


# PODIUM

A POLICY  
HANDBOOK  
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*HUNGARIAN REFORMS /  
MARKETS vs. EDUCATION /  
ACTA /  
RENEWABLE ENERGY /  
NEW VAT /  
TRANSIT TRAFFIC /  
ELECTIONS IN DRC /  
MYANMAR /  
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ENLARGEMENT vs. DEEPENING /*

Podium is a publication of the  
**Youth of the European People's Party.**  
The purpose of this publication is to summarize  
all the adopted policy documents by the  
YEPP Council and focus on the most important  
and innovative proposals of the organization.

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## contributors for this issue

**Linda  
Eichler**  
IRLY, Estonia



**Julie  
O'Leary**  
YFG, Ireland



**Tom  
Vandenkendelaere**  
JongCD&V, Belgium



**Federico  
Potočnik**  
MSI, Slovenia

## resolutions adopted

*/ HUNGARIAN REFORMS  
/ MARKETS vs. EDUCATION  
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*presented by*  
**MUF**, Sweden  
**Unge Høyre**, Norway  
**Fidelitas**, Hungary  
**Jeunes CDH**, Belgium

# *YEPP pronounces itself on the institutional changes in Hungary*



Recently, the Hungarian Parliament has adopted new laws, with the objective of putting into place institutional reforms; that was a highly-needed political step for Hungary, which was the only ex-communist European country that had not adopted a new Constitution after 1989. However, concerns were raised regarding the process of legislation and the content of the new laws. It is argued that some of them are incompatible with EU law and with fundamental rights, raising concern among NGOs and the EP.

The European Commission called for changes in the new cardinal laws in order for it to comply with EU law, and the Hungarian government has promised to fully collaborate to ensure the compatibility of its constitutional changes with EU law. YEPP, that pronounced itself on the situation, has a specific role within our political family as a sentinel when core fundamental rights are at stake and shall never put party discipline before principles. For YEPP, it is of strong significance to maintain institutions independent in order to have the power to overlook each other. Moreover, it is of utmost importance that the legislative process is done in an open manner, including opposition and civil society.





*For YEPP, it is positive that the new Hungarian constitution incorporates the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and that for the first time since the democratic transition national minorities will be given seats in the Parliament;*

*YEPP expresses its commitment to fundamental democratic values, the rule of law, democratic pluralism, the protection of minorities and the culture in accordance with national legislation as well as the monitoring activity of the European Commission regarding the compliance of Hungarian laws with EU fundamental principles;*

## *Main Clauses*

*YEPP supports the commitment of the Hungarian government to make all the necessary adaptations to the criticized new legislation requested by the European Commission, within the deadline set.*

*The European Commission and the Member States are called upon to follow the same procedure for current or future allegations of breaches of EU fundamental values in other Member States.*

*presented by*  
**ONNED**, Greece

*YEPP in favour of a  
more **job-oriented**  
European  
agreement on  
Higher Education  
with **Bologna II***

The Bologna Declaration was first signed by European Ministers for Education in 1999, with the aim of creating a Common European Higher Education Area, with common standards and transferrable qualifications. Almost 13 years later, the objectives of creating a comparable and compatible European Higher Education system have still not been reached. YEPP believes that a renewed strategy is needed for the higher education sector in order to adapt to the needs of a modern Europe.

In the dire economic conditions that Europe is currently battling, Higher Education Institutes must be more cognisant of the needs of the labour market. Youth unemployment is at crisis levels – over 5 million young people across the EU-27 were without work in December 2011. Efforts must be made to remedy this. YEPP firmly believes that experience and knowledge should be given greater attention through internships and practical learning, as part of qualifications. New emerging fields must also be supported by our education sector, with research being supported and new qualifications being developed.

# Main Clauses

YEPP calls on Higher Education Institutes to develop internships and quality educational practice projects as an integral element of higher level qualifications.

**Academic credit should be awarded** to such programmes which will also be recognised by the labour market as real, valuable experience.

While respecting the universal character of education, YEPP believes that Higher Education Institutes need to adapt and change. **Outdated departments with no relation to the needs of the labour market need to be upgraded**, while new departments and qualifications need to be developed to meet the needs of new emerging areas;

YEPP believes **new criteria should be introduced in Universities' Evaluation Reports** to include the level of employability for graduate students and the degree of updatability of the European HEIs curricula regarding new professions and specialties.

BOLOGNA





presented by  
**Young Fine Gael**, Ireland  
**ONNED**, Greece  
**Junge Union**, Germany




# *For a free and open internet*

The multilateral Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), negotiated among developed countries around the world, proposes international standards for the enforcement of intellectual property rights. Although YEPP recognizes that piracy of intellectual property is a serious issue, ACTA is controversial in both process and substance. ACTA could have serious consequences for websites hosted within the European Union, particularly for websites which support user-generated content. Therefore YEPP insists that any action taken must be proportionate to its aims.

Proposing acts like ACTA, SOPA and PIPA have caused widespread protests, both online and offline because there is merely too much confusion over the content and its consequences. ACTA threatens our rights to free speech, access to culture, it endangers user privacy, hinders innovation and trade, and lacks legal clarity. This could have a devastating impact on the development of the Innovation Union as envisaged in the Europe 2020 strategy, as innovation will be halted from a fear of breaking rules. YEPP believes that there has been a lack of democratic credibility in the developing process of ACTA and welcomes the decision to suspend ratification of the treaty in the EU.



# Main Clauses



*Any action taken in this area can have wide-ranging consequences for the private lives of citizens, as well as business and education. It therefore is YEPP's believe that new policies should be developed openly and transparently through the normal legislative process;*

*YEPP calls the European Parliament **not to accept the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement** in its current version;*

*As YEPP, we underline that further satisfactory assurances and clarifications from the European Commission and from the European Court of Justice are necessary;*

*Finally, YEPP calls on the European Union and its Member States to **lobby the United States against introducing any legislation that could be damaging** to the free and legal exchange of information on the Internet.*

*presented by*  
**CDJA**, The Netherlands

# *A secure, integrated and sustainable European energy system*

The European Union adopted the “Energy Roadmap 2050” in 2011 with aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by the year 2050. In addition, the EU has set ambitious targets for Member States in order to reach a 20% share in renewable energy in the final energy consumption by 2020. Despite the efforts already made, today most of the European countries compliance with the energy targets have not been achieved. YEPP acknowledges that many obstacles are hindering the member states’ ability to adhere to the regulations including high costs and questionable efficiency of renewable energy technology.

In order to overcome the differences between European countries in their needs for energy generation, YEPP stresses that cross-border cooperation is needed to make the European energy system more secure, integrated and sustainable. According to the principle of shared responsibility, differences between people and their living environment must be taken into account when developing energy policies. In addition, market forces in energy innovation can stimulate the development of more efficient and cheaper renewable energy sources.



The background of the entire page is a photograph of a vast wind farm. Numerous white wind turbines are visible, stretching into the distance under a clear, bright blue sky. The perspective is from a low angle, looking up at the towers and nacelles of the turbines. The lighting suggests a sunny day, with some shadows cast on the ground.

## Main Clauses

*YEPP believes that the share of renewable energy in the production of energy of the EU Member States should be annually published by the European Commission, so that Member States can verify (monitor) each other's progress in reaching the targets;*

*The European Union should encourage the realization of new network links between countries, so that local energy shortages and surpluses can be traded. YEPP believes that other European countries should also be involved in this trading process;*

*It is YEPP's conviction that the expansion of European and international research programmes on new or more efficient renewable energy sources should be facilitated with a view on reducing further CO2 emissions.*

presented by  
**MUF**, Sweden  
**Unge Høyre**, Norway

# *YEPP calls on tax exemptions for civil society organisations*

YEPP believes that volunteer organisations are vitally important to European society, and therefore every effort should be made to promote and encourage activities that enrich and improve our society.

In December 2011, the European Commission adopted a communication on the future of value added tax, setting out what the Commission sees as the fundamental characteristics of a new VAT regime for the EU. Despite opposition from the European Parliament and several Member States, the communication does not allow for VAT exemptions for civil society and instead seeks to ban exemptions entirely. For thousands of volunteer-led organisations across the European Union, VAT is currently not compulsory.

The European Parliament in October 2011 called on the Commission to legislate for "a mechanism allowing Member States wishing to strengthen civil society to generally exempt from VAT all or most of the activities and transactions carried out by these organizations". YEPP strongly agrees with this statement, and believes this must be included in the new VAT regulations. YEPP has long stressed the value and importance of civil society in furthering democracy, prosperity and European values and YEPP believes the tax system is an important method of supporting these activities.

**YEPP calls on the European commission to support and enable a mechanism giving the member states the possibility to exempt civil society from VAT in the EU.**





presented by  
**JVP**, Austria  
**JG**, Italy

# Transit Traffic



Over the last decades, and encouraged by the free movement of goods, freight traffic has augmented enormously. On the topic of traffic, important measures have been taken, such as the adoption of the “**Eurovignette**” and the charging of heavy goods vehicles over 12 tons for the use of infrastructure.

We acknowledge the efforts to establish a single European railway area and to encourage the concept of “modal shift”, supporting the development of railway systems. Although the free movement of goods is among our core values, the public and the environment close to the transit routes suffer from various stresses and strains caused by freight traffic. Air and noise pollution caused mainly by the transportation of goods on roads, have a huge impact on the quality of life, as well as the environmental costs, which are usually carried by the public. It is reasonable to charge the polluter through the polluter-pays-principle to cover the expenses created by the consequences of pollution and to persuade polluters to modernize their fleet.

## Main Clauses

*YEPP calls on all parties concerned to approve the directive to **establish a single European railway** including measures for common safety rules and environmental protection and the full implementation of the Eurovignette;*

*We underline the importance of taking into account the **environmental pollution caused by trucks** with low euro classes when calculating the road charges, thus to create an to keep fleets up to date.*

*YEPP calls upon the realization of the **Brenner Base Tunnel part of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) line 1** from Berlin to Palermo, as quickly as possible, including all the infrastructure needed.*

presented by  
**Jeunes CDH, Belgium**

# *YEPP condemns electoral fraud and widespread use of violence in presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo*



The presidential elections held on 28 November 2011 in the Democratic Republic of Congo saw the reelection of President Joseph Kabila. Indisputably, however, there have been serious irregularities in the elections, as was confirmed by independent monitoring organisations as the Carter Center, the EU electoral observation missions and the National Episcopal Conference of Congo. YEPP strongly regrets that the National Independent Electoral Commission of the DRC failed to publish any original copy of the polling station results.

Observers have argued that the DRC state forces used widespread violence against political opponents since the start of the electoral campaign. Notably, Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of UDPS and the main opponent of President Kabila, was told to be blocked in his Kinshasa residence. YEPP underlines that the support of the EU for the political and economic development of the DRC and the good relations between the two must rely on common values such as democracy and the protection of human rights.

## *Main Clauses*

*YEPP calls on the EU and its Member States and the African Union to condemn the **massive fraud** in the presidential elections in the DRC and the violence used by the police and the army against political opponents, if they have not already done so;*

*YEPP asks the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton to urge the DRC government to **stop using the violence** against political opponents;*

*The CENI must publish the **original copies of polling stations**, for the presidential elections as well as for the legislative elections, YEPP believes.*

presented by  
**CDJA**, The Netherlands

## *Developments in Burma (Myanmar)*

In the light of the reforms that have been recently taking place in Burma (Myanmar), some improvement has been seen towards an open and peaceful democracy. Progress has been made since the instauration of a civil government which decided to release political prisoners and discharge the death penalty, and especially by legalizing the opposition party of Aung San Suu Kyi, enabling it to take part in the elections. This progress was not unnoticed by the EU and the United States, who have broken down several sanctions against Myanmar and announced to open an office in Yangon. In 2014, the country will hold the presidency of the ASEAN, the regional cooperation of South East Asian countries.

For YEPP, it is imperative to promote further development of the legal order, resolution of conflicts between people and communities and improvement of participation in society. The European Union and all its actors should seek justice for all. They must take into account the existing disparities of means and resources when striving to improve the well-being of all.



## *Main Clauses*

*YEPP calls on the European institutions and the EU member states to keep on encouraging the political reforms in Burma (Myanmar) and support the country in the development of an **open, transparent and peaceable administration** as well as the development of democracy;*

*The European Union, if possible in cooperation with the **ASEAN**, should participate in a monitoring mission to Burma (Myanmar) for the elections;*

*For YEPP, the European Union should make **full use of their new office in Yangon** to support these new reforms.*



*presented by  
Junge Union, Germany*

# *Stop the bloodshed in Syria*

In Syria, Spring has not arrived yet. Syrians who dared to join the dream of a democratic future which was sweeping the Middle East and North Africa have been subjected to extreme brutality at the hands of the Assad regime. Concerted killing of anti-government protesters has already claimed the lives of more than 8000 people. YEPP is very concerned about the number of victims under the Syrian dictator that is increasing every day.

Unfortunately, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has not yet been able to agree on a resolution that calls on Bashar al-Assad and his regime to step down. In addition, the Syrian monitoring mission of the Arab League has been suspended without changing the situation in the country for the better. YEPP strongly condemns the refusal of the Syrian regime to draw back its forces, to release detained citizens and to grant its people humane living conditions. Democracy in Syria cannot wait!

*China and Russia shall join the other permanent members of the UNSC in their effort to end the reign of Bashar al-Assad;*

*YEPP urges the Russian government to immediately stop all arms sales to Syria as long as the current regime is in power;*

*YEPP calls on the European Union, the United Nations and the Arab League to closely coordinate all sanctions aimed at the Syrian regime ;*

*For YEPP, dictator Bashar al-Assad and his regime must clear the way for a legitimate government chosen by the Syrian people.*





*presented by*  
**ONNED**, Greece

# *Empowering European Start-Up Companies*

Business start-ups and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), are the backbone of the European economy. They provide for **50% of EU-wide job** creation and their cumulative profit amounts to more than half the Gross Domestic Product of EU-27. YEPP regrets that, despite the high willingness and awareness of potential start-up entrepreneurs within EU borders, the establishment of new SMEs continues to decrease. Based on a YEPP-proposal, the EPP congress in Marseille in December 2011 adopted a resolution on young entrepreneurship. EU institutions have also already made efforts to provide young entrepreneurs with incentives so as to revitalize business creation and alleviate SMEs of administrative burdens and bureaucratic procedures.

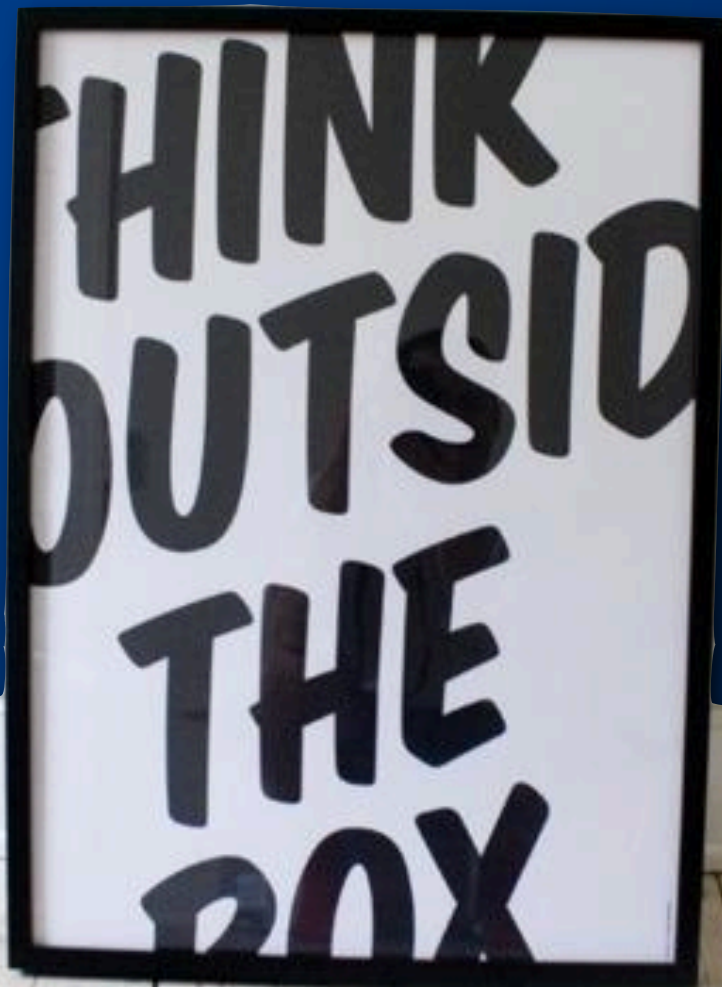
It is YEPP's firm belief that, in order for new business creation to become again a viable option for young entrepreneurs, EU institutions need to consider more than costs relevant with financing and bureaucratic procedures. In order for start-ups to last, be profitable, provide jobs and contribute in further developing the European economy into an international competitive structure, EU needs to secure the flow of knowledge within social and business constructs that produce entrepreneurs with skills and willingness to embark on high-risk business ventures.

# Main Clauses

*For YEPP, it is a priority to call on those 23 Member States that currently do not comply with the criteria set by the Competitiveness Council on May 31<sup>st</sup> 2011 to converge their national legal framework pertaining to the reduction of start-up time for enterprises to 3 days and the reduction of the respective cost to 100 euros;*

*The European Banking Federation (EBF) should coordinate the activities of European public financing institutions and private banks, introducing fixed-rate loans up to 50,000 € as part of Corporate Social Responsibility programs, rendering the offered capital tax-deductible;*

*To encourage young entrepreneurs, YEPP proposes the introduction of a European-wide 'Award for Business Excellence' for innovative ideas of start-ups.*

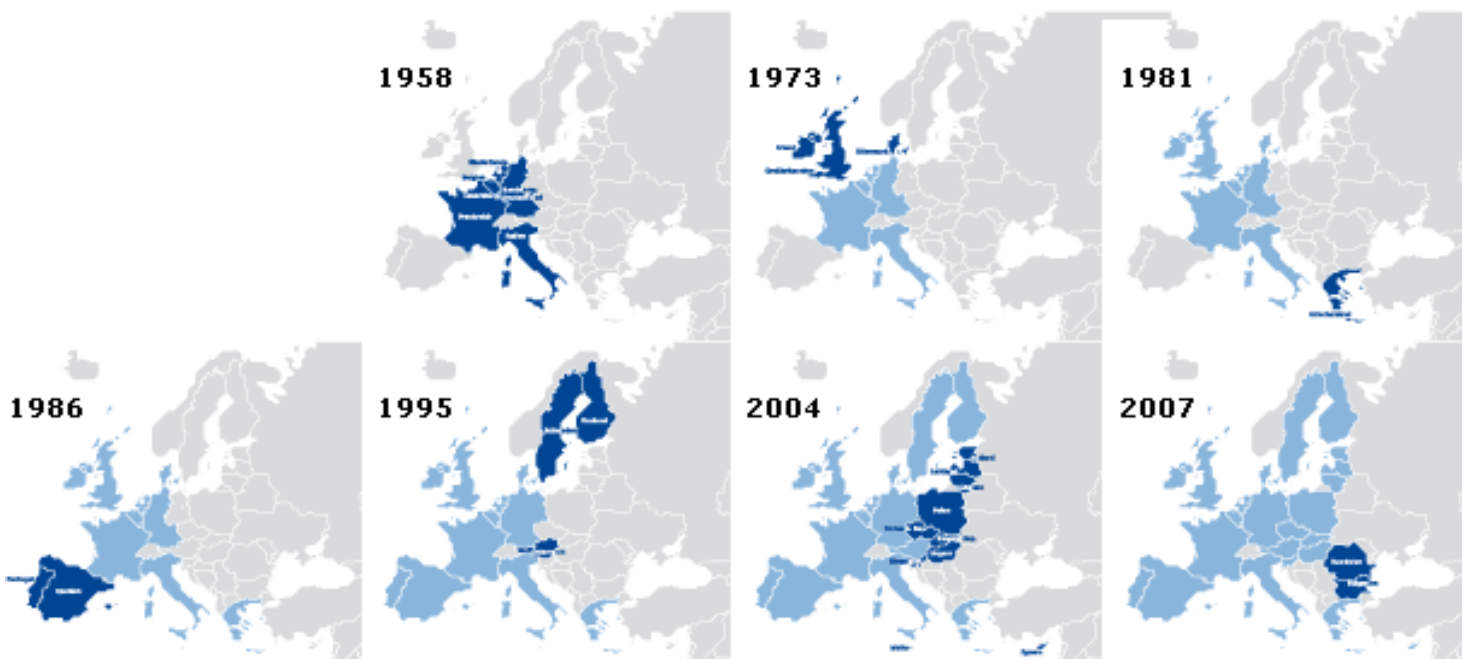


*presented by*  
**Young Fine Gael, Ireland**  
**YFU, FYROM**  
**MHDZ, Croatia**

# *Continuing Enlargement as a Positive Step During Reconstruction*

From 6 members to 28, a peaceful and united continent has always been the driving ideal of the European Union. Croatia is our newest member state, and Iceland, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey are all official candidate countries, working towards membership. YEPP strongly believes that the process of enlargement and integration must be continued amidst economic difficulties.

Enlargement brings benefits both to current European Union citizens and the citizens of new Member States: in travel, in culture, in business opportunities. Increasing stability, democracy, peace and prosperity on our continent is always a worthy goal, and should remain a driving priority of the European Union. The enlargement process is important in maintaining and building EU credibility on the world stage, and domestic political issues should not be allowed to impact on this.







## Main Clauses

*YEPP calls on the Member States to continue with the visa liberalization process, both with candidate countries and the other European countries, to demonstrate a commitment to furthering the vision of a united Europe;*

*Candidate countries and other European countries shall enthusiastically continue the domestic legal reforms necessary before joining the EU;*

*According to YEPP, the EU should step up its engagement with the civil society in candidate countries, through exchange programmes with civil society in Member States, in an effort to strengthen operations and share best practices.*

*See you in*

*Lisbon!*

[YEPP Chairmen's Conference 2012]



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