

A STRONGER EUROPE IN A CHANGING WORLD



YEPP Political Programme 2015-2017

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 next five years being the ultimate testing ground. The eyes of the European people and the world will be fixed upon us, waiting for us to deliver.

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 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, and political conviction 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.

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. People create jobs, not governments

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 adopt simpler taxation systems 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. With the internet economy rising at 8% in Europe today, we believe it is high-time to heavily invest in startup communities. If Europe can, then Europe must become the best place on earth to create a startup.

16. Housing for all

All European citizens should have the ability to acquire a home. In areas where house 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 targeted tax breaks, shared ownership schemes and other incentives, in cooperation with the private sector to help young people acquire their first home. Owning a house of one's own has proved to be a secure way for citizens to avoid poverty. Moreover every European citizen 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 pension rights, 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.

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. 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.

20. 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.

21. Transatlantic Free Trade

While TTIP negotiations are ongoing, we call for all stakeholders to work towards a truly free trade agreement that will not fall short due to too many exceptions and special clauses. The EU and the US hold 50% of the world's GDP and this is a golden opportunity to push the limits of global trade. Given the economic and geopolitical circumstances, we simply cannot fail in achieving a transatlantic agreement and strengthening our alliance. At all times, however, we strive for transparency and democracy, provided this does not harm ongoing negotiations.

This agreement 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.

22. 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 realise their full potential. Such examples are the innovation wave in the Baltics and the Nordic region, the heavy industry in central Europe, agriculture, tourism and shipping in the Mediterranean, the service economy in Ireland and the UK. We believe in a diverse economy that will use every State's best products while respecting fair competition.

23. 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.

YEPP therefore pledges a strong and stable framework for the development of agricultural production, through increased productivity and competitiveness and a proper functioning of the market. A simplified European agricultural policy shall contribute to the EU's strategic independence in the supply of reasonably priced food, with guaranteed food safety and traceability as well as assured environmental and animal welfare standards.

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:

23. Updating the European Security Strategy

Europe's security strategy needs to reflect 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 European Security Strategy, the conceptual framework the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) rests upon, has not been updated since its inception in 2003, despite a series of fundamental changes in the global order over the past decade, including the rise of new economic powers, new fundamentalist and terrorist movements, the global financial crisis, and more recently, armed conflict in Ukraine and turmoil in the Middle East. The CSDP needs to be improved significantly in order for Member States to be able to respond to the ever increasing asymmetrical and hybrid threats. The threats of tomorrow differ from the threats of yesterday. Cyber-threats, natural disasters, political instability and the capability of peacekeeping and defending the pathways of global trade demand co-operation between military and civilian resources, and also between countries. The establishment of an EU seat on the UN Security Council would be a crucial measure to ensure this.

24. 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.

25. European Neighborhood 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.

26. 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.

27. For a European military force

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 EU army is a guarantee that the nations of Europe will not fight one another again and also a guarantee that we will stand up for each other. The lack of interoperability between national armies undermines our collective security. It is a goal of our common security and defence policy that can be achieved only with a common EU army.

28. 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 religious persecution. The battle against religious persecution and other religious minorities must be the EU's core objective in its foreign policy along with the goal of achieving religious freedom.

29. 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 Syria, Iraq, and Libya 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 and increase its efforts to save lives in the Mediterranean Sea. YEPP also calls on the European countries to increase their contribution to humanitarian aid for those who are suffering.

30. 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.

31. 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.

32. 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. Better and shared intelligence between Member States is required to prevent future attacks. We shall present zero tolerance to terror, as well as to its actions, means and messages.

33. 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.

34. 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' interests and actual capabilities.

35. 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.

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.

YEPP calls for more flexibility to the 2020, 2030 and 2050 targets depending on the global changes that may occur from a geopolitical point of view. 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.

36. Tackling climate change

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.

37. 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.

38. 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.

39. 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.

40. 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.

41. 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.

42. 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.

43. 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.

44. 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.

45. 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.

46. 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.

47. Volunteering and 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.

48. 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. 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.

49. 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.

50. 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 cities 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.

51. 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.

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.

52. 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 the complicated copyright environment will open the digital single market to the 500 million citizens of Europe.

53. The internet era

High speed, reliable broadband connections and 4G mobile internet access need to be made available everywhere throughout our continent, even in the most remote areas. Telecommunication corporations need to be encouraged to invest in their infrastructure and to bring down costs for consumers, whether personal or business. 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.

54. 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+.

55. 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.

56. 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 call for full voting records of MEPs, for the abolition of secret voting, for simpler requirements for a workable European Citizen's Initiative, and for less lengthy processes and shorter deadlines in decision-making. The EU needs to be more understandable to the people who are paying for its existence. Therefore we call for the establishment of a single seat of the European Parliament.

57. 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.

58. 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.

59. 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.

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 and have direct access to European funding based on the level of representation after the most recent EU elections.

60. The populists and us

The simplicity of Europe after all, would eliminate all populists' and euro-deniers' main point of criticism. Populism grows out of misconceptions and lies and the alleged EU's distance from everyday problems constitutes both. 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 the 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 therefore shall engage populism with what has forged our political tradition; truthful and head-on argumentation, for we ultimately trust the EU's citizens ability to realise their true interests and our political family's ability to deliver on their mandates.

61. Strengthening subsidiarity

We believe in a European Union in which every task is accomplished on the most suitable level. Our vision is not a European superstate, but a subsidiary union that leaves those duties to the states and regions 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.

62. 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.

63. Smaller government, bigger citizens

The European Union's governments spend 17 billion euros every 24 hours. 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 power means less corruption, fewer politicians means more accountability and a smaller state means bigger citizens. This is our vision for citizen-driven governments.

EPILOGUE

We, the 60 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 2015-2017, on Saturday the 16th of May 2015, in Porto, Portugal at the 10th 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.