

YEPP's Political Program

*Adopted at YEPP's Berlin Congress
14 May 2011*

Building our Future

1. Challenges and YEPP Values

Challenges ahead

For sixty years the European Union has been a huge success, helping to spread freedom, peace, prosperity, democracy and security across much of the European continent. We must not underestimate the historical significance of the European integration process. What started over 60 years ago with six countries has grown today not only into a European Union of 27 states and regions, but also into a community of shared and common values, based on freedom, security, solidarity, subsidiarity, sustainability, equality and prosperity.

Whereas the divide of a political and military Europe almost ceased, with the exception of Belarus, new challenges lie ahead of the European Union. These include the ageing of Europe, terrorism, climate change, financial crisis, food crisis, energy supply and challenges in the current multilateral institutions. New emerging countries such as Brazil, China, India and Russia are increasingly important players on the world stage. Globalisation has its merits in new opportunities, economic growth and in involving more nations in international decision-making.

With respect to these challenges, we, as the Youth of the European People's Party, believe that the well-being of the persons living today and the generations to come must be at the heart of political action. We also believe that the most efficient common approach to the challenges ahead lies at the European level. A common approach will lead to benefits. But the legitimacy to act will only be enjoyed if citizens participate actively in the democratic procedures. Bearing in mind the low turnouts in the European elections and the decreasing participation, especially among young people, YEPP stresses the need for specific attention to youth participation in public life. There is an immediate need for further information sharing and action bringing European citizens closer to the European institutions and decision making bodies in order to bring the EU closer to the people. At the same time, EU politicians should make clear how European solutions benefit EU citizens' lives and national, regional and local politicians should give credit to the EU for what it delivers and not blame the EU for malfunctioning national issues. The role of festive occasions such as the

European Day or the start of an EU Council Presidency should be enhanced further in this regard, to bring European citizens closer to each other and increase further the common European feeling.

Commitment to a European common future

Because we believe in the added value of an ever closer Europe, we call upon European politicians – whether they are active in the local, regional, national or supranational level – to commit to the common European project, to take up European leadership, to unite all European citizens in a common, inspiring project, in a Europe that provides benefits to the people from each Member State in a more profitable way than if Member States were to act alone. Only a form of multilevel governance based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, and only joint action by the Member States and European institutions can make this happen and only collaborative action by the Member States, European institutions and relevant stakeholders can make this happen.

YEPP values

YEPP is an independent European youth platform of the Christian Democrat, Conservative and like-minded political youth organizations from Europe. Political decision-making is all about values and principles. We consider Europe not only as a community of interests but also of values. Historically based on Christian values and as an inherent part of Europe that is founded on diversity, the values YEPP wants to promote are:

- absolute respect of human dignity;
- human rights;
- a strong commitment to the European integration process;
- the protection of religious freedom and freedom of belief;
- subsidiarity as an essential factor of division of competences within the European Union;
- proportionality as an essential factor of the use of competences of the Union;
- principle of sincere cooperation as an essential factor of the action of the Member States and the Union;
- respect of cultural diversity and the rights of minorities in our common European space;
- importance of non-discrimination policies;
- respect of the principle of gender equality;

- promotion of Eco Social Market Economy;
- the development of the person;
- the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and good governance;
- importance of family and communities, which stimulate the development of the human being;
- sustainable development and the protection of the environment;
- solidarity and looking for the common good.

2. Economy

Economic recovery and growth is still fragile and the ability of several European countries to survive from their debts has been questioned multiple times. Therefore, the Member States of the EU should support the economic growth to the extent it is possible for the governments to do so.

Investing in the future

YEPP:

- acknowledges that intergenerational justice is an important theme for youth living in the EU and, therefore, states need to balance their books and not to pass the debt onwards to future generations;
- cannot highlight enough the need for more private and public investments in R&D since that generates economic growth through innovations;
- supports 'green economy' and sees it as an opportunity for the EU to further confirm its role as a global frontrunner in the fight against climate change;
- acknowledges that the EU is highly able to compete in areas of industry which require a high-level of competence;
- acknowledges that we have the means to develop more and more environmentally friendly products and production methods and that is a huge economic opportunity for the EU;
- calls on Member States to enhance the structures connecting universities and business since Europe has very strong universities which could be better connected to businesses without contradicting academic independence;
- calls on Member States and the EU to do everything that is feasible and pragmatic through legislation to help SMEs and entrepreneurs, and to develop entrepreneurship among the youth.

Competitiveness & stability

YEPP:

- stresses that fiscal discipline and good governance are key issues for given and future solidarity among the Member States;
- calls all Member States of the EU to respect and follow the 3% budget deficit rule and to decrease their integrated public debts and emphasises on the fact that all Member States are responsible for their debts and all loans need to be repaid;
- encourages member states to reduce taxation level on the national level;
- calls for wider competition in the banking sector and financial sector in order to guarantee that these industries serve the interests of the real economy and not vice versa. An integrated macro- and microprudential approach of regulation and surveillance of systemically important financial institutions is an indispensable step to tackle the 'too big to fail' issue and the moral hazard problem;
- congratulates the formation of the European Stability Mechanism and the additional supportive measures introduced, being a step forward towards European financial integration;
- calls for major international reforms of the financial sector to be introduced in order to tackle the underlying problems of the financial sector to avoid the repetition of the situation in which financial institutions are considered 'too big to fail';
- calls the EU and Member States to do everything that is feasible through legislation to block future financial catastrophes;
- calls on the European Union to strengthen the free-trade efforts in order to promote growth and prosperity;
- calls for a broader competition, stronger regulation and oversight of credit rating agencies. The prevention of highly concentrated market power in this business area is crucial with a view to these agencies' role in influencing public opinion about the creditworthiness of private and public debt issuers. The still unbroken heavy reliance of market participants on their risk estimates has the potential to trigger self-fulfilling prophecy scenarios with systemic dimensions, which regulators have to account for ;
- highlights that financial stability of a Member State is the responsibility of the government of that Member State and the consequences of violating EU treaties regarding deficits should be much stronger;
- emphasises that all member states are individually responsible for their debts and all loans need to be repaid to member states that provided loans;
- believes that consumer protection is an important aspect in raising the quality of living in the European Union. The EU must do its utmost to ensure that consumers enjoy the optimal level of protection;

- calls the State members to control and make inspections to avoid the tax evasion and the employees who work without any social care.

Social market economy

YEPP:

- acknowledges the principles of solidarity and social market economy as socio-economic cornerstones of the European Union;
- calls for an economy that is more inclusive and flexible. This is necessary, because people change their job more often nowadays. Employers should have incentives to employ young people and those who lost their job at older ages. At the same time, employers should enable employees for lifelong learning opportunities;
- recognizes the performance of the individual with a social balance in the society and a careful contact with the environment;
- stresses that it should be more rewarding to work rather than to rely on state support, while reliance on unlimited social programmes should be reserved for the needy only as a matter of social responsibility;
- calls to the governments to make policies which promote the children in order to ensure the system of pensions and to make easier that the young people can have the opportunity to build their own family
- acknowledges that the ageing society will put a heavy burden on pension and health care expenditures. Governments should quickly act to prepare their welfare systems and labour markets to cope with these challenges. Intergenerational solidarity is key and underlines our principle of the social market economy. But it may not be accepted for governments to postpone harsh measures to the future;
- calls governments to create mechanisms which facilitate youth emancipation and the chance to find a job according to the studies acquired;
- however, YEPP acknowledges that states should foresee the necessary mechanisms to ensure that persons relying on social programmes are integrated back in the labour market as soon as possible;
- stresses the need to stimulate a social dialogue to deal with the above mentioned issues;
- calls governments to promote the conciliation of work and personal or family life.

Agriculture

YEPP:

- believes that food security remains a central challenge not only in the EU, but globally as well. Therefore, the Common Agricultural Policy has more reasons for

existence that ever. However, the CAP has to be aligned with other policies as well as with new challenges; the environmental and rural development goals have to be more reflected in agricultural related funding;

-welcomes the on-going talks regarding the reform of CAP. YEPP promotes the simplification of current procedures, since the use of subsidies proved to be too bureaucratic. Embracing the new challenges must not mean new administrative burdens on European farmers. YEPP wants the CAP to contribute to the EU 2020 strategy. A fairer financial system with objective criteria and streamlined mechanisms is needed to secure Europe's nutritional standards;

EU Budget

The negotiations on the next long-term financial perspective are expected to start this year, during the Polish EU presidency. Through the next multiannual financial framework the European Union should reaffirm its commitment to the existing common policies as well as assign adequate resources to the new challenges. Bearing in mind that due to the economic crisis and financial consolidation, new financial sources are limited, this seem a demanding challenge Europe has to live up to.

YEPP is convinced that top priorities of the current EU agenda must be incorporated in the next financial perspective. Adequate financing must be ensured in the field of job creation, research and development, internal security, energy policy, climate protection and economic governance. To ensure the funding of the new challenges, more flexibility is needed during the budget planning.

Answering to the new challenges cannot mean less resource for traditional policies such as agriculture and cohesion policy. The efficiency of spending these latter funds, however, must be monitored on a regular basis.

YEPP welcome the European Commission's analysis with regard to new possible EU sources of revenues, such as revenues from the auctioning the emission allowances. However, any kind of new revenue mechanisms must bear the support of all Member States and reflect the principles of transparency, cost-effectiveness and fair burden-sharing.

We find it of utmost importance that funds related to youth policy be strengthened in the new financial framework. Especially as related EU funds proved to be efficient tools in the past years to encourage social inclusion, skill development and great mobility of young people.

Social policy

YEPP:

-states that social policy is expected to remain a Member State competence. A more intense Europe-wide dialogue is being developed in this field, with special regard to its huge effect on national budgets and debts. YEPP finds it essential that the interests of coming generations be reflected in any future EU level social policy measures;

-states that a special emphasis must be put on unemployment (the rate of which reaches almost 10% in the EU of 27 in recent times) with special regard to the issue of youth unemployment.

-bearing in mind the demographic trends in most Member States, notes that profound pension reforms are likely to take place throughout the EU. On-going pension reforms, let them be on national levels, must contain guarantees to generations that are far from the retirement age;

-is convinced that the on-going fiscal consolidation in Member States must not jeopardize the aim of job creation. No economic recovery can be achieved without a significant increase in employment rates;

-states that the current economic crisis proved that the structural problems in European labour markets require urgent measures. YEPP thinks that the EU 2020 strategy is a proper set of priorities to get the EU out of its economic hardships. YEPP appreciates that the Commission dedicated one of the strategy's flagship initiatives to youth, education and training;

-promotes the adoption of a European Roma Strategy aimed to better integrate the numerous Roma population throughout the continent. The issue of the Roma can be handled only via wide-range international cooperation.

3. Foreign Policy and Neighbourhood Policy

Often people compare globalization to the fading of borders between countries. However, new scarcities such as raw materials, food, water but also religious extremism might on the contrary result in ever stricter border policies.

International relations are more complex than ever before. On the one hand, globalization brings about opportunities for people. On the other hand, recent developments include a series of challenges individual European nations cannot meet on their own. International terrorism is just one example, migration is another.

EU's role in the future

YEPP:

-stresses that foreign affairs policy must always be based on European values such as peace, human rights, democracy and freedom and needs to be strengthened;

-calls for armed forces of the EU Member States to share capabilities and work towards specialization, without duplicating NATO capacities. YEPP believes that

the so called 3D approach, defence, development and diplomacy has an added value in particular circumstances;

-encourages the EU and its Member States to strengthen EU Foreign Policy coordination with special regard to European external action service.

EU's diplomatic relations

YEPP:

-states that the EU Member States should when needed coordinate their international positions and speak with one voice. The High Representative and the President of the European Council should be the main persons to carry out the position of the EU and its Member States on international matters;

- The European External Action Service should be the key tool of the shaping of an EU wide diplomatic positioning. National diplomatic, although they should not withdraw or reduce their influence, are expected to fully cooperate with the EEAS;

-calls for a continuation of a strategic transatlantic relationship in a context of mutual respect and understanding;

-sees the EU-Russia relationship as a strategic partnership for security and prosperity in Europe. Attention should be on the following matters; energy supply, cooperation in economics, and cooperation in the fields of research and development. However, even though the agreement is important to both parties, it does not preclude the EU from holding a dialogue with Russia on issues such as human rights, or acts against democracy;

-defends the right of the existence of Israel and a viable state for the Palestinian people. YEPP strives for reviving the Middle East peace process on the basis of the "road map". YEPP wants to strengthen existing democratic movements in the Arab world and supports concrete measures against violations of fundamental human rights. YEPP supports a comprehensive approach to support the transition process in the Arab world which includes other key players like the League of Arab States and the United Nations;

-ensures that the rising of BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) as well as other developing economies live up to their global responsibility. This includes international crisis management, environment, business, as well as rule of law, human rights and democracy;

-calls for an intensified co-operation with Africa. Some countries have already achieved considerable progress but in some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) progress is still needed. There are, however, still grave deficiencies in terms of democracy and the rule of law, as well as poverty, diseases and a lack of education;

- stands for a free, democratic and independent Belarus. YEPP encourages the European Union and the Member States to support all processes of democratization and stand up against political imprisonment and prosecution;
- believes that the European Neighbourhood Policy's (ENP) objectives should be realigned and the respective financial instruments amended and where necessary increased, in view of the Southern Mediterranean developments brought about by democratic aspirations as expressed by the people, particularly those of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

EU's enlargement

YEPP:

- emphasises that all candidate country must meet all accession criteria without any reservations;
- emphasises that the EU's enlargement after the Berlin Wall can be regarded as a success story, contributing to the historic reunification of Europe. Enlargement policy is a proof of the EU's soft power, encouraging neighbouring countries to incorporate democratic standards, the rule of law and the measures aimed at stabilizing market economy;
- acknowledges the political and economic disparities between the applicants and, therefore, a need for an individual approach to each country;
- underlines that the European perspective is important to the countries of the Western Balkan and Eastern Europe, either through accession negotiations or through the Eastern European Partnership;
- sees the importance of a privileged partnership with Turkey and is aware of the importance of creating closer ties between the EU and Turkey;
- stresses that without the countries of the South East Europe being fully integrated in the EU, the political and geographical image of Europe will not be complete.

4. Home Affairs

Balance between safety and liberty is important to all citizens. We approach home affairs from a pragmatic point of view since we acknowledge the complexity of the balance between individual liberties and safety of the majority. We emphasize the need to secure individual liberties of all citizens of the EU. We acknowledge the constant threat of terrorism and we condemn all acts of terrorism. We also support inalienable rights and freedoms including the right to free speech.

Crime

YEPP:

- notes the existence of the European Arrest Warrant and calls on Member States to apply for its issue and use it properly, in order to fight organized crime efficiently;
- acknowledges the importance of fighting against organized crime;
- supports Europol and calls for more funds for Europol to target organized crime;
- acknowledges the causal relationships between social problems and violent youth gangs;
- acknowledges the need to see Home Affairs as part of a larger entity together with social, educational and economic issues;
- acknowledges the growing threat posed by cyber crime;
- stresses the need to differentiate between immigrants and refugees;
- acknowledges the rights of refugees as portrayed in the Geneva Convention and calls upon Member States to accelerate the procedure for asylum seekers;
- recognizes the need to revise the clauses of the Dublin regulation concerning illegal immigrants, towards a fairer distribution of asylum seekers among EU Member States;
- supports the work of European Court of Human Rights and calls on Member States to accelerate the procedure of applying its decisions and holdings.

Terrorism

YEPP:

- calls on Member States to fight relentlessly and together against all forms of terrorism;
- acknowledges the increased number of 'home grown terrorists';
- acknowledges the multiple forms of terrorism;
- highlights the importance of following international law and conventions in the fight against terrorism;
- urges to attack the sources of terrorism.

Immigration

YEPP:

- believes that the primary goal of tackling immigration issues is improving living conditions and democratic standards also in the home countries;
- calls upon the EU to keep on supporting human rights globally and the work of the European Court of Human Rights;
- acknowledges the need to follow the Dublin regulation regarding asylum seekers;
- acknowledges the importance of the integration of immigrants and established minorities, while promoting intercultural dialogue;
- acknowledges the responsibility of the EU towards less developed countries;
- Calls on the financial, material and logistical means of the EU Agency FRONTEX so that border control and the fight against human trafficking and illegal immigration can all be strengthened and improved;
- calls for considerations for asylum requests for international protection to be made through a harmonized process applicable and agreed by all Member States and coordinated by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). YEPP believes that the EU should strengthen relations with countries of origin and transit and conclude readmission agreements, providing in return upgrades to political and economic ties.

5. Energy& Environment

Energy is an extremely important issue in Europe and we should concentrate on forming a common stance and on negotiating as a Union instead of individual countries. It is essential, then, that we address the major energy challenges facing us today, i.e. climate change, our increasing dependence on imports, the strain on energy resources and access for all users to affordable, secure energy supplies. Europe should put in place an ambitious energy policy – covering the full range of energy sources from fossil fuels to nuclear energy and renewables – in a bid to spark a new industrial revolution that will deliver a low-energy economy, whilst making the energy we do consume more secure, competitive and sustainable. Finally, we highlight the environmental threat caused by human intervention in our planet and we call for more binding international actions to be implemented, in order to tackle the adverse impacts climate change.

20,20,20 by 2020

YEPP:

- supports the climate package of the EU;

- emphasizes that the EU must actively undertake the initiative for a better, more binding international agreement to be put in place regarding climate change;
- calls upon the US and China to undertake their share of responsibility in order to contribute more effectively in this effort;
- acknowledges a wide concern of pollution and the need to leave the environment in better shape than in which it was received;
- emphasizes the fact that the Kyoto Protocol, the Copenhagen 2010 and Cancun climate conference remain incomplete and suggests that EU actively undertakes the initiative for a better and, to the extent possible, binding international agreement to be put in place regarding climate change.

Energy production and efficiency

YEPP:

- acknowledges the need to diversify energy sources of the EU depending on the exact geopolitical characteristics of each country and the need to reinforce the European energy autonomy.
- finds it essential to ease the EU's energy dependence on external sources with special regard to gas supply. The EU needs alternative supply routes that strengthen diversification not only in terms of routes, but also in terms of the location of sources. The EU also has to elaborate on efficient defence mechanisms against external hostile takeovers that endanger diversification commitments;
- is a supporter of liberalization on the gas and electricity market. Liberalization, however, must mean ever increasing competition, real choice for customers and high quality services;
- calls for economic incentives for industries, in order to invest in R&D of renewable energy production methods and enhance their efficiency. Emphasizes the need to invest in Nuclear energy production by safer means, in order to create less radioactive material and a supply of fuel that lasts longer;
- is convinced that enhancing energy efficiency is of high importance, being one of the most significant tools to create new jobs and turning European economy into a low-carbon one;
- recalls that the most efficient energy is the one which has not been consumed. YEPP therefore urges the EU and its Member States to promote behavioural change in society by multiplying awareness-raising campaigns and educational programmes on the reduction of energy-consumption by individuals and companies.

-stresses the need for alternatives to fossil fuels and welcomes the EU's commitments to promote renewable energy sources. At the same time, YEPP urges Member States to harmonize their support schemes and funding mechanisms with regard to renewable sources that meet all kinds of sustainability standards. The simplification of authorization procedures has special relevance. Bureaucracy must not constitute a burden for creating the green economy;

-calls for the initiation of a sincere dialogue on the role of nuclear energy. YEPP pushes for an open debate which goes beyond superficial statements which will pave the way for transparent decisions regarding nuclear power. A thorough Europe-wide assessment is needed to monitor safety measures in the already existing reactors Europe-wide, with special regard to those, the life-cycle of which was prolonged. Calls upon the European Commission to ensure that Member States undertake regular safety test of nuclear power plants as per an established and comprehensive standard procedure;

-is convinced that in order to achieve the energy policy related aims, an ever intensive cooperation is needed between Member States. Since energy policy is a strategic political issue, Europe has to speak with one voice;

-is to promote greener transport by advocating policies internalizing external costs and thus make it more cost efficient to chose the less environmental demanding ways of transportation.

Climate change

YEPP:

-welcomes the EU's commitment to paving the way for a new long-term international climate protection agreement. The upcoming meetings of UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) are expected to translate long-term policy targets into near-term policy actions;

- states that the future agreement has to lay down GHG reduction targets that are feasible and accountable and that are compulsory to each of the signatory parties. YEPP regards it as important that the burdens are distributed in a fair manner;

-states that while implementing climate strategies, governments should focus on market-based mechanisms, such as cap-and-trade systems, carbon taxes or white certificates. These instruments ensure that targets are met with the lowest possible cost;

-promotes the inclusion of forest management in the post-Kyoto climate agreement. Emission credits earned from forestry might be incorporated in future international cap-and-trade systems as well. The aspects of energy efficiency also have to be incorporated in the international climate cooperation;

-states that the future international climate agreement should not pose much more burden on the European economy than on third countries. Consequently, Member States must avoid carbon leakage. When adopting climate protection legislation, Member States should focus on measures that – beyond environmental gains - have many other collateral benefits (for example: development of transport systems).

6. Education, Youth and Future

We, as the Youth of the European People's Party, understand that we are next in line and we want to emphasize the idea of intergenerational justice in all aspects of human life. Not only should we leave the environment in better shape than when we received it but this should apply to all other fields in society as well. We urge the governments not to cut from education or youth policies since reduction of resources in those areas will have a lasting impact in the future wellbeing of us all.

Higher education

YEPP:

- calls all EU Member States to spend more than the average stated by the OECD on higher education;
- would like to see Erasmus- and Socrates-programs extended and supporting the mobility of students;
- acknowledges that higher education is a huge factor in generating economic growth in the future;
- acknowledges that if due to high tuition fees some bright students are unable to afford university education the whole economy loses. YEPP calls the governments to ensure that every individual has an opportunity to enter university through government bursaries and student loans;
- supports the independence of higher education institutions;
- recognizes that the Bologna Process guidelines remain incomplete and calls on Member States to consider a new agreement for the harmonization of the European higher education.
- calls for the Member States to further develop accompanying mechanisms which facilitate the transition from studies to the labour market

Career changers and lifelong learning

YEPP:

- acknowledges that a high percentage of people in the EU are from one reason or another going to change their career and YEPP wants to support those who want to re-enter education in order to acquire another qualification;

- acknowledges that our economy is in constant change and some countries are struggling with high structural unemployment and more needs to be done to encourage people to get back in employment or education;
- calls upon Europe to take action to reduce the unqualified outflow and to take action so that everyone is aware of the importance of lifelong learning, thus encouraging participation;
- stresses the need for high quality daycare to better combine family and professional life;
- supports the development of a system of recognizing prior developed competences in order to value competences gained out of experience;
- supports the introduction of common rules and mechanisms to easily acknowledge the qualification to practice a profession in each EU Member State.
- believes that more child care arrangements in support of families are needed to give the children a secure environment to grow up in with their parents

Social exclusion and Youth commitment

YEPP:

- acknowledges that social exclusion of the youth is a growing problem in the EU and especially the recent financial crisis has made the problem even worse;
- Acknowledges that the social exclusion of the youth poses deep problems of multiple nature (cost, social link, labour market functioning) for societies as a whole;
- calls for the Member States to carry out financially sound policies against social exclusion (including support to families), having economic, home affairs and educational dimensions since a consistent and comprehensive approach is needed to tackle this problem;
- calls governments to increase the social development plans to take care of families who are in social exclusion;
- acknowledges that voluntary commitment of youth in social, political, cultural or sport organisations can be a tool against their social exclusion, and an opportunity to develop personal and professional skills. Voluntary youth action should be therefore encouraged by the EU and its member states.

7. Technology

The benefits of technology are nowadays widely accepted and its applications in our everyday life are numerous. We, as Youth European Peoples' Party, believe that the effort to establish the beneficial effects of technology in every field and make them accessible to as many as possible should be set as a priority.

YEPP:

- encourages the use of technology in public affairs, such as access to public administration (e-government) and healthcare;
- calls upon member states to utilize technology in the fight against crime (especially cybercrime and tax evasion);
- calls upon member states to take advantage of the internet's wide publicity to strike corruption, by publishing public expenditures and financial data, in respect to each member's national legal framework;
- calls upon member states and the EU to subsidy the use of technology in education (e-learning) for its conceptual advantages as well as economic and social benefits.

We, as the Youth of the European People's Party, want to highlight that the above mentioned issues are of great concern for us, and we want to emphasize that our sincere aim with this document is to present guidelines for the formation of a Europe in which everyone is able to succeed and fulfil his / her own potential, at the same time taking care of the vulnerable individuals living within our society.