



**A**  
**STRONGER EUROPE**  
**IN A CHANGING WORLD**

YEPP Political Programme 2018-2020

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## PREAMBLE

### **What would our Founding Fathers think?**

To us, the European Union's deepening integration is the natural political evolution of relations between free and proud European nations. Still, European integration has never happened automatically. Our European Union is the result of deep political and humanist convictions that have always been and will always continue to be at the very centre of our political thought and action. We consider the EU to be a reference of trust for its citizens, arming them with the determination, confidence, security and stability needed to face the challenges of an ever uncertain and shifting globe.

We have drawn today our conclusions from the last European elections, when the centre-right managed to maintain a sizable majority in the European Parliament. Our political family's policies mobilised the electorate to support us, *with the five-year mandate we were given being the ultimate testing ground*. The eyes of the European people and the world will be fixed upon us, waiting for us to deliver. *In the two years that remain, we have to deliver to earn the support of the electorate again in 2019.*

We believe in a stronger Europe, that is big on the big things and small on the small things. We believe in a Europe that will become a stronger leader worldwide and will inspire the world with its ideas. We want Europeans to feel their identity and be proud of it. We want to change Europe, to make it simpler, more understandable, more visionary, less bureaucratic. Europe for us is not the sum of the modern glass buildings in Brussels. Europe is its people, the 500 million voices that see their future in this Union.

Some recipes, however, need no changing. Our political identity of Centre-Right, Liberal-Conservative and Christian-Democratic values have been proven to provide trustworthy, comprehensible and applicable solutions. In this context, we remain strong advocates of our political tradition of personal freedom, economic liberalism and social fairness.

These ideas, together with unity, boldness and solidarity, won the fight in the recent elections.

These ideas brought our Founding Fathers together, steered Europe through a severe crisis and promise to deliver more Europe for the days ahead.

These ideas are our past, present and future.

We respectfully believe our Founding Fathers would agree.

## THE VALUES OF THE EUROPEAN CENTRE-RIGHT

*We understand values as a multitude of constitutive knowledge for ethical action, yet evolving and always on hand to provide inspiration. With their trajectories through time and space, European values were forged by individual and collective examples into a coherent value system. In a western world struggling to find its course between modernism and postmodernism, we reject the totalitarian deconstruction of grand narratives and the sacrifice of values on the altar of non self-aware progress and absolute relativism.*

*Europe is here to stay and it did not appear in a vacuum.*

## **1. Freedom**

Men and Women are born free and masters of their own fate. In a free State, individuals give up only a fraction of their personal freedom in order to, in the long run, freely, safely and quietly exercise the rest. In accordance with this Social Contract ideal, State action is limited to the mandate handed over to it by the free citizens who constitute it through democracy.

Under the tradition of political liberalism and Christian democracy, we reject any abuse of the state's power to intervene in an individual's life. We consider individual freedom to be an object of guarantee by any modern and free state and we regard unnecessary obstacles to this to be politically and morally wrong. We therefore stand with individual freedom and nothing could be more altruistic than that, given the human nature of non-deniable, intrinsic, self-evident value.

## **2. Humanity**

The European Union is more than just a collection of individuals. We are a society. Many people make voluntary contributions to our society. Not government, but people, make the society and look after their own responsibilities where they can. We have faith in the people. Therefore, we are critical of top-down governance. There must be mutual commitment between all citizens: we are not alone in this world. We are only humans by living together. To create a better world, people have both rights and duties to society.

## **3. Private Property**

In a society of merit and modernised economic relations, personal freedom demands that private property is equally guaranteed. Whether it is housing, monetary values, claims, or mere objective possessions, all private property is inalienable to their rightful owners and protected erga omnes.

On the individual level, the acquisition of personal property drives persons to set and achieve goals, functions as another basis for their personal fulfillment and reflects their hard-earned life achievements. No person should be stripped of their property without due process and compensation.

## **4. Rewarding those who try**

Fairness and equality are not absolute synonyms. In a fair society those who try more, who expose themselves to greater risks and achieve more, should be able to harvest the fruits of their own effort. Taxation therefore, should in principle, allow for the accumulation of gains when respective success is achieved.

We believe that when those who try more are punished rather than rewarded, then the motivation for personal development is eliminated. At the same time, and as the collective progresses through the actions of its members, the asphyxiation of the latter under unbearable and grounding equality would also eliminate the very raw materials for the society's progress as a whole; personal inspiration and motivation to achieve more.

## **5. Free Markets**

The commitment to personal freedom, the right to own private property and merit as well as the reward of hard work is best reflected, from an economic perspective, in a Free Market economy. To us, therefore, Free Market is not a blind belief; it is rather the rational solution that incorporates free players, free action and free choice.

It is the Free Market that allowed for the economic and technological advancements that Europe has proudly achieved. A State intervening in the economy goes against our basic notion that human action and self growth cannot be predicted and cannot be barricaded. YEPP believes that planned economy equals planned freedom and a predecided path in life; notions that, being alien to our value system, we pledge to oppose in a civil, respectful yet passionate manner. We shall oppose the Left's economic determinism by waving the flag of trust towards economic and personal freedom to bring about progress, growth and social peace.

However, a free market can only be free if all citizens can participate. Therefore, social corrections should be added and people who start a business on their own should be supported by the government. The government should invest in people who give them the ability to take advantage of the free market and thus strengthening the European economy by participating in it.

As keepers of the Christian Democratic and the centre-right tradition, we reject any abuse of the state's power to intervene in an individual's life. We believe that the market should be at the use of the people, not the people at the use of the market. Work must dignify the people.

## **6. Social Justice**

Although we pledge our trust to the Free Market to deliver growth and stability, we believe that the objective of taxation is to redistribute wealth to those sections of society where it is urgently needed and where opportunity was scarce. The fact that certain individuals failed to achieve to standards is, to us, no reason at all to deny them basic involvement within the society and a fair share to the collective gain. We therefore believe that in a democratic society, social welfare to those in need, public health plans and public education are essential obligations that a state has in the framework of the social contract with its citizens.

On the other hand, we do not regard social welfare as a personal means of "getting by". The objective should be to engage more and more people to the productive community in the long run, so as to create a sense of creativity and usefulness to all individuals. We do not consider welfare recipients as a by-product of free market capitalism, needing maintenance. We see them as creative, free individuals, able to contribute greatly and if state action is needed to unlock this potential, then we should all be there to contribute with what is necessary.

## **7. Human Dignity and Human Rights**

We regard every man and every woman as a unique human being who is, as a person, irreplaceable, totally irreducible, free by nature and open to transcendence. We affirm that all men and all women have the same natural dignity and importance and are therefore equal by their nature.

The respect of human rights should always be one of the EU's main objectives, within its borders and while engaging in relations with non-EU countries.

In this context, YEPP places its trust in the rights and values of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We strongly oppose

discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, physical status, ethnic background, social standing, political conviction and religion. We believe that the EU should play a bigger role in guaranteeing respect of those instruments worldwide.

## **8. Rule of Law**

The lines upon which all freedoms and rights are realised are those dictated by law. Lawful exercise of liberty and respect for the freedom of others is what elevates humans from nihilism and anarchy to civilised and progressive citizens. State action should, accordingly, be carried out dictated by the principle of legality. All legislative and administrative undertakings therefore, must promote the free exercise of human liberties and rights, and abstain from posing any obstacles to them.

## **9. Representation & Political Participation**

Among all freedoms, one exists that allows citizens to positively influence everyone else. This is the free participation in public political life. Through parliamentary and local representation, Europe has created a political tradition of easily accessible political life, looked up to by an entire globe. In the very same spiritual guidelines, YEPP will support schemes that enhance the inclusive nature of all European decision making processes.

## **10. Responsibility**

Given the value of human beings and our dependence on our earth, we have a responsibility. Neither our, nor any other generation, owns the planet. We therefore call for responsible management of the earth with a view to satisfying the needs of all, whilst also ensuring sustainable development to protect the legitimate interests of future generations.

Global warming and environmental degradation is one of the biggest threats to mankind and facing it is a great challenge. The European Union, as one of the biggest Economies in the world, has a significant role to play. Our economic growth must be based on efficiency and low emission. We have to set an example and take global warming in consideration in every legislation and encourage Europeans and the world to adopt the same mentality.

## **11. Solidarity**

Solidarity means an awareness of the interdependence of people. We have a joint responsibility to those whose freedom or dignity have been taken from them. In affirming the unity of mankind in space and time, we see solidarity between all human beings across generations and different places.

## ECONOMY

*The European economy, and with it, the notion of participatory capitalism is engraved in our centre-right vision for a unified Europe. In our vision for an interconnected economic community, the hard work of Europeans comes first and the mechanisms of States and supranational institutions are set in motion to support and materialise it.*

*We recognise that the private market is the most effective and meritorious wealth allocation mechanism and we support policies that trickle down wealth to the entire socioeconomic pyramid. At the same time, we oppose the circulation of wealth only to a tiny fraction of the population and we strongly advocate policies that alleviate tax burdens, emphasise the role of businesses in the economy and hold job creation at the forefront of our policy mix.*

*YEPP is a strong advocate of a small state for bigger citizens. We envision a socioeconomic system whereby the innovative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit of citizens are materialised through the support of governments with narrower reach.*

*With lower taxes, a support framework for small businesses and entrepreneurs, the internationalisation of best practices and a strong single currency, YEPP aims to revive the European economy and industry and reinstate Europe as a global leader in the global economy.*

### **12. Governments don't create jobs – just the right conditions for them**

It is our conviction that the only way to create more employment is to create more employers. The EU today provides 50% of the world's welfare spending while governing only 7% of the world's total population. If we want our generation to have access to pensions, we need to move towards a much more dynamic economic model.

However, solid and efficient welfare spending has allowed Europe to continue its growth over the years. Protecting the social fabric of the European society in which weaker people are supported by the strongest provides for a society in harmony, with opportunity and personal fulfillment for all. European welfare programs, pension systems and social corrections will continue to set an example of an inclusive society where solidarity is essential, in which everyone can participate, and no one is left behind.

We believe in hard work, and we are inspired by the hard-working. These are the people who drive our societies and our economies forward and who remind us that it is people who create jobs, not governments. With that attitude and the emphasis placed on European citizens' ability to excel, YEPP stands for a flexible, effective, secure and innovative labour market that champions talent and rewards job creators.

### **13. Backing Small Business**

The backbone of the European economy, the small and medium businesses that drive growth and foster innovation, comprise 99% of all European businesses and offer two thirds of private sector jobs. Europe's SMEs are faced today with insurmountable bureaucratic burdens and limited access to finance. We support legislation that simplifies procedures of founding, financing, sustaining and closing a small business. We believe in a state that takes away the bureaucratic burden and lets small business owners do what they do best: buy, sell, hire, and move the economy.

#### **14. Lower Taxes**

The Eurozone is the highest-taxed, least competitive economy in the OECD. High taxation is killing jobs, innovation and entrepreneurship. It discourages risk-taking, it punishes success, it doesn't work. We believe in lower taxes because we believe people should keep more of what they earn. We advocate for tax-incentives to be linked with job-creation. For a stronger and bigger middle-class to thrive, lower taxes are the way forward. At the same time Europe's Member States need to simplify taxation and automated tax-collection mechanisms so as to avoid tax-fraud and tax-evasion. Every euro lost in tax-evasion is a euro added to the taxes of the hard-working.

#### **15. For Startups**

In YEPP, we believe Europe should do more and talk less when it comes to solving real problems that startups face today. The reality is that the majority of innovative and successful startups most often find their home in other places in the world. Europe has talented people but not a talent-driven business attitude. Europe's graduates and millennials are the best-educated generations of all time but their knowledge does not give them enough confidence to start something on their own. We believe it is high-time to heavily invest in startup communities and that it is important to create structures that allow startup communities to flourish. Europe must become the best place on earth to create a startup.

Platform economy, which is made possible by innovative startups, poses challenges on some of current structures of taxation and labour policy in European countries. YEPP believes that these problems are best solved through constructive dialogue between the public and the private sector – not by banning new inventions. We must reform our structures so that they are capable of adjusting to the challenges and possibilities posed by digitization. The best way to support innovation is by allowing it to happen.

#### **16. Housing for all**

All European citizens should have the ability to acquire a home. In areas where real estate prices are growing faster than inflation, the affordability of housing, especially for young families, is becoming a major impediment to ownership and therefore security from poverty.

Governments' should assist first time buyers through shared ownership schemes and other incentives, in cooperation with the private sector to help young people acquire their first home. Private property is the key to independent living. Moreover, every European citizens has the fundamental right to live in a secure and healthy environment.

#### **17. Connecting the dots of the Single Market**

The Single Market, the largest unified economic entity in the world, has paved the way for Europe's continuous growth, the solidification of its market economy and free movement of products, services, capital and its people. YEPP calls on the European Commission to work closely with all Member States towards a real and complete single market with special regard to the Banking Union, the Energy Union, the Capital Markets Union, the Digital Single Market as well as the the fields of air and land transportation, employment regulations and previously earned pension entitlements, consumer rights, trans-border industrialisation and free movement. The single market should become more extrovert, less protectionist and simpler to use for citizens and businesses.

After the Euro-crisis, we envisaged a three pillared banking union: centralised financial supervision under the European Central Bank, which took effect in late 2014; the Single Resolution Mechanism, where the SRB became responsible in

January 2016 for ordering the restructuring or winding up of failing banks; and a still-unestablished deposit insurance scheme.

YEPP believes that the 2016 Council Roadmap to complete the Banking Union should remain the basis of future discussion. The EU needs to work towards adequate buffers for bail-in, flexibility to address macro prudential and systemic risks at the national level, sound provisioning policy for non-performing loans, regulatory treatment of sovereign exposure, ongoing work on improving the efficiency of national insolvency procedures and minimizing the use of state-aid. A focus on risk reduction needs to be maintained too and to support progress on the development of a Capital Markets Union and the fostering cross border private risk sharing.

## **18. Reviving European Industry**

Europeans are an industrious people; the continent that generated the Industrial Revolution and ignited the change of the global economic system is now faced with transformative challenges. European industry is central to Europe's growth potential and despite the challenges, Europe remains a global leader in industrial innovation.

Tax friendly, competitive market environments are essential for industrial stakeholders who provide jobs to Europeans and create tangible and intangible goods and services within our market. While corporations should be accommodated in their pursuit of gains, YEPP reminds market stakeholders that industrial commitments to uphold consumers' rights and environmental standards will forever be accounted for in its policy mix.

## **19. Ease the burden of bureaucracy for mobile European citizens**

Moving from one EU state to another confronts European citizens with great challenges, when it comes to issues which have traditionally been dealt with at a national level such as residency, health insurance, income tax, child benefit payments, pension contributions, social insurance inter alia, as they are not adequately coordinated or recognized across Member States. This leaves European citizens with the impression of a fragmented rather than a united Europe. We therefore call for more recognition of other Member State's resident registration systems through a framework of common reference as a first step. Secondly, we call on Member States to dismantle everyday hurdles and enable the authorities to resolve such matters in a service-oriented manner in the interests of the citizens.

## **20. Adapt social security systems to the realities of European freedom of movement**

The free movement of people enables the younger generation in particular to travel and work without borders within the EU and also helps to address the ongoing skills shortage felt by many member states. Simultaneously however, these achievements of the European Union pose new challenges to national social security systems. YEPP is committed to the freedom of movement but this should not come at the expense of some individuals cheating the system to choose the welfare system with the biggest pay out. Negative social economic and demographic consequences of internal migration should also be addressed.

In the small minority of cases of intra EU migration where 'welfare tourism' happens, i.e. where between 0.7% and 1% of non-contributory benefits welfare expenditure is claimed by non-active EU migrants, we need to end this abuse at national level as this is a national affair. Member States need to use national legislative tools to tighten their respective rules around non-contributory cash benefits which sets eligibility through residency, registration with employment services etc.

Furthermore, YEPP believes that in the scenario whereby child benefit is claimed by a European citizen who is unemployed for a child who is not a resident in the relevant member state making the payment, that the benefit be indexed downwards to the cost of living in the country where the child lives but should not exceed the amount paid nationally.

## **21. A globally competitive EU economy**

A vibrant industry defined by fair competition and export orientation will allow European businesses to transcend the physical borders of our continent and reach international markets. Competing within the Single Market is a stress-test for domestic businesses; success in the internal market should be emulated beyond its borders and in so doing, reinstate Europe as a global industrial competitor. Taking advantage of international synergies and Europe's own competitive advantages will not only allow European companies to export their operations, services and products but also attract international investment. Europe can - and should be - globally competitive.

## **22. A stronger Euro for a stronger economy**

The Euro is the most prominent example of economic integration in the EU. Despite the many hardships that the Eurozone economies have faced, the Euro stands strong and competes internationally with all major currencies. As the Monetary Union grows, the single currency becomes more and more engraved into the economic DNA of the EU. New institutional reforms, support mechanisms and the Banking Union have been pursued in order to mitigate the after-effects of the sovereign debt crisis.

YEPP recognises the single currency as the building block of the modern EU economy and aims to support, protect and expand the single currency, and with it, the stability of the system of economic governance. In order to achieve that goal, all Member States must respect the common rules of the Euro and work collectively towards a stronger Euro that will benefit European citizens and businesses.

## **23. Enhancing Free Trade**

We call for all stakeholders to work towards a truly free trade environment. Therefore, the European Union should commit to free trade agreements. At all times, however, we strive for transparency and democracy, provided this does not harm ongoing negotiations.

These agreements, however, should not allow European standards to lower. The quality of food and products is high in the European Union and the EU should be able to impose its standards across the world in an effort to increase the quality of food and products globally. Additionally, GMO's should be placed under scrutiny before being allowed to enter the European market.

## **24. Enhancing national competitive advantages**

Every European nation has a competitive advantage that can help them to thrive. The European Commission should work closely with all Member States to help them to realize their full potential. Such examples are the innovation wave in the Baltics and the Nordic region, the heavy industry in central Europe, agriculture, tourism, shipping and ship building in the Mediterranean, the service economy in Western Europe. We believe in a diverse economy that will use every State's best products while respecting fair competition.

## **25. Rural areas and agriculture-based economy**

Considering 40 million EU citizens work directly in the agricultural production and processing sector, YEPP recognizes the essential role of a dynamic and competitive agricultural sector in the EU's 2020 strategy for jobs and growth.

Future EU budget funds for the Common Agricultural Policy will come under increasing scrutiny as Britain prepares to leave the EU, taking their contributions with them. YEPP therefore calls for a reformed CAP that strikes the balance

between efficiency, safety and sustainability. European consumers deserve the highest quality food which is 100% traceable. To deliver this, farming needs to continue to produce high quality products while also simultaneously stepping up to the challenges of stewarding the environment and tackling climate change. Future CAP payments should be linked to rewarding the reaching sustainability targets, specifically regarding water, air and soil quality and build on their success of schemes to protect the environment, mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change.

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*At a time of a changing, volatile and unpredictable global political, economic and security environment, Europe must redefine its priorities and reassess and strengthen the existing response mechanisms at its disposal in order to remain a key player on the international stage. Therefore, Europe's foreign policy priorities for the times ahead must focus on the following issues:*

### **26. Consistently strengthen the European Union Global Strategy**

The European Union Global Strategy shall keep up with the arise of the new challenges the continent is confronted within its immediate neighbourhood and beyond, as well as the opportunities the bloc is strategically positioned to benefit from. The CFSP needs to focus its action on the fulfilment of the EU Comprehensive Approach to Conflict and Crisis Management ideals and on the progress of its application, in order for Member States to be able to respond to the ever increasing asymmetrical and hybrid threats. The establishment of an EU seat on the UN Security Council would be a crucial measure to ensure this.

### **27. Focusing on the strengthen of the EU Comprehensive Approach to Crisis and Conflict Management**

The threats of tomorrow differ from the threats of yesterday: Cyber-threats, natural disasters, political instability, the existence of countries with a serious lack of security capabilities to its own territories demand co-operation between military and civilian resources, but also between countries and organizations. Thus, the focus on the modernization and ampliation of the approaches to this crisis has been where the EU strongly highlights its importance comparing to the UN's Integrated Approach or NATO's CIMIC. Therefore, we strongly believe that the EU needs to focus its action on the continuous strengthen of the following, already active, principles: the response to immediate humanitarian needs, helping to rebuild countries and societies torn by conflicts, and addressing the root causes of instability to prevent further violence form part of the EU's focus on resilience, but lastly, also the work on mediation and reconciliation.

### **28. Optimize investments, improve cooperation, share capabilities - PESCO**

Since the Lisbon Treaty, the possibility of the application of a Permanent Structured Cooperation has been a reality in the EU, changing the paradigm on the defense decision-making. Taking the most out of this possibility, YEPP strongly believes that this must be the new reality on defense investment, overcoming the long trouble to achieve unanimity between all EU Member States.

PESCO has a budget of 1.5billion for projects between now and 2020. YEPP calls on the participating Member States to ensure that this funding is used effectively to

- Fill existing strategic gaps across the continent;
- Achieve greater interoperability in training, equipment and research;
- Increase cooperation on cybersecurity matters and;
- Improve intelligence capabilities.

### **29. A European response to Russia's aggression**

For the new strategic approach to be relevant, a common and concerted response to the conflict in Ukraine and how to deal with the Russian Federation's renewed irredentism will have to be achieved among the Member States utilising the various facets of EU external action such as trade, economic, energy, justice and home affairs, development and security policies and between the EU institutions and national governments.

YEPP supports the continuation of sanctions against the Russian federation and condemns the annexation of Crimea Peninsula as a serious violation of the international law and as a threat to peaceful cooperation in Europe.

### **30. *European Neighborhood and Enlargement Policy***

The political and economic stability of its neighbours, promoted through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and the Eastern Partnership and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in particular, must continue to be of central importance to the European Union's security and development agenda.

YEPP recognises the importance of the values of the EU for the success of the European project, democratisation and stabilisation of the continent. The continuation of the enlargement process, seen as the successful transmission of the EU core principles and values, remains a crucial sign of European Union's attractiveness and vitality, and should, therefore, be supported.

### **31. 'Brit-In' – acknowledging the United Kingdom as a crucial part of the European family**

We respect the democratic decision taken by the British voters to leave the European Union. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom remains a crucial part of the European family. YEPP believes in keeping the door open to the UK and will therefore promote a re-entry in cooperation with the pro-European Youth in the UK. YEPP supports a for a 'Brit-In', a re-entrance of the UK into the European Union, as a long-term vision.

### **32. Consolidating and expanding NATO**

Members of the Partnership for Peace programme since 1994, Finland and Sweden have both been valued contributors to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's peacekeeping operations across the globe. Building upon a partnership based on common values and a shared vision for a peaceful, stable and prosperous world, YEPP strongly supports the enlargement of NATO to include Finland and Sweden as full members of the organisation. In addition, NATO should place particular emphasis on strengthening its partnerships globally, including with countries that NATO has launched an Intensified Dialogue, as well as Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative countries. The full and immediate implementation of article 5 of the Washington Treaty by its signatories is the unquestionable fundament of transatlantic security.

### **33. Enhanced Military Co-operation between Member States**

Europe is built on the idea of peace and prosperity. Seventy years after World War II, we have yet to achieve peace on our continent. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has proven that Europe needs to be capable of, and more active in, defending our common values. The lack of interoperability between national armies undermines our collective security. The goal of our common security and defence policy can be achieved only through increased military cooperation.

In order to strengthen our common security European countries have to coordinate their efforts. The European Union has to better cooperate with NATO. Our common security is dependent on cooperation with countries that share our values.

### **34. EU's strategy against the Islamic State and other terrorist threats**

The rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria poses a new threat to the stability of the bloc's neighbours and to homeland security, a threat that is often undermined by European decision-makers. Europe should act with one voice in containing the resurgent terrorist organisation and its partners, including by military action, to protect the local population from persecution, and to eliminate the chances of a spillover to the rest of the Middle East and, most importantly, terrorist activity in the Continent itself. A special monitoring should be implemented on returning EU citizens and migrants that have offered support to these groups by combining Schengen and migration databases as well as intelligence information at a European level.

YEPP stands strong against persecution based on religion or membership of a particular social group. The battle against persecution must be EU's core objective in its foreign policy.

### **35. A common humanitarian response**

The humanitarian crisis on the EU's border is a common European problem, for which all of the EU and Schengen have a responsibility. The escalating situations in Middle East and North Africa have increased the number of refugees attempting to reach a safe haven. The United Nations has claimed the number of refugees has not reached such levels since the Second World War.

Europe must unite on this issue. In the short term, the European countries have to increase their effort to prevent loss of lives caused by illegal migration, save lives in the Mediterranean Sea. In the long term, Europe has to increase its contribution to humanitarian aid for those who are suffering in order to counter causes of flight.

### **36. Empowering Atlanticism**

We recognise Atlanticism as an historic, natural and fundamental element of the EU's foreign policy. We see the Atlantic alliance, not as a declaration on paper only taken into consideration by political and military elites, but as a value that should be part of our identity as a generation. YEPP is committed to Atlanticism and pledges to intensify its efforts to build stronger ties with young, like-minded Americans.

## HOME AFFAIRS

*YEPP is committed to creating an EU where citizens enjoy their fundamental right to free movement, where the rule of law and democratic rights are fully respected. A single legal framework on data protection, respecting intellectual property rights, privacy and gender equality as well as policy positions that render European citizens safer are all at the forefront of YEPP's home affairs agenda. We are working towards a common European approach on immigration and asylum policy and call for a united stance against terrorism and organised crime.*

### **37. Safer communities, safer citizens**

Safety is not a political declaration, it is a right, a status rightfully demanded by all European citizens. YEPP considers safety to be a basic prerequisite of freedom. In this vein, we support policing doctrines that provide just that; absence of danger and uncertainty from parts of our private and public lives, in which it has no place at all. In the same spirit we demand that during the safety providing process, no procedural misconduct is tolerated. No violations of human rights will be accepted.

### **38. United against terrorism**

The terror phenomenon springs up with renewed impetus and determination, both domestically and internationally. Acts of vicious brutality and non-discriminatory violence threaten the innocent and irreparably harm the free. More recently terrorism has undertaken operations that insult the core of our basic collective consciousness and fundamental rights of European democracy, such as freedom of speech. Europe's reaction can only be swift and proportionate to the threat. European intelligence cooperation must be strengthened TO PREVENT FUTURE ATTACKS and agencies such as Europol must be improved and further developed. We shall present zero tolerance to terror, as well as to its actions, means and messages.

### **39. Fighting organised crime**

Over the course of the last two decades, Europe has joined forces with the rest of the international community in the common fight against organised crime. Money laundering, human trafficking and the international illegal arms trade have been consistently countered. However, YEPP believes that the same experience and international political will can and must be showcased in the fight against illegal trade, targeting supply lines, mediators and financial means.

### **40. Immigration Reform**

A lot of talk has been focused around immigration in Europe, with little action. In the coming years, climate change, stiff economic conditions and war will bring ever increasing numbers of people to Europe in desperate search of a safe home. Europe needs to act before its choices are significantly narrowed by the swiftly changing circumstances. European asylum processes should be improved and simplified, in close cooperation with national authorities. FRONTEX needs to witness an operational paradigm shift, one that will transform it into a real coastguard agency, as a first step towards a European border police. Lastly, clauses of the Dublin II Regulation that create insolvencies and unjust distribution of the immigration inflow, should be revisited in a manner reflecting and respecting all Members States' capabilities.

#### **41. Free Movement for Europeans is non-negotiable**

In the context formulated by increased immigration, European Member States should face the challenge without resigning the principles of free movement. The free movement of Europeans is not only non-negotiable, but a fundamental principle of European identity, tradition and law. States demanding special treatment despite signed agreements such as the UK and Switzerland should respect their commitments to free movement for all European citizens.

#### **42. The European Coast and Border Guard**

YEPP has repeatedly called for concrete and sensible action to protect the outer borders and shift the burden of doing so. One of the most ambitious proposals that can help us solve the ongoing border crisis is a fully functional joint European Coast and Border Guard. By pooling national resources we can share the burden that now disproportionately falls on a handful of member states. It also provides us with a great opportunity to use our resources more economically, by withdrawing large, expensive military hardware and replacing them with more effective flexible patrol units, whose equipment can be procured in a collaborative fashion.

### **CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT**

Climate change is one of the biggest threats to mankind. It is a challenge without borders that the European countries must face together – at the EU-level, as well as in other international arenas. The environment is a public good that must be protected through legislation and taxation. As one of the biggest economies in the world, the European Union must lead by example and take responsibility for this urgent matter.

As a youth organization, YEPP calls for ambitious climate- and environmental policies in order to secure the future of our generation, and the generations to come.

#### **1. Green growth**

YEPP believes that economic growth must be sustainable. Environmental protection and a strong economy can, and should go hand in hand.

We need to move from disposable to sustainable production and consumption. Taxation AT MEMBER STATE LEVEL plays a crucial role in creating incentives on both the supply and the demand side of this issue. Taxation and regulation must encourage innovation within the fields of circular and sharing economy. Simultaneously, environmental externalities must be taxed while environmentally viable consumption is to be incentivised.

#### **2. Common European environmental policy**

YEPP supports a common European environmental policy to set minimum standards. The environmental aspect must be mainstreamed in all of the EU's policy areas. This can be done through the evaluation of the environmental consequences of all European legislation and projects.

#### **3. Renewable energy**

The future lies in renewable energy. Investments in innovation and research are needed for the European countries to fully utilize their potential in the global race for renewables. YEPP believes that emissions' trading is the preferred method for improving renewable energy output.

#### **4. Sustainable cities**

Climate change and environmental questions must be addressed at every level of society. Since the vast majority of this society lives in urban areas, the European countries must include the cities when addressing climate issues. The speed of the urbanization process imposes pressure on urban planning and makes the cities key players in fighting global warming.

#### **5. Investment in research**

The public sector should support research in technologies and innovations needed to solve these pressing issues. YEPP also believes in the capacity of the private sector to innovate. We must secure that there are incentives to invest resources in green innovation and research, which will bring us closer to sustainable solutions and a circular economy.

#### **6. Fossil Fuels**

YEPP urges that the use of fossil energy sources is decreased and encourages the EU as well as all European countries to invest in alternative energy sources that neither pose threats to its surroundings, nor to the environment in the long run, and for the EU to promote scientific research in this field. YEPP supports a common European environmental policy to set minimum standards, and considers the environment in all European policymaking areas and in all European projects. Climate change happens independent of state borders, and must therefore be tackled through international agreements and common efforts.

The EU should work to change the Chicago convention on International Civil Aviation to allow for taxing aviation fuel.

## ENERGY

*Europe is the most energy-responsible area in the world. While being proud about this achievement, YEPP pledges to support policies that will make the EU more energy independent and more energy-diverse, provide affordable energy prices for consumers and businesses and support Member States that have unused natural resources.*

*YEPP supports a European Energy Union that will ensure secure, affordable and climate-friendly energy by allowing a free flow of energy across national borders within the EU, and bringing new technologies and renewed infrastructure to cut household bills, create jobs and boost growth.*

*In that context YEPP recognizes the need for solid Energy Union Governance aimed at enhancing dialogue, deploying regional cooperation and coordination of policies whilst cutting red tape. In a changing world, the EU must be ready to readjust its strategic goals based on a broader context than environmentally friendly policies.*

### **43. Using Europe's natural resources to the fullest**

YEPP considers every natural deposit located on European land or within European-controlled waters as an asset to the Union's energy capacity. Beyond being a clear advantage to a member state's economy, such natural resources help the EU become stronger and more energy efficient. YEPP calls on the EU Institutions and Member States to move quickly and decisively towards exploiting all available natural resources on European soil, such as shale gas in Poland and natural gas and oil in the Aegean sea. European energy means more affordable energy for our people, more independence from Russian gas, and more power on the global stage.

### **44. For an energy independent Europe**

Europe's dependence on energy imports is a particularly pressing issue with the EU currently importing over half its energy at a cost of €350 billion per year. Energy independence for the EU is a long-term goal that cannot be achieved in just a few years. However, we believe that if Europe can, then it must move towards energy independence. In a changing world, Europe needs to be stronger at every level and set strategic goals to secure future generations. In order to ensure the energy independence of Europe, we agree that interconnection between Member States is a key issue for achieving a real Energy Union. Therefore, we support efficient investments in order to improve interconnectors within Europe.

### **45. Leading the global race for renewables**

True energy security lies in renewable energy. With its target for a 20% share of renewable energy by 2020, rising to at least 27% by 2030, the EU is currently a world leader in promoting the use of renewables while the sector employs over 1 million people and it has a turnover of €130 billion. The Union should continue leading the global race for renewables with eyes on innovative solutions that will utilise the full potential of Europe's land, water, wind and sun.

#### **46. Smart cities and smart grids**

Smart cities and smart grids can save up to 30% in electricity consumption in Europe's most populated cities. Upgrading our cities means upgrading the quality of life while reducing costs. The EU should start investing more in research and innovation in those technologies that would make our urban areas more efficient. YEPP calls for a roadmap to make Europe's major cities run on that concept.

#### **47. Consumers at the heart of the Energy Union**

YEPP calls for a competitive environment for private and public energy providers that ensures affordable prices for homes, businesses, and industry. We believe in a market where consumers are able to access clear, understandable, reliable information, which is delivered in real-time, in order to increase their control over their energy decisions. Such a system should allow future European consumers to have full power to make their own energy choices.

## EDUCATION

*The European continent has traditionally been the birthplace of innovative thinking and ideas that changed the course of history. YEPP believes that the continuity of Europe's success and leading presence globally can be ensured through educational systems that combine academics with skill creation, and enable learning throughout one's academic and professional life.*

*With our attitude constantly reminding regulators of the talent of Europe's human capital and their abilities to reengineer the economy, society and life at large, we advocate for effective educational systems in accordance with the freedom of Member States to design such systems autonomously. We wish to reward academic excellence and instil an attitude of continuous learning.*

### **48. A global education leader**

YEPP believes that Europe's growth and economic success is contingent upon its ability to design and implement educational policies and programmes that enhance the academic strengths of European students, harvests their critical thinking and introduces them to a competitive labour market with a wide academic arsenal and professional skill-set. With technology and innovative processes offering Europe the potential to redesign a more interactive learning environment, we believe that Europe can regain its rightful leading position in educating its youth and creating a sustainable route from education to the market. To attain those objectives, it is essential to ensure an authentic match between school programmes and field reality. We therefore call for a closer collaboration between the educational system and the business world. *We therefore call for a closer collaboration between the educational system and the business world, especially in future-oriented industries.*

### **49. Better Schools, Better Teachers**

Teachers are the vanguards of education and, with them at the centre of our attention regarding education policy, we wish to invest in the future of European academia. We believe that a high quality of education is an indispensable prerequisite for our vision for European education where freedom of speech as well as value-driven and lateral thinking modules are to be supported by exceptional teachers. Excellence can be fostered by excellent people.

### **50. Educating for the jobs of the future**

In a decade or less from now, Europe's top jobs are jobs that do not exist today, solving problems that did not yet occur. Europe's universities and all other education institutions must adapt to that reality by being more open to the world's trends and the exponentially growing knowledge. Europe's education systems must prepare the next generation for the next generation's labour market.

### **51. Building a highly-skilled generation**

For YEPP, education is not a stand-alone stage of an individual's life. In our view, education is a transmission belt from thinking and learning to acting and leading. We want our schools, teachers and educational environment to solidify the knowledge of young Europeans and to build on their strengths in the process of professionalising their skills. YEPP

calls on EU Member States to adopt the successful 'Dual System' that combines skills and knowledge in one degree so that the next generation of European graduates will be ready for their first job from day one.

## **52. European Universities need to think global**

Europe's tertiary education is a channel for internationalising the outlook and potential of its human talent and intellectual innovation. Fuelled by its people, Europe's intellectual contribution globally is one of its major competitive advantages. YEPP supports Europe's universities leading role and presence in the international spectrum of academia through participatory education that fosters international exchange and an attitude of global learning.

## **53. Volunteering and Non-Formal Education (NFE)**

Volunteering and other forms of non-formal learning are both imperative for the development of European students' academic and social skills. Intercultural exchange and attempts to integrate students in task teams and missions to assist in resolving cultural issues enhances their understanding of the parameters of education. YEPP supports learning through non-formal and volunteering channels where students and citizens can embark upon missions to give back to society and improve their social engagement while also impacting change in their schools, universities, communities and ultimately, Europe.

## HEALTH

*Mens sana in corpore sano. Healthy mind in a healthy body. Europeans have traditionally valued health and their access to healthcare. We spend large amounts of time and resources in improving our health, through the available healthcare systems. Health largely defines our level of happiness and is a basic prerequisite for all other engagements, for without health only little can be done.*

*YEPP believes in a society that is able to live to its full potential, a society that will take good care of their body and mind and live longer, happier lives, ready to face everyday challenges.*

*The unprecedented demographic challenges of European Union pose a serious economic and social threat for the future of Europe. Therefore, they should be addressed in a systematic, innovative and structural manner.*

### **54. Citizen-centered healthcare systems**

The healthcare system is there to serve the citizens. We believe that the essential aim of health care investments should be primary prevention - to keep citizens healthy and to detect threats to health before illnesses develop. In this aspect, policies aimed at enhancing work-life balance of young Europeans could be a very good investment that can lower the health risks and increase the overall life satisfaction. A healthy society needs an efficient, citizen-centred, transparent and dynamic healthcare system.

We embrace the implementation of e-health solutions as well as new medical technologies respecting ethical aspects. We call for budgets that will meet the needs of a changing population and for efficient spending that will responsibly acknowledge increasing expenditures due to an increasing life expectancy.

### **55. Expanding the European Health Insurance Card**

Although the EHIC is a successful measure, its use is still very limited. Awareness about the card is very low and some limitations are problematic. YEPP calls for a simplified process of registration for every European citizen that should be linked to ID-cards or passports. While it is important to prevent abusive practices, the EHIC should guarantee free treatment abroad in case of emergencies regardless of the national healthcare system.

### **56. Healthier Europeans at the heart of our policies**

Healthy citizens are the cornerstone of a healthy society. We strive not only for a longer life, but for a longer life in good health. In order to achieve that, we need to empower citizens to take responsibility in the management of their own health.

It is the state's responsibility to keep its population in good public health conditions. It is every business' role, small or big, to create a healthy workplace. But most importantly, it is in every individual's power to keep themselves healthy. YEPP envisions a European society that invests more in sports, healthy food and considers well-being as a priority. An ageing Europe that needs to spend less on welfare in order to work longer and more efficiently can only be sustainable if its citizens are healthier.

## **57. European response to deadly global health threats**

Increased trade and travel pose new challenges to prevention and containment. Countries and societies should responsibly tackle these issues by making greater efforts to improve food safety and hygiene conditions which are the primary sources of infectious diseases. YEPP acknowledges the value of vaccination and supports it in order to prevent eradicated illnesses from returning. Additionally, more needs to be done in the field of sexually transmitted diseases by raising awareness about effective preventive measures. Also, the treatment and containment strategies for pandemic and epidemic outbreaks must be further improved.

## DIGITAL AGENDA

*A Digital Single Market can create up to €340 billion in additional growth, hundreds of thousands of new jobs, and a vibrant knowledge-based society. We stand firm in removing the obstacles to unlocking this potential.*

### **58. E-commerce in every house**

We want to bring e-commerce to the doorstep of every European consumer and small business. To do so, e-commerce needs to operate within the same online trading rules across the Member States. Investment in infrastructure and information sharing will bring down delivery costs, while simplifying VAT arrangements and harmonising and easing the complicated copyright environment will open the digital single market to the 500 million citizens of Europe.

### **59. The digital era**

High speed, reliable broadband connections and improved mobile internet access need to be made available everywhere throughout our continent, even in the most remote areas. Governments need to work in conjunction with telecommunication companies to invest in infrastructure to reduce costs for consumers, for both personal and commercial use. Furthermore, cloud data can bring huge cost-savings to businesses and we support those who wish to invest in improving the availability of this technology.

### **60. A digitally skilled generation**

Our society needs to become digitally skilled for today and tomorrow's job requirements. We want to see Member States integrate coding across national curricula, with support driven at a European level. Teachers need to be trained in innovative teaching methods with effective use of digital tools and content available, while European universities should expand their online and open educational resources, reaching to students across the continent. E-Skill regional hubs should be built to connect stakeholders to funding opportunities through the European Social Fund and Erasmus+.

### **61. Net neutrality**

We stand for an open and neutral internet, an internet without censorship. Online rights for privacy and the users own control of their personal data must be fully recognized as essential rights by the European Union. Only for catastrophe warning and for large-scale operations after catastrophes, highest priority should be granted. Apart from this, all internet traffic must be treated equally, without discrimination, restriction or interference, irrespective of its sender, receiver, type, content, device, service or application.

## POLITICAL SYSTEM

*Everyone is a politician. As supporters of a citizen-driven democracy we work for the implementation of policies that engage more and wider parts of the public in the decision-making processes. In this digital age we regard the geographic distance between citizens and policy creation centers as no excuse for abstention and apathy. This is a big continent, but in the near future, our technological innovation will bridge all distances and lobbying will be open to*

*everyone. We therefore regard the political system not as a separate and sterile fragment of society, but simply as a podium, where everyone can have their say.*

## **62. Simpler EU decision-making**

**There is no future for the Union without the involvement of its people. This is why we say: Citizens First.**

To begin with, the legislative procedure within the European institutions needs to change to be composed of three stages: first a proposal to be drafted by national Ministers and the Commissioner in charge or political groups in the European Parliament, which then goes to only one, main committee in the parliament, aligned with the Commission's portfolio. The committee should debate, amend and vote on the proposal right before the plenary session. Finally, the proposal will go to the Council of Ministers for approval or rejection. In this system citizens and media will know how things can change and they will be more engaged in European politics.

YEPP also calls for roll call votes in all European Parliament decisions, for simpler requirements for a workable European Citizen's Initiative, *and more transparent decision-making in the European Parliament, the Council and other informal institutions, like trilogues*). Furthermore, YEPP calls on the European Commission and the Council to implement shorter deadlines and less lengthy procedures. The EU needs to be more understandable and responsive to the people who are paying for its existence. Therefore, we call for the establishment of a single seat of the European Parliament.

## **63. For a directly elected EU President**

We are very proud to have been part of the campaign for the very first elected president of the European Commission during the European Elections of 2014. However, we see today's system as a step towards real democracy in the EU. YEPP calls for the merger of the Commission President and the European Council President positions into one. The EU president should be elected directly by European voters at the same time as the European Parliament's elections with a common ballot and a common system.

## **64. Rebuilding trust**

History teaches that no political establishment can be maintained unless it radiates inspiration and attracts people to it through trust. Inspiration makes us all link the EU with our common future and trust makes us want to bind our personal lives to a few hundred millions more. EU citizens need to realise that their rights are not ink on statute books, but an everyday lived reality. This very goal is what should define the EU's political personality, transforming it into a more and more simple, comprehensible and engaging mechanism. This goal of a two-way relationship of trust falls solely on policy makers.

## **65. The role of youth politics**

YEPP is the largest alliance of young politicians of the democratic world. Our vision about the role of youth politics goes beyond training and networking. We are witnesses to a generation of Europeans who began their path in politics from a youth organisation and climbed their way up to a parliamentarian or ministerial position or even to Head of State. This fact fills us with responsibility about how to prepare the next generation of Europe's leaders.

Today's political youth organisations can be more consequential than elected individuals in public offices. From raising awareness to changing legislation at the national and European level, from accessing decision-making to electing our

own representatives in parliaments all over Europe, YEPP sees its role as policy maker. A policy maker that represents young Europeans who believe in the ideas of the Centre-Right, Liberal-Conservative and Christian-Democratic politics.

We call on all European youth organisations to join us in our vision of youth politics and put an end in the era of endless demands and excessive spending of taxpayers money.

YEPP calls on the EU Council and the European Parliament to allow youth organisations of European political parties to register as European legal entities.

## **66. The populists and us**

Populism stems from misconceptions, with the European Union's alleged distance from the everyday problems of citizens only adding fuel to this populist fire. However, every time we fail to explain why and how we do things in this Union, we leave the field open for populists to pull straw-man arguments against what we do. Too often, members of national governments themselves contribute to a negative image of Europe amongst citizens.

On the other hand, we believe that the demonisation of populism is an indirect cause of its recent growth. False prestige and unearned attention are granted to populists, through our over-emphasis of their non-systemic attributes, making them appear different, and fresh, and therefore promising.

By casting a direct light on populism, it will become clear how the mouse's shadow appears to be a lion on the wall of our public debate. We shall therefore tackle populism with the courage and conviction that has forged our political tradition; a reasoned, dignified and forceful response to those who promise simple solutions to complex problems. We trust the citizens of our Union and their capacity to rise above the vitriol and demagoguery of the populists and vote for the people's parties that reflect the true values of our Union.

Finally, YEPP calls on all EPP parties to only join government coalitions with parties that share our core values regarding human dignity, the principle of private ownership and unalienable fundamental human rights.

## **67. Strengthening subsidiarity**

*We believe in a European Union in which every task is accomplished on the most suitable level. To us subsidiarity is not just a principle, but the main pillar underpinning the European project. We therefore believe that both new and existing EU competences should be decentralised wherever possible. Expanding the subsidiarity check by national parliaments by adding a red card to the current early warning system helps in this pursuit. Our vision is not a European superstate, but rather a subsidiarity union that leave to the states and regions those duties that they can take charge of best. The strength of the EU is its strong peoples and regions, and following its motto "United in Diversity", the protection and promotion of their identity remains our common mission.*

## **68. More participation in local politics**

We trust local politics and their ever-constant fight against populism. Local administrative and legislative victories against populist and left agendas provide foundation, momentum and concrete examples to national and European politicians in order to push for similar agendas. Decisions on the micro-level shape our everyday lives. The inability of most EU citizens to name their local representatives is alarming and we pledge to do our part by promoting and assisting

young members of our political family that engage in local politics. At the local level we stand for increased involvement of the citizens in managing their neighbourhood. Therefore, we strongly support the idea of social participation, engaging people into decision-making processes and civic budgets.

### **69. Smaller government, bigger citizens**

Our corporations, small businesses and individuals spend wisely and smartly, so should our governments. Cutting spending across the board is not the solution. Europe should spend smarter and better, while structural reforms should make our governments more flexible and our economies stronger. A balanced budget should be in place so that every hardworking taxpayer's euro is spent maximising the benefits to society, encouraging growth, improving education and healthcare, securing our borders from external threats and rebuilding the dream that brought our founding fathers together to form the European Union.

A smaller state is central to our conviction, not just because of spending, but because we believe it should have less power in the life of the individual. Less concentrated power means less corruption, and a smaller state means bigger citizens. This is our vision for citizen-driven governments.

### **70. The future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom**

YEPP respects and recognises the democratic decision taken by the people of the United Kingdom in June 2016 to leave the European Union. In recognising this however, we share the view of European Council President Donald Tusk that "Brexit is one of the saddest moments in twenty first-century European history" and is a particular blow to young people. We resultantly want to build a close relationship with the UK whereby a decision taken by the British people in the future to re-join our Union is not beyond the realm of possibility.

We envisage such a relationship resulting in healthy economic, social and political co-operation. However, the four freedoms of the European Union must not be compromised in the pursuit of such a relationship. Furthermore, YEPP remains fundamentally opposed to any hard border on the island of Ireland. In 2018, the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement which ended decades of political and religious motivated violence in Northern Ireland, YEPP calls on the UK to respect and uphold their responsibilities as co-guarantors of the internationally recognised peace agreement.

## **EPILOGUE**

*We, the 64 member organisations of YEPP, representing Europe's largest alliance of young politicians, true to our mission, committed to our common future have adopted the Political Programme for 2018-2020, on Saturday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, in Athens, Greece at the 12<sup>th</sup> YEPP Congress.*

*We pledge to serve these ideas and work together towards their implementation at every level, national or European. We pledge to enlarge the centre-right movement and represent with integrity and determination all young Europeans who believe in what we do.*