicians broadcasted on the Internet or TV would not only bring them closer to

the people, but would also make them more accountable for their policies.

It is of utmost importance that youth is encouraged to get involved in the political process of the EU by means of youth discussions and debates. It should be conducted through good communication among the younger generation. An annual event European Youth Festival should be held. The aim is to bring the European agenda at the heart of the European youth. Although there are similar events, the European Commission should consider hosting an event on a larger scale encompassing all the Member States. The participation in the event should not be limited, while its programme should include presentation of cultural heritage of Member States, inter alia music and dance, as well as workshops devoted to the contemporary issues of political importance. By adopting these initiatives, youth is likely to become more active in the process of creating an inclusive European society based on common values. This in turn, is prone to bring a different perspective to political discourse in the European institutions.

### Social Factors

Although the EU is considered as one of the most developed and socially and economically strongest unions in the world, there still are concise differences between separate parts of the union, as well as many social problems, in the relations inside and outside EU.

#### **- Social Services**

From the creation, EU worked not only on security, but also in the developing and ensuring good provision of social service in the member states.

Despite all the goals which have been reached during all these years, we are still on our way to the better development of social service and providing support for those, who are most in need.

Firstly, it is a well-known fact that our continent is ageing and although in Western Europe the social service for elderly people is at a very high level, the same cannot be said about East and South-East Europe. Taking into consideration the rates of the emigration of young people from the same countries are very high, having thousands of old people left alone can be a serious obstacle in our future. That's why we have to increase the awareness on the importance of development of social service as well as to create a plan and prepare for the future.

Taking into account that some member states have a positive experience in implementation of social service, we can create a platform of sharing the experience help those member states which do not have such a deep tradition of the provision of a sufficient level of social service and prevent a huge problem which the EU will face in the future if we will do nothing now.

Also, the united EU " working experience" data platform should be created, so that it would be easier to guarantee an adequate life insurance for elderly people.

The lonely elderly people support should be implemented in all member states and it should be one of the main goals for our social sector. In order to achieve that institutionalised elderly people homes, which are very common in East and South-East Europe they have to be changed to modern, comfortable and private institutions, which would provide a homely atmosphere, strong medical and social support for elderly people.

Moreover, the equality is one of the main EU values. That's why we should encourage the member states to follow the EU recommendations for social guidance so that the quality of social service provided in different countries would be more equal and it would decrease the discrimination rate inside the EU on the ground of nationality.

Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights which was adopted in 1950 prohibits the discrimination on any grounds. In this view, the model of large social care institutions outside the cities which is very common for former socialist block countries violates this Article as well as the Article 1 of the Universal

### Declaration of Human Rights.

The EU social funds already provides the support for implementation of new modern social tools in the EU member states, but the provision of these funds has to be improved and widely spread in order to develop better social care service for vulnerable groups.

The high percentage of unemployment rate is one of the biggest issues in our society. In order to solve this problem the supporting courses which are already provided by the EU have to be more accessible - that means that it has to be not only valuable, easy to reach, but also well promoted and accessible to everyone no matter where they live.

The economic crisis showed that youth in European labor market is one of the most vulnerable groups. For many young people in EU it is it really difficult to find a job concerning their profession or to get a sufficient salary which would allow them to be independent. A part of this problem could be solved by providing better counselling in schools about the existing labor market and the prosperities of their chosen profession as well as to encourage the collaboration between universities, other higher education institutions and private sector.

### - Immigration

Immigration is a growing issue for the EU. There are various arguments for and against the decision to open borders, allowing free movement within the EU. The main arguments in favour of this action, regard cultural exchange, building international relations and, of course, the question of the right to freedom of immigration. However, since the influx of immigrants began some months ago, general opinion seems to have shifted, with the majority displaying negative attitudes and a lack of respect towards the practice of free movement throughout Europe. Immigration has an enormous impact on the economy, though not necessarily in a bad way. Many complain that immigration results in a loss of jobs for locals, however, this is often sensationalised and figures of citizens losing jobs as a direct result of immigration are usually inaccurate.

In most cases, immigrants are taking jobs that others will not, so the only effect on the economy is positive as unemployment figures are reduced and profit is made, boosting trade and the economy as a whole.

It could be argued that the negative impacts outweigh the positives though. The economy of the EU has been put under great strain as immigrants relocate, either between European countries or coming into the EU from an outside state.

Many immigrants will require assistance from the state, as they will not have immediate employment available. They will also usually have families and children, so the EU is presented with financial responsibility for hundreds of new citizens.

This also results in a strain on healthcare services, not only financially but with regards to capacity staff, space and equipment, too.

The EU should create regulations to control internal immigration (from one member state to another). There should be certain criteria to fulfill when relocating to another country in the EU. For example, they must already have a job offer or desirable skills etc. In order to help insure this, there should be a "EU platform" where companies from all over the EU can post their vacancies, so that this kind of "naive immigration" could be avoided.

In the case of immigration from outside the EU, there should be a database or a record of the number of people entering a country. These people also have to have obtained a job offer prior to arrival or official invitation. The negative attitudes towards immigration are further intensified by the added finance of Humanitarian Aid, which the EU spends millions on each year. Some argue that, with the added strain on budgets and economy from immigration our countries should not be sending money elsewhere instead putting it into the EU. Others suggest that the EU has a moral responsibility to help those involved in humanitarian crises.

It could be contended that crime rates have increased, along with immigration. Whilst this may be the case,

it is not necessarily correct to assume that immigrants are the sole perpetrators.

While non-violent crimes, such as burglaries may be slightly increased. Violent and often racial-crimes are being committed at a much higher rate, and usually by angry "vigilante" types. This has an extremely negative effect on economies, and the image of the EU.

There is an argument that some groups do not respect the laws in their "host" countries. Instead, insisting that they will continue to abide by their own customs and actively ignore the legal and social codes of the state they have moved into.

There should be developed "EU info centres for immigrants" all over Europe, especially in countries that face this issue more than others. These centres should also be well publicised. Here immigrants can find information and advice about where to obtain help, about basic customs in the country and social events. It cannot be expected for immigrants to actively work harmoniously in a community, when they do not feel they are part of it. Here we can also develop materials and hold educational sessions, both to inform immigrants of local culture and traditions, and to inform locals of the customs of those relocating. In this way, a cultural exchange is formed, creating inclusion and a more intellectually enlightened community.

First of all, language barriers must be broken down. Communication is a key factor in connecting with a society. Many immigrants speak little or none of the language when they arrive in a new country so naturally stay together, forming a separate "sub-community". By introducing language courses for both adults and children will encourage communication and social cohesion.

It is important that we preserve our culture, language and traditions, but also respect and acknowledge those of others. It is only then, that we will have a society accepting of immigration and destroy its negative connotations.

### - Discrimination in the EU

Discrimination is, unfortunately, a social reality nowadays in the EU. This is due to the fact that EU is characterised by a great cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Discrimination is an effect of social exclusion, when certain groups of people, with certain characteristics, are left out or are not given the same chances as other groups. It comes at different levels and it affects us directly or indirectly. We are equal only when it comes to our rights, chances and opportunities. In rest, we are all individuals. The EU should emphasise on this aspect and give it a more positive perspective. By beginning with respect and compromise, we can embrace group values, whilst preserving cultural traditions. It is a complex process, that will take a long time. We need patience, but the process has to start now and the EU needs a clear strategy for this.

The issue must be tackled because if we will not do that, we will find ourselves in a growing conflict situation and all that has been built until now, it will fall apart. Many international conflicts and internal civil wars have been caused by problems related to discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance and hate speech. So, if we deal with discrimination and maintain a certain control over this problem, we will, in a way secure the peace status quo that has defined Europe for many decades. This is why the EU, through its institutions, has the responsibility over this problem as the main purpose of this complex political and economical construct is to maintain peace.

The EU should offer another perspective to the problem and determine the European citizens to take advantage of the fact that we are all different and learn from each other. This would help us develop as a big community. So, there should be more cultural exchange programmes that should involve very different people, with very different cultural backgrounds. And the EU should promote better these kind of programmes as they are not very easy to find and access. There should be a better transparency and we recommend that the EU should rethink its PR and marketing strategy on this matter.

We should all live in a Europe where we identify ourselves first as Europeans and afterwards as individuals with different nationalities. Developing the concept of European identity among all the individuals would

solve a part of the problem because we would all have a common ground, with respect for the same values and principles. The concept should become more profound, not just a superficial social construct, based on a common political culture. Moreover, there should be extended European citizenship regulations that would define better what membership to the European Union means. And also this aspect needs to be promoted better because not so many are aware what being a European citizen means and what it involves (the right to vote in European elections, right to free movement, settlement and employment across the EU and right to consular protection by other EU states' embassies).

The mass-media plays an important role on this matter as it shapes most of the times people's perceptions and beliefs. This is why we believe that it should take its role more seriously and play it in a more responsible way, not just for the ratings and publicity. We recommend the EU to elaborate a "European Media Code of Ethics" that could offer guidelines and norms of conduct for the journalists and determine them to address individuals equally and to respect their dignity, personality and cultural background.

### - Education and Human Rights

Education is one of the major and most important responsibilities of society, because it affects human beings from the first moment. As we already said one of the ways to eliminate the discriminations, which are a negative social factor is education.

First of all, the countries, that are members of E.U should provide more funds, in order to develop their educational systems. Especially in countries, where a significant 10% of students dropouts school, because of political, financial and social reasons.

Furthermore, there is an important amount of 75 millions adults, who lack basic reading and writing skills. These people with low literacy are less likely to finish school and more likely to be unemployed, especially in times of crisis. In my opinion, the E.U should set new policies, which they will reduce illiteracy and they will promote adult education programs via lifelong learning. Also, it is very important to increase awareness about non-formal education, as the internet nowadays changes the way of learning. The teachers should help the students „to learn how to learn“. With that way, people can have a better quality of life, they can be satisfied with their salary and also, they can have access to public systems, so as to fight for their rights and demand what they deserve.

In addition, there are a lot of minority groups in every school surrounding, like Roma, immigrants or refugees. As a European Union, we should help them to be integrated into society and to have access in education. Otherwise, they will remain on the fringe of our communities and they won't be an alive part of it, so as to influent beneficially on it.

Moreover, there are people with learning difficulties or disabilities, whose supporting is tremendously important, so they can reach an independend life and are able to cover their needs. But, if they won't the social services are necessary to be there for them.

It is common knowledge, that the present and the future of Europe, is a multicultural school environment, where people from different nations and with different cultures learn and live together in EU countries.

We should help children to implement the topic of „Human Rights“ in their life from an early age. This could be a reality among subjects like: Civic Education and Human Rights, European Culture and Civilization, which can be taught at schools. As a result every person will learn how to respect the other cultures and not to discriminate someone for a trait, that it is not familiar to him/her. This is also the task of the teachers, who need to be involved and adaptable to the new alterations in the global world, that we are living in today, so as to engage students on it. In addition they should be persuaded to gain more cultural experience towards exchange programs.

The main point of Education and Human Rights is to offer the access on them for all. It doesn't matter who you are, but who you can be. Surpassing the border of your country, travelling abroad, exploring the world,

broadening your mind and gaining knowledge can give you the power to create a better world.

## European Youth

### Introduction

Opportunities is what European Union (EU) is for youth. During the lifespan between 18 to 25 people are in a developmental state. People are eager to learn and improve their practical skills. Some want to make an impact in the world early and earn acceptance. Others just seek to put their skills to work to develop their financial base. Whatever the case, the most common needs for youth are education and employment. The EU must invest in these two areas a great deal with the thought that this investment will be given back to the society in the future when this particular generation has prospered.

### Mobility

There are several mobility or youth programs that are already offered by the EU, such as Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus and Leonardo Da Vinci. We have gone through a long path so far but there is more that can be done.

There are many advantages of going abroad. Young people can get to know other cultures, learn new languages, meet new people and become more independent. Furthermore, young students and workers are curious to seek opportunities and experiences they may not encounter in their countries. Nowadays people work and study in foreign countries, thus increases the necessity to visit family and friends and the willingness to travel around Europe. This leads to mobility and increases the need for proper systems that support those going abroad.

Currently Erasmus is the most well known mobility program offered by the EU. University students have an opportunity to go to another European country and study one semester or one year there while keeping them enrolled in their home university. They can experience different teaching methods in the host university. EU gives financial help to the great majority of the students participating in the program. Leonardo da Vinci program is also another example of the effort of the EU to facilitate mobility among young professionals. They have the opportunity to work for a period of time in another European country of their choice, gaining new competences and experiencing a different working environment. These programs are thus of great importance, as they enable young people to raise different personal and professional experiences, gain different skills and increase knowledge in their field of professionalism. They also foment the cooperation between countries and ultimately it prevents unemployment.

However, we think that more could be done to support young people. For instance, a common platform could be created for universities in Europe where people could apply for any university of their choice. Similarly this platform could be used for job postings from companies to students or young professionals. More internships could be associated with the study plan to put the theory into practice. This also makes it easier to find a job when they graduate having already experienced work life and also gives companies the chance to train their future employees. Extremely important is to collect feedback from the participants of these programs because then they can be developed even further.

We think that Erasmus could be also expanded to younger generations similar to the former program "Leonardo" and the current "Erasmus+" with a greater emphasis on pupils. High school students are looking for international experiences and should be given the opportunity to study abroad as well. Nowadays mostly only the ones who can afford the costs can go abroad. Language skills and open-mindedness are also achieved during the time of that program. It makes sense to us to develop „Erasmus Junior" since the youth (until 18

years old) is the time of your lives when you can learn the most and can spend time doing that. Our suggestion is also to go out of European frontiers and establish similar connections outside of Europe, for example to allow young people to study or work in non-European countries. Eventually it would benefit all countries since cultural barriers would be lightened, there would be less conflicts and more exchange of knowledge, cultures, wealth and experiences. It should be easier to travel outside of Europe, because now there is too much bureaucracy in the process. International boundaries are getting weaker as the world gets globalised and therefore it makes sense to facilitate communication and mobility between countries all over the world.

As a consequence, in the future it is likely that people will have more than one nationality and families will be more culturally diverse as there will be more marriages between different nationalities. That is another reason why it is highly urgent to create new opportunities for young people and improve their living standards.

### **Unemployment**

In every person's life there comes a moment when it is time to get up on their own two feet. An integral part of this break-through is a stable financial income, which can be provided by getting a job. However, a prerequisite for getting the desired position is experience and knowledge of the field. That can be gained through studies and practice. But how can one have practical experience without the opportunity to work? This is where mobility or the possibility to travel freely plays an important role.

To break the magic experience-job circle one has to either find an employer, which invests time and money in the development of the person, or work free of charge. Not everywhere such opportunities arise, especially in rural regions, so the offering has to be increased by introducing new players to the market. Mobility or being able to travel around without great obstacles is a good method to do that, because one can more easily travel abroad, meet new people, different cultures and increase their perspective. To many employers the fact that a job candidate has got foreign working experience plays an important and maybe even decisive role.

EU could help young workers to settle in a new country. For example, EU could help them to find the job and accommodation, offer language courses and above all simplify the applying process in its entirety because many times that is the reason why young people don't seize this opportunity. It would be similar to the "Erasmus+ International Internship" program, but it would not be an internship, but a contractual job.

Considering the current situation in many European countries, where the percentage of youth unemployment is rising substantially, measures to tackle this problem should be brought by the EU. Such solutions may include the creation of more internships opportunities in EU and the implementation of incentives for companies to invest in younger workers.

### **Awareness**

Currently many young people view EU as a source of funds for their countries, a political and legal institution, an employer entity, a trade union and an authority that watches over European society. On the other hand there are many young people who are not interested in EU at all and they miss its opportunities. For this reason, awareness should be raised and a positive image should be created.

As a means of communication and passing information both ways, social media is the most effective tool nowadays. However, it has too much influence in the way young people perceive and understand EU. In consequence it should be highly controlled and used to raise the awareness among young people of European issues and existing opportunities. Today our opinion on the EU is highly shaped by what social media presents to us. Young people should stay true to their own thoughts and beliefs instead of letting social media manipulate their minds.

Our suggestion to increase the awareness is by implementing the programs mentioned above and through

the collection of the feedback from that. Also projects like „A new narrative for Europe“ congress is a really effective way to bring people from different EU countries together to share ideas and raise the awareness of how to develop Europe. We think that the information should not only come from school books but also from informal events that people can join optionally. A thought must be put to advertising them.

In a world where money doesn't grow on trees, support, especially financial, is given only to areas of importance. What is and what is not important is decided upon many factors of which one is demand from the public. There are many social groups with their special needs, of which many can be solved with financial support. The social groups that are the loudest get the financial support and the others either have to find other means of surviving or have to reduce their capacity. Here the needs of young people have to be taken into concern. Youth is a big social group, but with its vastness arises the problem of not being aware of the opportunities and duties that young people have. Mobility programs are the most popular means of travelling and living in another country for young people, especially for students. During these programmes young people travel and develop one of their first real connections between themselves and the European Union. This is great opportunity to raise awareness and get feedback, as there is a direct connection with youth. Their wishes, problems and expectations can be determined and defined and they can be informed of the topics of importance.

### Politics

We think that one of the reasons why young people are not interested in EU is the complexity. The fact that there are so many institutions inside of it makes it extremely difficult to remember who is doing what if you are not so interested in politics. That is why EU feels distant for many young people, so if the structure cannot be simplified at least people should get interested and involved, but the willingness to that has to come from themselves.

It is important to get young people involved into politics since usually decision makers are not the youngest ones and they maybe see youth issues from a different perspective. The young itself, provided with professional help of course, are the best ones to defend their rights and search solutions to the problems that concern them. Cooperation between decision makers and young people should be established. We already have EYP but maybe their role could be more significant and visible and more chances to affect and responsibilities could be given to them. The other option could be creating „ European Youth Party“. Also they could be the ones to raise the awareness about the EU in their own countries and trying to activate the young.

The important decisions concerning the society are made amongst its representatives – politicians. Nevertheless, there is a feeling amongst the society that it can be done better. There could be more done if the those being directly involved would be the ones making the decisions and not distant representatives. „If we would be the ones making the decisions, we would do it so much better!“

### Image of the EU

#### Introduction

Participation is the basis of democracy. But latest European elections showed that in the last 15 years less than one in two European citizens voted. A rethinking about the image of the EU is needed, because our attitude as citizens of the EU directly influences our willingness to participate. So to analyze the EU's image means to do a first step to enhance participation.

In this section we will first summarize our impressions as young citizens about our current situation. Based on this we will then give suggestions how we can enhance EU's image in order to enhance the participation and strengthen a democratic living in the EU.

The EU makes our everyday life easier and brings us a lot of benefits but we take it for granted and do not see the positive effects of the EU which is also caused by the media reporting only the negative things about the EU. We believe that it is a huge problem and there is a need to solve it and make the EU's image better. We divide the EU's image into external and internal, but for the needs of the paper we are going to focus only on the internal one.

After discussing the EU's internal image we can sum up that the idea of the EU among the member states is perceived rather in a negative way. In our opinion the complexity and the diversity of the political, economical and social system of the EU makes it hard to understand the decision-making and developments in the EU. That's why the EU is often perceived as a non-transparent system. As a result of this the distribution of subsidies, a feeling of corruption and waste of money diminishes the credibility of the EU.

We are concerned about the unawareness among citizens about the meaning what an European citizenship contains. In our point of view there is a big potential if we start to consider ourselves more as European citizens and not only feel related to our own nationality.

This might also be caused by the media. The perception the average EU-citizen gets when listening to their national media is mostly pessimistic, since the media tends to focus on the issues that are perceived as being negative. Many national journalists put out misleading perceptions of some laws to get a higher reaction in the broad public and to increase their sales. We recommend to rethink the role of EU-Press Office, that we will elaborate in the solution section.

The still ongoing discussion about if the EU-Parliament in Strasbourg should be closed and the non-deciseive behaviour from politicians just adds more negative perceptions of the institutions that they do not function and are spending such amount of money with no reason for paying for the "travel-chaos". This also gives the perception of the EU-institutions and their politicians as being far away from the average citizen and not understanding their situation, especially in the financial crisis times, where so many people lost their jobs and still today are unemployed and the EU still continues to use money on a very debatical issue.

Summarizing the problems mentioned above, we determined that there are several challenges regarding the EU's image. The EU is asked to solve these in a proper way:

The representatives of the EU have to emphasize the diversity, vitality and attractiveness of the EU. The EU should use already existing tools in order to do this and should encourage. A great tool to achieve this is an european wide film project: It can summarize the complexity of European life.

The media of the EU has to do a better job on working on this aspect: the media should not only underline the EU policy, but the richness of Europe's culture and history as well.

The important role therefore of the EU-Press Office should be making sure putting out more positive press release so the national journalists can pick that up and spread it further in their respective home countries. The PR-people should be better of making it "easier" to understand for the average EU-citizen what is getting decided in the Commission, Parliament and the Council and not that many formal words and figures. They should emphasize the things people take for granted and just seeing as a "normal" way, but forgets that the majority of laws in their respective countries are passed in the EU-Parliament. The PR-section should be much better to getting out right away and have a "counter-attack" when national journalists starts to put out wrongly understood perceptions of some laws and then prove with facts in a simple way though that it is actually not how the national journalists presents it to the public, to convince and show the EU-citizens transparency.

The media should talk about the EU in a more interesting way and has to focus more on 'real people' who citizens can identify with. The media therefore should disseminate more concrete messages of the EU, of its policy and tasks for example, which European citizens can understand and recognize themselves in it. Europe needs a new narrative in which all European citizens can recognize themselves in. To improve the image of the EU, political decision-makers have to come with new guidelines to solve present-day problems and the important persons of the EU have to be more in the media and more public. Old arguments like the prevention of war do not work anymore and we have to look at new arguments like optimistic narratives as the prospect of economic prosperity. The EU should listen more to the needs of EU citizens. The new narrative must be embraced by politicians who have the real power to make the EU's image better.

### Education

Children in primary and secondary schools should learn about the European Union. The current lack of knowledge of the EU among the general public indicates that this initiative should be implemented. All primary and secondary schools in the EU should spend at least 1 hour a week on subjects relating to the EU. The goal of this is that children will learn about every aspect of the EU: from European integration after 1945 to European culture and the EU bodies. Eventually, as they grow older, they know what the EU is and it will help in building a future together and recognize the EU as an important actor in today's world. Alongside the EU education program there should be a 'Junior Team Europe', which is a student organisation occupied with encouraging scholarship about the EU: this student body should tell them more about the purpose of the EU, the importance of Erasmus and getting connected with other scholars around Europe. A similar organisation is currently only active in Hungary and Slovenia and it would be a great idea to expand this organisation to all the other member states of the EU.





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## IMPRESS

### Responsible

Regional Representation of the European Commission  
Dr. Stephan Koppelberg  
Bertha-von-Suttner-Platz 2-4  
53111 Bonn (Germany)

Et

Federal Agency for Civic Education  
Svetlana Alenitskaya  
Adenauerallee 86  
53113 Bonn (Germany)

### Editorial work Et Layout

Gemeinsam Europa gestalten e.V.  
Yasmeen Babar Et Andreas Christ  
Hauptstraße 14  
56290 Buch/Hunsrück (Germany)

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