



HEAD OFFICE
10 Rue du Commerce
1000 Brussels, Belgium
+32 2 285 41 63
yepp@epp.eu

CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE: THE YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

YEPP White Paper

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For over 70 years, our joint European project has been an aspirational goal – a continent that was once at war, living in peace through joint priorities and alliances based on mutual economic dependence and shared values. Our Europe is now at a crossroads and as not only the next generation but the current generation, it is our responsibility to shape that ambitious and prosperous future together.

In order to create a common European future, we can build upon the already existing structures and commonalities. The basic understanding of these commonalities were certain inviolable principles: democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law.

Today's reality is a union of 27 countries, 500 million people and a common understanding of 4 basic and fundamental freedoms: freedom of movement of people, goods, capital and services. Monetary union, banking union and the Schengen system are structural and key mechanisms to make these 4 freedoms a continuing reality.

YEPP calls for:

- Further enhance common standards of regulation and supervision to strengthen the Banking Union and ensure sustainable financial growth of the European economy.
- Further expansion of the Schengen area.
- A profound focus on a reform of the criteria that are the foundation of the monetary union in order to be able to ensure stability of a growing monetary union.
- Accession process to EU for Western Balkans.

Jobs & Innovation

A Europe of the future will not be successful if we cannot offer prosperity to our peoples, and the freedom to create that prosperity for themselves. The world of work is changing, advancing, through new technologies and innovation. We as the Youth of the EPP have always strongly embraced the moves to such



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new technologies and the opportunities they offer. We must ensure that Europe and its citizens are equipped to take advantage of such opportunities and to allow Europe to be at the forefront of technological advances.

Yet too, we must be honest, that with such innovations and advances, comes a shift in work. Jobs will be lost to automation, the green transition and international trade. Each of these important priorities can only be successful if we are honest with our workers and support them to reskill, upskill or to change sector. Coupled with the digital and green transitions, we must focus on workers at each juncture to ensure that they are supported and do not lose out.

YEPP Calls for:

- Continued support for HorizonEurope to ensure that our Europe is at the forefront of global research. The programme should guarantee that all developing technologies must be owned and used by European companies for the first five years before being opened to the global market.
- The European ecosystem to support innovation and job creation through scrapping unnecessary administrative burdens and reducing punitive taxation.
- Enhanced supports for reskilling and upskilling of workers, such as through the Just Transition Fund, ESF+ and the RRF.
- Supports for the transition of family farms to the next generation of farmers. The Common Agricultural Policy must be sustainable, both environmentally but also generationally, so that the strong tradition of European farming and food security is not lost.
- A radical rethink of our housing policies to address the struggles young people face in finding proper housing. We call for a higher house ownership rate in Europe and more affordable and decent housing opportunities.
- Member States to reform their pension systems in order to address the unsustainability of their current models, which is not compatible with the current demographic changes and could unfairly burden future generations.

Environment & Health



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The future of our Europe fundamentally depends on the future of our planet: we cannot envisage an ambitious future without an earth that we can live on. Climate change is one of the fundamental challenges of our generation, and we intend to meet it head on. We must be realistic however: this green transition cannot come at the cost of a lost generation. As such, our move to a greener planet must go hand in hand with supports to our citizens, as outlined above.

Our approach for achieving this green future is innovation based: we are the party that believes in science and innovation as the best way to tackle climate change. Everyday business and industry are developing new technologies and methodologies to tackle the climate crisis: government must be there to support and empower them to do so. We must use all available resources at our disposal to build a greener future for our Europe. Recent natural disaster have demonstrated the urgency of the task ahead of us, and the scale of the challenge. We must continue to make emergency response funds available for those States, both EU and globally, that are on the front lines of this challenge.

Intertwined with our green ambitions is our approach to health. We must learn from the devastating damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and ensure that our prevention and early warning systems are well equipped to tackle our global health challenges. Central to this is the One Health approach, recognising that humans, animals and biodiversity are intertwined and interdependent – if one is damaged, all are. We must therefore take a holistic approach to tackling our environmental challenges.

YEPP Calls for:

- A global pandemic treaty to address global health challenges.
- Pooled European resources to purchase key vaccines at lower prices eg HPV vaccine. We can learn the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly as regards joint vaccine procurement.
- Common EU approach and assistance in vaccine procurement for partner countries.
- Reassessment of the Green Deal followed by an efficient adoption and implementation with a focus on the Western Balkans.
- Further diversification of Europe's energy sources and reduced dependency on external sources of energy.
- Strengthening the EU Civil Protection Mechanism



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- Work for a more permanent pandemic vaccine distribution programme, based on the model of the COVAX programme.

Democracy

If the European idea and European ideals are to persevere long beyond the 21st century, investment in our democracy is imperative. No more can Europe rely on the reason for its existence to justify its presence. We must ensure that European young people feel invested in the future of Europe and that the tangible results of what Europe does for them every day are visible.

National and local governments need to be honest with their voters: what are European successes and why should they be celebrated. No more can we have a situation where European successes are taken credit for by national governments and neighboring countries.

So too must we combat false fears and misinformation as regards the European Union, it's goals and ambitions, from wherever they come. Communication of our European Union is as important as what the Union itself does. We must focus our energies.

YEPP Calls for:

- A robust and comprehensive strategy to tackle misinformation and disinformation. Working with technology companies and holding them to account is essential in this regards. So too must aggressive action against those countries who orchestrate disinformation campaigns and electoral interference against EU countries. In parallel, myth busting and fact checking services must be invested in, and civil society efforts in these fields supported.
- A more understandable European decision-making architecture, balancing decision making powers with an accessible and clear structure.
- High profile European engagements with citizens through frequent consultative gatherings with citizens on a regular basis. These would be jointly held by European Commissioners and national Ministers or heads of state.
- Strong actions where breach of EU fundamental values occur within the Member States.



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EU partnerships through the association agreements

The Republic of San Marino, due to its size and geographical location, constantly interacts with Italy and the European Union, in order to improve relationships in the international context in which it finds itself.

San Marino over the years has entered into bilateral agreements with the Union to develop common interests. In fact, there are:

- the cooperation and customs union agreement
- the agreement on the taxation of savings income
- the monetary agreement

The cooperation and customs union agreement, in addition to the customs union between the Republic and the EU, addresses further issues ranging from non-discrimination for working conditions to cooperation in various sectors in order to protect the environment, culture and tourism.

While the monetary convention establishes the conditions for the issuance of euro banknotes and coins on the market, the appointment in banking and financial matters for the purposes of activity and supervision of the institutions concerned and the prevention of money laundering, fraud and counterfeiting of statistics.

Despite the agreements stipulated, the Republic of San Marino doesn't fully enjoy the freedom it would have if it were a member state. But, joining completely the Union would be unfavorable, due to the microscopic size and therefore also to the small population of about 34,000 inhabitants. At the Parliament's level it would involve a complete reworking and reorganization, given the fact that currently the number of parliamentarians is regulated by the number of the population of the member states.

To overcome this problem, the path that the Union and the three small states are taking is association. However, there is a substantial difference: it does not allow active participation, as third States, in regulatory activities of the European institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament).

This still unfinished agreement, which includes San Marino, Andorra and Monaco, addresses bilateral and plurilateral issues between the various states and the Union.



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Although this project is developed on a common institutional framework, by breaking it down it is possible to observe the three bilateral agreements between the EU and the three states. They are based on protocols (currently 25) that list the so-called *acquis* (ie the legal corpus of the Union) to which the States will have to align.

The main purpose of the association process is to resolve the obstacles to the entry of the single European market, which would reduce the obstacles that businesses and citizens of the Republic face when exporting or importing goods or services.

It would regulate and align the regulations of San Marino with those of Europe, which would guarantee the right to the internal market (which would lead to the free movement of goods, people and capital) and participation in the customs union (which would facilitate customs documentation for economic operators).

To conclude, the bilateral agreements and programs between the Union and San Marino will be outlined within the association agreement, not only economically, but socially and culturally. The Association Agreement with the European Union concerns the international position of the country in the 21st century.

YEPP calls for:

- Immediate conclusion of the Association agreements with the Republic of San Marino, Principality of Andorra and the Principality of Monaco

A stronger Europe in a changing World

The global world order has changed significantly since the EU was founded: shifting alliances, developing priorities and advancing technological innovations. Throughout this period, the need for a strong and robust Europe on a global stage became apparent: one who works with partners, supports allies and yet can stand up for itself and the values it embodies. Yet our Union is facing a number of challenges: a increasingly fractured global and geopolitical environment, instability, poverty, environmental challenges, and above all apathy towards the Union and democracy. The European Union can only be as successful as what citizens see.



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An ambitious future for our Europe must be one where we are strong and united on the global stage, aiming to achieve the goals for our Union through international cooperation on core issues: climate, trade, and above all, peace.

YEPP Calls for:

- A Paradigm shift in our relationship with Africa from an aid based partnership to one built on reciprocity and mutual engagement. Europe must actively pursue an ambitious trading partnership with Africa and seek new opportunities to engage there. Supporting education and entrepreneurship in Africa will boost opportunities for African citizens, advancing Africa's reputation as the continent of the 21st century. The more we support and invest in Africa, the more likely we are to reduce inward migration pressure and the devastating loss of life in the Mediterranean.
- A practical partnership with China based on common goals where common ground can be found, such as in tackling climate change. Securing Europe's key infrastructure against Chinese takeovers and continuing to be outspoken against Chinese human rights abuses, including against the Uighur people, threats to democracy in Taiwan and Hong Kong, should remain a core aspect of our relationship with China.
- A realistic approach to our relationship with the US. Whereas Europe has often relied on the US and looked to it for global leadership, we must now take our fate in our own hands and strike out boldly through our own global leadership in areas such as climate change and human rights. The US alliance perseveres, yet we must acknowledge that the geopolitical reality means that the days of our reliance on the US are over.
- A strong and united European approach to Russia. Tackling misinformation and disinformation, standing with those EU Member States and neighbouring countries who are on the front lines of Russian aggression and supporting Russian civil society and opposition must be the hallmarks of a European approach to Russia.
- Continued support to our neighbourhood, including in the Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership countries and in the MENA region.
- Advancing responsible European trade agreements with countries across the globe. Human rights, environmental standards and maintenance of European standards must be at the heart of these agreements, while not jeopardising our strategic autonomy in key sectors.



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Conclusion

The future of Europe is at a crossroads and the actions we take today will decide the future of Europe for generations to come. Our task is monumental, yet we are poised to take on that challenge. The Youth of the European People's Party calls on the European Union as a whole and to the European Governments to take action on our calls, and to continue to build the future of Europe with us.