



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

## **YEPP Declaration of Presidents**

**A stronger economy for a sustainable future**

*Signed at the Council of Presidents in Rome, 19.02.2022*

The promotion of the European model is crucial if we want European values to have an impact in a rapidly changing world. We must ensure that the needs are adapted to the realities of today, which can only be done by bringing the European Union closer to its citizens. The pandemic itself has deepened the cracks within Europe's economic framework and has pushed policymakers towards fortifying the economy.

The youth have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and past times of crisis. We, the Youth of the European People's Party, want to ensure that a better future is built. Hence, we see it as pivotal to include the youth perspective in creating a resilient and stronger economy for a sustainable European future.

Irrespective of the challenges faced every day, understanding the underlying causes, core issues and probable ways forward will aid in all of us building an enriched future, together.

### The European Green Deal, Energy, and Sustainable Growth

The European Green Deal represents the roadmap to creating a sustainable Europe. With the initial draft presented to the Commission in December 2019, member states have come together to ensure Europe reaches its goal of becoming the first climate-neutral continent. This is an ambitious plan, and it is encouraging to see the Union taking the ropes in leading this initiative.

It is unquestionable that climate change is not only a threat faced by Europe, but by the world at large. There is a clear need for an attainable goal to be created and reached; this is what the Green Deal provides, a growth strategy aiming to transform the states into



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competitive and sustainable economies. The European Union needs to be modern and resource-efficient; it must learn how to use its own assets and not remain a follower but a leader.

The Green Deal recognizes three goals:

1. No greenhouse emissions by 2050.
2. Economic growth must be separate from resource usage.
3. No person nor place is left behind.

Although the goals may seem small, the agenda itself is much larger as it encompasses numerous strategies to pursue these objectives state-by-state. The areas included are climate, environment and oceans, transport, agriculture, finance and regional development, the industry as well as research and innovation. With funds being allocated to the EU Green Deal, from both Next Generation EU and a prospective seven-year budget, Europe needs to strategize and ensure that these funds pursue the goals agreed upon in the deal.

Furthermore, in November 2021 the European Commission adopted the addition of stopping deforestation, facilitating innovative sustainable waste management, and making soils healthy. This pushes us to be more ambitious in our attempts to create greener and sustainable growth in Europe.

We must make the pledge and the necessary steps to protect our ecosystems, reduce air, water, and soil pollution and ensure the sustainability of our blue economy. Only if the latter is considered can we move towards a circular economy.

YEPP endorses and supports the European Green Deal and believes that the Union must take all necessary measures to ensure we meet all our targets. Yet, we must ensure that other sectors do not suffer but gradually transition to meet these demands. Only ambitious and stable policy frameworks can provide stable planning to incentivize low-carbon technologies and business models.



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Thus, YEPP calls for:

1. Increased investment in research and development to ensure a Carbon-neutral Europe by 2050.
2. Increased focus on innovation by the Member States to motivate green solutions, green capital, and investments, and funding new technologies.
3. Raising awareness on what actions need to be taken to live a sustainable lifestyle and improve our environment.
4. Protection of biodiversity by promoting better forest management practices and initiating strong relations with governments and companies working in the sector.
5. Hold nations who contribute as high polluters, such as the People's Republic of China, accountable for their actions.
6. The development of smart solutions to further ensure sustainable development of the entire European Union and enhance the quality of life of all European citizens.

### Health Policy

Within the last two years, we have seen the extent of the damages caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic. For numerous months, people were unable to meet and interact with their loved ones, but also industries had to close and adapt to the changes demanded by the virus. These drastic measures clearly highlighted the cracks within the present health policies and systems across the European Union. We quickly saw how health became the top priority, as the institutions and individual governments have been working tirelessly to ensure the welfare of the people.

One particular issue which has affected the youth, particularly during the pandemic, is the rise in mental health-related issues. Sustainable systems and support networks have not been put in place to provide aid to those mentally affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. We believe that this must be changed going forward, as only a healthy society equals a functioning economy.



It is clear to see how health is important in determining how our industries function, thus it can be said that health is closely tied to our economy. Without a robust healthcare system and policy, the European economy will continue to be heavily affected by health-related travesties. YEPP believes that the right steps have been taken but it is unquestionable that more needs to be done to ensure we do not find ourselves in a similar situation in years to come.

**YEPP calls for:**

1. The European institutions pay greater attention to health-related issues, particularly those affecting the younger generation.
2. Improving the usage of resources by sharing materials, research and developments between member states to ensure a stable health system.
3. Focus is placed on domestic capabilities, including structures and funding
4. Ensure the creation of a general strategy to combat future pandemics and sudden changes to our way of living.

Innovative Economy and Youth Engagement

Innovation plays a significant role in our economy, as it ensures the continuity of a competitive industry. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union specifically mentions the necessity of guaranteeing the latter. Everything can be connected to innovation, including employment, competitiveness, environment, industry, and energy. Having said this, innovation has always provided the necessary environment for improvement and growth, highlighting the need for a changing and growing reality.

The crucial point of innovation is research, as results produced by research are what warranties better services and products. With the enormous size of the European market, over the years it has proven to not be innovation-friendly, causing an increase in brain drain.

To combat this trend, the European Parliament has set the following agenda:

1. Make the EU a world-class science performer.
2. Remove obstacles to innovation, including expensive patenting, market fragmentation, and skills shortages.
3. Revolutionize the way the public and private sectors work together, notably through the implementation of European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs).

Initiatives, including Innovation Union, Horizon 2020, Europe's Cohesion Policy as well as the European Institute of Innovation, already work towards overcoming current market failures by addressing market gaps and mobilizing private investment. All these efforts contribute to the EU's long-term goal in ensuring the strategic autonomy of the Union, to be more resilient and self-reliant, especially in terms of semiconductors, agriculture, energy and other production capacities and storage capabilities.

One of the major pluses of innovation is that it drives youth engagements as it urges young people to actively partake and support the process of economic growth. This is because innovation has always been, and always will be, the leader of change; hence youth engagement is motivated by this.

YEPP believes that the young generation has actively contributed to the positive economic changes experienced in our society, be it through research and/or the introduction of new solutions. Hence, the programs need to be further discussed and an action plan needs to act immediately.

The consequences of the pandemic have left a lasting effect, irrespective of whether our economy gradually recovers, youth unemployment remains a black hole for the European Union. Innovation is linked to youth engagement and increased employment, and consequently to our economy.



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**YEPP calls on:**

1. Stronger partnerships between European stakeholders, companies, and institutions to introduce new funds directed towards youth-focused engagement in research and development.
2. Creating new agreements to launch programs directed to youth, with a specific focus on projects regarding innovation across all sectors, from technology to climate.
3. Enriching exchange programs so that our community can interact with one another, learning how innovation positively drives the economy forward.
4. The inclusion of young people in decision-making processes, to ensure space for youth engagement and their development as citizens whose ideas are valuable and constructive for the sustainable and prosperous future of every community.

Common European future

The European Union is at the crossroads. With major political, demographic, economic and environmental challenges ahead of us, we should be aware of our goals and of our allies in achieving them. In order to find answers to those questions, the European institutions have launched the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). It provides unprecedented opportunity to the European citizens to contribute to the shared vision of the European future. Through its most versatile and accessible tool, the multilingual digital platform, citizens have an opportunity to share or support ideas, attend and organize events, or just find the information about the most recent CoFoE developments.

In addition to the opportunities provided by the CoFoE, YEPP acknowledges the importance of branding the year 2022 as the European Year of Youth.

It is closely connected with NextGenerationEU, which reopens perspectives for young people, including quality jobs and education and training opportunities for the Europe of



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the future, and supports young people's participation in society, especially as bearers of the green and digital transition.

**YEPP invites all the young Europeans to;**

1. Actively participate, individually or in group, in the process of shaping the European future by contributing to the work of the CoFoE's multilingual digital platform.
2. Make full use of the opportunities that the European Year of Youth may present.
3. Fully utilize all of the available youth empowering tools which include, but are not limited to – Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, Youth Guarantee, European Youth Event and Youth Employment Initiative.

**Conclusion**

The Future of Europe lies in the hands of policymakers and we, the Youth of the European People's Party, firmly believe that the opinion of the younger generation needs to be taken into account. We have an enormous task to deliver and appeal to the European Union to act on our calls to ensure a better future, not only for us but all generations.