

NEWS YEPPer

INTERVIEW WITH MEP PETER LIESE 10

“We cannot fight climate change alone. If we lose our industry while going climate neutral, no one will follow us.”

OPINION ARTICLE 07

Oleksandr Afanasiev

Is the meaning of “Ukraine’s Victory” understood in the same way in Ukraine and in the Western world? Are we really talking about the same victory?

BOOK REVIEW 14

Ola Svenneby

The purpose of the journey and the book is to describe how Russia and Russians influence their neighboring countries—politically, economically, socially, and historically.

GET TO KNOW A BOARD MEMBER 17

Sophia Kircher

I got to know YEPP during the European Parliament election campaign in 2014. YEPP did a road trip campaign and...

3 **2024: Embrace The Youth, Empower Change!**

4 **Past Council Meetings**

Zagreb
Skopje
Brno

7 **Opinion Article**

Ukraine's victory: do we understand it in the same way?

9 **News from EU Bubble**

10 **Interview with MEP Peter Liese**

13 **Get to Know Nuevas Generaciones**

14 **Book Review**

16 **Social Media Highlights**

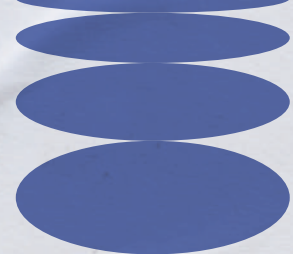
17 **Get to Know our Candidate for the EU Elections**

18 **YEPP in the Future**

Next CM - The Hague

19 **EPP Congress**

XX
e
d
n
i



2024: Embrace The Youth, Empower Change!

In the pivotal year of European elections in 2024, it's time to welcome fresh perspectives and youthful energy into political leadership. As the voices of the next generation, Young Candidates must step forward to shape Europe's future, aiming for #GenerationalRenewal.

It is the youth who will play the leading role in reaffirming the EPP/YEPP as Europe's foremost political force. To make this happen, we can't afford to miss our chance: we need to vote! Our message for the Youth is simple:

**Start caring,
Start voting!**

Lídia Pereira
YEPP President



A message from the Secretary General

The months ahead will be intense; we already know it. Something is intense when it is truly lived and experienced with passion, with the sensation of being able to achieve milestones for the generations to come. We, as members of YouthEPP, see the European elections this way: as our opportunity to amplify our voices and to gain more prominence within centre-right European politics, and more broadly, in all political institutions. Our commitment lies in increasing the impact of the YEPP network on policies and, ultimately, in shaping a better future for all young people. If you are as passionate as we are, follow us on this journey to see what has been done and what we are working on to reach our goals!

Heidi Hanhela

Editorial Note

In today's world, we must remind ourselves of the true meaning of political diversity: the struggle against conforming to a single form of thought. Mindful of this, YEPP aims to reshape the Youth discourse in Europe by revitalizing its Newsletter Magazine. We strive to reach an audience weary of the old rhetoric portraying the Youth as solely focused on demanding ever-expanding rights, being captive to the allure of demagogues with hidden political agendas. No. The Youth embraces the complexity of reality beyond mere ideology and therefore seeks solutions that shape all facets of its future.

Tomás Cruz
Executive Officer



Past Council Meeting

Zagreb

After a new Board was elected at the June Braga Congress, YEPP's first event led us on a journey to Zagreb for the Council Meeting themed 'Redefining Europe's Role: From Global Challenges to European Opportunities.' Hosted by MHDZ Croatia, the event welcomed over 75 delegates from our 64 member organisations and partner organisations, with which the new Board successfully started its work.

Strategic Autonomy and Modern Sovereignism

Delving into Europe's perspective on these critical aspects, recently re-elected YEPP President Lídia Pereira set the tone for the event. In her speech, she emphasized the role of Member States in a Europe under increasing geopolitical pressure. The key concept that pervaded the entire event was that of modern sovereignty, which implies the promotion of national interests within the European framework, remembering that, unlike other main actors on the world stage, Europe is built from different nations. Not losing sight of the importance of sovereignty, we reflected on how Europe

can stand united, respecting all Member States' differences, and facing the challenges of the present.

Exploring Key Issues Shaping Europe's Future

The Council Meeting continued with a panel on the transformative force of AI and its implications for Europe's future. The discussion touched on the difficulty of regulating a technology that evolves daily. A following discussion, that included among the speakers Zvonimir Frka-Petešić, Head of the Prime Minister's Office, explored the effects of decarbonisation, digitalisation and demography on society and economy. Particularly important was the latter point, on which Croatia has played a decisive role at the European level pushing for more attention on the worrying effects of population decline.

Engaging with Political Figures and Parliament:

Prime Minister Andrej Plenković shared insights into the history of the Republic of Croatia and the process that led it to be the youngest member of the EU. PM Plenković, who participated in the accession negotiations himself, told the successful story of a country that was progressively integrated in the Schengen Area and, finally, into the Eurozone on the 1st of January 2023. Croatia, being an example for new EU candidates, is now at the forefront in its support of European Enlargement.





Skopje

'Unifying the Future: Next-Gen Meets Western Balkans'

From the 16th to the 19th of November, YEPP gathered in Skopje for a Council Meeting hosted by the Young Forces Union of VMRO-DPMNE. The event, attended by over 60 delegates, proved to be a dynamic platform for discussions and collaboration. Launching the event, VMRO-DPMNE President Prof. Hristijan Mickoski welcomed our delegates with a speech highlighting the importance of European integration to VMRO-DPMNE, and how the party is positively impacting this process.

Exploring Key Issues:

The Council opened with keynote speeches by the highest representatives of VMRO-DPMNE, delving into the important role young people play in shaping EU politics and on the economic impact of EU Integration for new Members. Afterwards, delegates engaged in multiple discussion panels, workshops, and gained insights from key political figures. A visit to the Parliament in Skopje provided a deeper understanding of the country's history and challenges on the path towards EU Integration.

Resolution Highlights and Joint Statement: A Stance for Rule of Law and Peace

A unanimously approved resolution on the Catalan amnesty stood out, highlighting the severe situation that the Socialist Party in Spain is creating. The centre-right is demonstrating to be the only political force that condemns without hesitation breaches of the rule of law on every side of the political spectrum. Furthermore, a very insightful discussion about the conflict between Israel and Hamas and the necessary approach to ensure peace led to a Joint Statement, marking YEPP's unwavering support for Israel and its commitment to peace in the region.

Firm Commitment to Western Balkans Integration:

The Council Meeting unanimously supported a Letter of Intent on EU Enlargement. Led by First Vice-President Sophia Kircher, YEPP reaffirms its dedication to the integration of the Western Balkans into the EU. The organization stands at the forefront of youth movements, actively promoting the integration of the Western Balkans and advocating for a faster and reform-driven EU accession process.



Brno

The first event of 2024 led YEPP to Brno, Czech Republic, from the 22nd to the 25th of February. The Conference titled “Green Future: Youth creation – Advancing Sustainability Through R&D” was hosted by Mladí Lidovci. YEPP focused on the agriculture sector, the need to protect the environment, and the reaffirmation of its unwavering support to Ukraine 2 years after the start of Russia’s brutal and criminal act of aggression.

An Agriculture for farmers and youth

The event saw the participation of the highest political representatives of the Czech Government, notably the Minister of the Environment and deputy chairman of KDU-CSL, Petr Hladík, and Minister of Agriculture Marek Výborný. YEPP approved a resolution on the revitalization of rural economy, rural sovereignty and the upholding of agricultural standards, advocating for compliance with quality and safety laws in the agriculture sector.

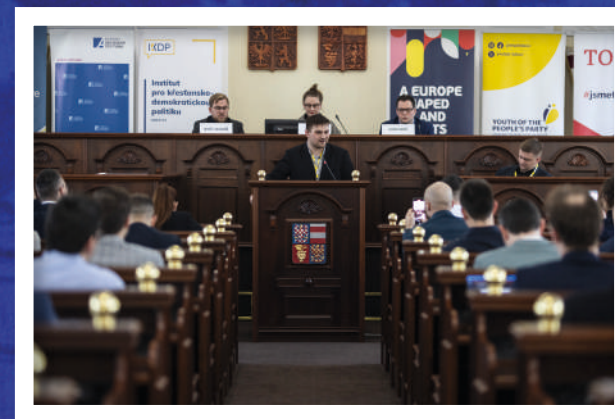
Support to Ukraine and rule of law

2 years after Russia invaded Ukraine, YEPP delegates reiterated their aspiration to

reach peace in the region. This culminated in a Joint Statement reaffirming support for Ukraine, and the condemnation of the war crimes committed by the Russian regime. Participants also focused further on the sanctions against Hungary for breaching the rule of law and on the condemnation of massacres against Christian population in Nigeria.

YEPP values for the next EU Elections: A Manifesto

During these intense days, delegates voted and approved the official Youth Manifesto for the 2024 Elections. The document addresses the most compelling topics for Young people aiming to foster greater attention on critical youth matters such as economic competitiveness, equal opportunities, unemployment, mental health and the protection of the environment. YEPP remains the only European youth political organisation addressing challenges faced by young Europeans through a balanced yet forward-thinking approach, without any ideological bias that hinders the pursuit of finding the best solutions.

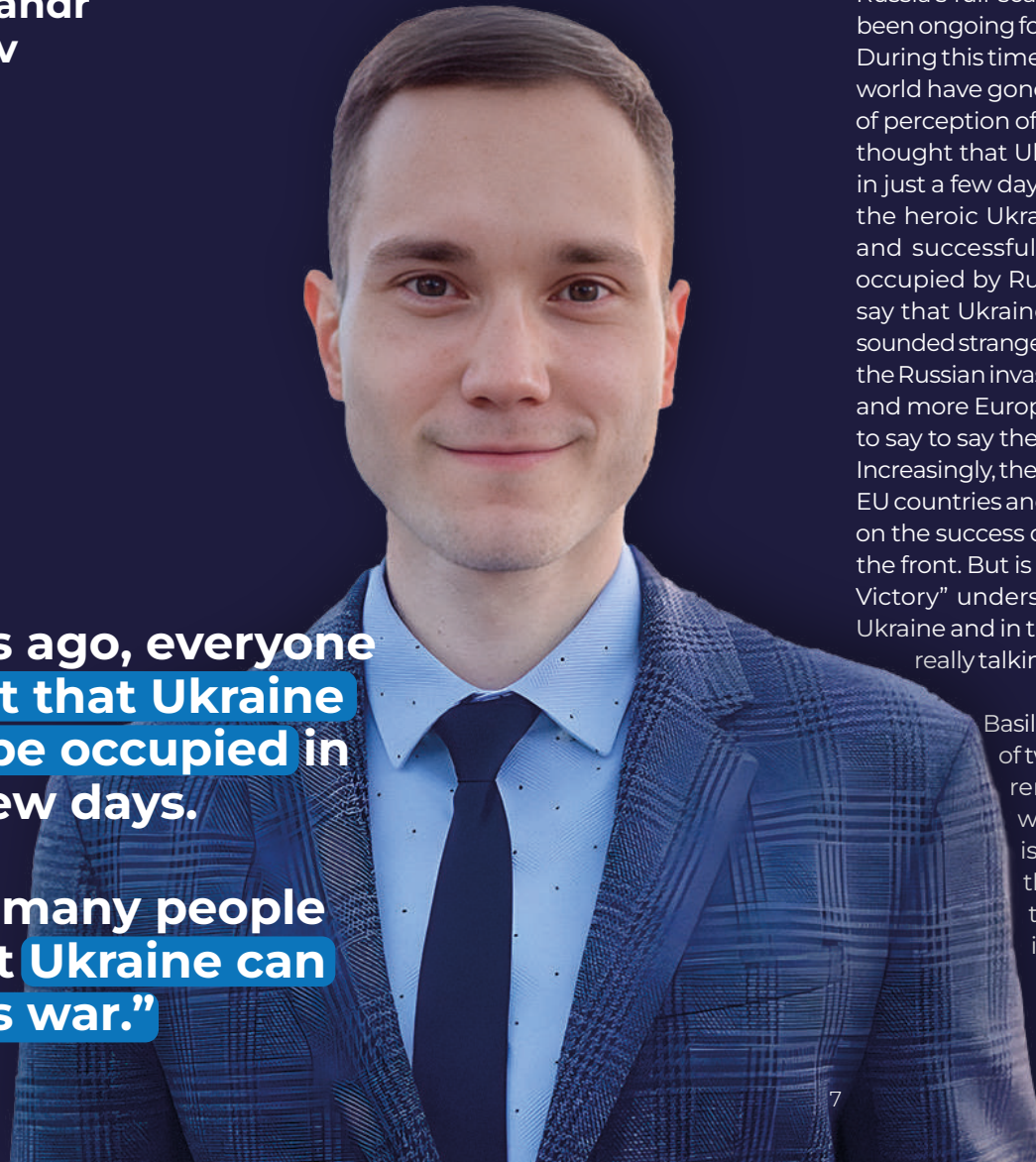


Ukraine's Victory: Do We Understand It in the Same Way?

by Oleksandr Afanasiev

"2 years ago, everyone thought that Ukraine would be occupied in just a few days.

Today, many people say that Ukraine can win this war."



Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has been ongoing for more than two years now. During this time, Ukraine and the Western world have gone through different stages of perception of this war. At first, everyone thought that Ukraine would be occupied in just a few days. Then everyone saw that the heroic Ukrainian people could resist and successfully liberate the territories occupied by Russia. Today, many people say that Ukraine can win this war, which sounded strange at least at the beginning of the Russian invasion in February 2022. More and more European leaders are not afraid to say the phrase "Ukraine's Victory." Increasingly, the internal political context of EU countries and European policy depend on the success of the Ukrainian military at the front. But is the meaning of "Ukraine's Victory" understood in the same way in Ukraine and in the Western world? Are we really talking about the same victory?

Basil Henry Liddell Hart, a classic of twentieth-century strategy, reminds us what victory in war is. In his opinion: "Victory is a peace that is better than the previous one." Based on this position, the idea that is sometimes voiced in the political environment to preserve Ukrainian state-

hood by negotiating with Russia, stopping hostilities and freezing the war is obviously not a victory. It will only be a short-lived pause before the next stage of Russian aggression, which in a few years may indeed be the last for the independence of the Ukrainian state. Another idea that is more palatable to the Ukrainian people is the liberation of all occupied territories and the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity. Most European leaders also support this strategic goal of Ukraine, but can this be considered a real victory for Ukraine? Most likely not, because even after losing all the conquered territories, Russia will not stop trying to destroy Ukraine with constant missile attacks and new attempts to occupy Ukrainian territories. The current regime of the Russian Federation has not recognized and will not recognize the existence of an independent Ukraine, even after suffering a total defeat in the war with Ukraine. There is also an opinion that the destruction of Russia as it exists today and the dismantling of the current Putin regime, which is dangerous for Ukraine, Europe, and the world, will be considered a victory. Of course, this scenario would be very appealing to Ukraine, but this development makes most Western leaders' blood run cold. But what would be a real victory for Ukraine and what kind of peace would be better than the previous one for Ukraine?

Obviously, the thesis that Ukraine must liberate all its territories is absolutely true and cannot be questioned. By neglecting this strategic goal, we continue to tolerate a world order in which no borders are permanent and where the use of force can be used to redraw the boundaries of sovereign states. The inviolability of borders and state sovereignty are fundamental values of Western democracy and international law. Therefore, for both Ukraine and its allies, the de-occupation of all Ukrainian territories is a strategic goal of the future victory. But, as noted above, this cannot be the only goal and consequence of victory. The best peace for Ukraine and Europe will be a peace where there is no threat of a repeated Russian attack on Ukraine. This second component of victory should take the form of security guarantees for Ukraine. Today, Ukraine's membership in NATO can be such a security guarantee. To date, NATO has been the most effective mechanism for ensuring security in the Member States. Ukraine, which signed the Budapest Memorandum in 1994 and voluntarily surrendered the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world, should have had such guarantees even earlier. Therefore, correcting this mistake and protecting Ukraine from possible further attacks by Russia is an important component of Ukraine's victory. The sooner Ukraine can receive such guar-

antees in one form or another, the sooner the war can be localized and, in the long run, ended. The third component of Ukraine's victory is systemic changes and democratization of Russia itself. As long as Russia exists in this imperialist form, Ukraine and Europe will be under the threat of a possible attack. These systemic changes can take many forms and in the extreme case can be characterized by de-imperialization and liberation of the enslaved peoples living on the territory of modern Russia. This does not mean that anyone should interfere in Russia's internal politics, but it does mean that we should consider this scenario and not be afraid to talk about it. Of course, in addition to these three components, the importance of punishing war criminals for their crimes, as well as reparations to Ukraine for the damage and destruction caused, is beyond doubt.

After two years of full-scale war, it has become obvious to everyone that Russia's war in Ukraine is not a local conflict but a geopolitical game to regain influence and control over post-Soviet territories that Russia still considers its "historical lands." It is also clear that if Russia succeeds in Ukraine, it will not stop and will continue its expansion to other countries, sensing NATO's weak position in protecting its geopolitical interests in the region. There-

fore, the victory of Ukraine and the vision of this victory outlined above can become a common victory of Ukraine, Europe and the Western world over the authoritarianism and imperial ambitions of the Russian Federation. The defeat of the West in this war will send a clear signal to other dictatorial regimes and could serve to create significant turbulence around the world, even escalating to World War III. Today, the money invested in Ukraine's victory is much less than the possible costs of the EU countries that would be necessary in the event of a direct war with Russia. Therefore, supporting Ukraine today is the cheapest way to ensure peace and security in the whole of Europe. The components of this peace and security should be: restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity; provision of security guarantees to Ukraine; promotion of systemic changes and democratization of Russia itself; punishment of criminals and payment of reparations for the damage and destruction caused to Ukraine. It is this shared vision of victory that will ensure sustainable peace for both Ukraine and the whole of Europe.



News from EU Bubble

Highlights from past weeks

• **Once a PVV strategist, now he fights it:** One of Geert Wilders' top strategists converted to Islam after being for years Wilders' right-hand and author of radical rhetoric for the PVV, ID party of The Netherlands. Joram van Klaverem left Wilders in 2014. In the last months, amid Dutch elections, he worked to counteract messages that he himself helped craft.

• **EU Commission investigates Chinese companies:** Brussels launched a probe into whether Chinese companies illegally benefited from subsidies for the construction of a solar panel park in Romania. The Commission will have approximately 100 days to verify if the Chinese companies won the bid thanks to unfair foreign subsidies.

• **Mark Rutte closer to NATO leadership?** The Dutch Prime Minister has garnered support from four NATO countries in his quest to become the alliance's next Secretary-General, with officials expressing confidence that he could secure unanimous backing before the summit in July. Despite having good chances, Rutte faces objections raised by Turkey, Slovakia, and Hungary. Also, Romania has put forward its own candidate: president Klaus Iohannis.

Legislative pipeline

• At the end of February, the EU Parliament adopted the **Nature Restoration Law**. The new legislation sets a target for the EU to restore at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030 and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. The content of the initiative was among the points contested by farmers in last months' protests. The text is now in the hands of the Council of the EU for the first reading.

• In the **last Plenary Session**, from 11th to 14th of March, important dossiers were voted. Among these, particularly important was the AI Act, the first in the world to regulate the use of AI generated content and to discipline the use of data to train models. In parallel, the EU Commission established a European AI Office within the DG CONNECT, with the purpose of supporting the development and use of trustworthy AI and monitoring risks.

• The European Commission is proposing a **Directive to regulate traineeships**. The proposal still needs to be discussed by the European Parliament and the Member States. The Commission also adopted a blueprint to create in the upcoming years a common European degree. In line with our mission, we will closely follow any development.

What's next?

• **The Middle East** is set to maintain a significant presence in newspapers and the political landscape. Heightened tensions between Israel and Hamas, along with neighbouring countries, pose an ongoing risk of escalation, particularly amidst unstable negotiations for the release of hostages. Additionally, there is a discernible shift in Israel's moral support due to evolving geopolitical dynamics, challenging traditional perspectives on the conflict.

• **Is the support for Ukraine solid enough?** The recent blackmailing by Republicans in the US Congress has complicated American military support for Ukraine. In the upcoming months, the supply of weapons and ammunition will be a compelling issue in the EU as well. As YEPP, we continue to emphasize how financial and military aid to Kyiv is critical to prevent an escalation of the conflict within the Union's borders.

• Amid geopolitical tensions and the increasing role of NATO, Europe finds itself confronting a **shortfall in military personnel**. Germany recently decided to address this issue, and the government is currently working on a blueprint for a scalable military service model. Across Europe, mandatory military service is poised to become a pressing topic of debate in the coming years.



Interview with MEP Peter Liese

MEP since 1994, Peter Liese was born in 1965 in Meschede, Germany. He has 15 years of experience as EPP Coordinator for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety. He has been a Member of CDU regional executive since 1997 and served as a ward doctor in a children's clinic after a doctorate in Medicine at the University of Bonn. In the EU Parliament he is also Member of the Special Committee on Beating Cancer, the Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America and the Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly.

You've been an MEP since 1994. What would you identify as the most noteworthy changes in Europe, particularly within the context of your work in the European Parliament?

The biggest change definitely is that the power of the European Parliament has been growing a lot in the last 30 years. When I started, the Maastricht Treaty just had entered into force. The co-decision procedure was completely new and only relevant for specific policy areas. After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, co-decision is the normal procedure in Europe, a big step for democracy. That also means that the elections for the European Parliament are much more important than 30 years ago.

What is it about European politics that attracts you, especially when compared to national politics?

I like Europe and I like the different languages and cultures in Europe. What I think is really amazing, is that we decide on laws that affect 450 million people. Important problems like climate change, security or the shortage of medicine can only be addressed if we work together.

“Let's talk a bit about the situation in Germany”. Despite recent demonstrations against the AfD in Germany, the far-right is performing well in polls. What, in your opinion, is driving the growth of these movements, and what strategy do you see being able to effectively mitigate these trends?

Fortunately, AfD is going down in the polls. Three months ago, I was afraid that they would be the biggest party in the European elections in Germany but now society has woken up. We not only have demonstrations but also a lot of entrepreneurs, trade unions, the church and many others from the civil society speak out. This is a big part of the solution. On the other hand, we need to take note of people concerns and do politics that address the real problems of the citizens unlike the German “Ampel” government.

“EPP has been leading many important files to tackle climate change. We need to support technologies that will reduce greenhouse gases and increase the productivity of agricultural land.”



The “Ampel-Regierung” has faced considerable criticism since the beginning of the term. You have played a role in addressing their shortcomings, such as the inability to mitigate rising costs. Looking ahead to the upcoming national elections, what would you say is key for the CDU to position itself as a compelling political alternative?

We need to clearly point out the mistakes of the government and, at the same time, propose concrete alternatives. Our new party manifesto is a very important step here.

When it comes to engaging young voters specifically, what strategy could be employed to resonate with this demographic?

To address young voters is a key part of my personal campaign. Seven age groups will vote in the European election for the first time in Germany because the voting age has been reduced from 18 to 16. I'm sure that we will perform much better than in the last European election and the national election. The introduction of a youth guarantee by the European Commission is a big success for the EPP. In contrast to the election five years ago, we have shown that we can deal with climate change and design the appropriate legislation. According to the reactions I see from young people, our agenda for competitiveness is also being positively echoed.

Let's go back to European Politics. With a potential reconfiguration of the European Parliament, especially considering your focus on the Environment, how might political shifts influence policies related to the protection of the environment?

First of all, we all need to be humble and let the voters speak before we draw consequences from the results. Personally, I think we need to fight for a reasonable environmental policy that reduces red tape and still protects the environment and human health. We should use the 'one-in-one-out principle' to abolish superficial bureaucracy that doesn't help the environment and, in particular, abolish bureaucracy that stands in the way of environmental innovations.

There's a perception that the centre-right has been late to the climate debate. Do you believe this is still the case?

We were definitely not well prepared in 2019. EPP was not clear and strong enough but this has changed completely. We have been leading many important climate files like ETS, Social Climate Fund and Carbon Removals were Lidia played a major role as rapporteur.

Achieving a delicate balance between climate protection and economic interests is crucial. What technological trends do you foresee that can facilitate this transition, ensuring both sustainability and economic competitiveness, particularly in sectors like agriculture?

For me personally, it is very important that the EPP doesn't call itself conservative or centre-right but Christian-democrat. My engagement with the environment and the climate is based on my Christian faith and inspired, for example, by Pope Francis. Our EPP approach is more pragmatic and technologically open. We don't want to decide all the details in Brussels but give a clear framework that awards everybody that has a good idea to reduce emissions.

How can a centre-right, conservative approach on the Environment differ from that of the left and the Greens? What key principles should guide a conservative stance on environmental issues?

Engineers and entrepreneurs all over Europe have great ideas. One of the most amazing technology that I have been learning about in the last two years, is direct air capture. Companies already exist that take CO2 from the air and create bricks, for example. The technology is very expensive at the moment but if we support it and create a market, costs could go down dramatically. Also in agriculture, we have great technologies that we should support. For example, manure enrichment reduces greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture dramatically and at the same time increases the productivity of agricultural land. These are the technologies we need to encourage instead of just reducing agriculture production.

Reflecting on the recent COP28, what, in your view, are the most positive outcomes and shortcomings of the conference, particularly in addressing the transition away from fossil fuels?

Overall, the COP 28 was surprisingly a success. I didn't expect that we could have a decision on transitioning away from fossil fuels in an oil country but finally it happened. It is also important that the world decided to triple renewables, to double energy efficiency and recognize the role of nuclear.

Do you believe Europe is currently on the right track regarding climate action? Are there specific policies or initiatives that you think have been particularly effective in addressing environmental challenges?

We are definitely on the right track when it comes to market based mechanism. The EU's emissions trading system (ETS) creates the necessary emission reductions at the lowest possible cost. However, the ETS could also have unwanted side effects if we don't protect families with low income, especially those who work hard but don't have large savings. The Commission, in particular, the former Vice President Frans Timmermans, has however exaggerated in some specific legislative proposals so that some proposals even contradict the climate agenda.



“We cannot fight climate change alone. We should have ambitious targets but at the same time, we should stay an industrialised continent. If we lose our industry while going climate neutral, no one will follow us.”

Even if Europe takes substantial steps, how can we ensure that other global powers contribute to climate action? What diplomatic and cooperative strategies can be employed internationally to address the collective challenge of climate change?

This is the most important question. We cannot fight climate change alone. That is why we need to lead by example. This does not only mean that we should have ambitious targets but at the same time, we should stay an industrialised continent. If we lose our industry while going climate neutral, no one will follow us. The introduction of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which asks companies from third countries, where there is no CO2 price, to pay a similar price at the border when they want to sell their product in Europe, is an important step to protect our industry and encourage third countries to decarbonise. The Commission is flooded by requests from third countries that want to follow us. Unfortunately, Frans Timmermans didn't organise the Commission in the right way. While many people work on even more detailed command-and-control measures, no one is responsible for dealing with these third countries that want to copy-paste our ETS and CBAM. Ursula von der Leyen and EPP Climate Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra have changed this immediately. A new task force will deal with this question. The establishment of this task force is in my view the most cost-efficient and effective climate measure ever.

Get to Know Nuevas Generaciones

Launching our first series, “Get to Know a Member Organization,” Board Member Edelmira Ferri will delve into the inner workings of Nuevas Generaciones (NNGG), shedding light on their ongoing primary goals and key priorities.

Nuevas Generaciones stands as the largest political youth organization in Spain, with divisions at the national, regional, provincial, and municipal levels. Each territorial level is overseen by its executive committee and is organized around specific areas of work such as social media, events, universities, campaigns, etc. NNGG takes the lead in defending center-right ideas in universities, schools, and various youth spaces across the country. In this role, NNGG has actively campaigned against the so-called “amnesty law” and various legal and moral controversies involving the current socialist government.

The amnesty law is particularly concerning due to its serious implications for the rule of law. Granting a pardon for crimes as a mechanism to gain support to elect a Prime Minister not only violates the separation of powers (effectively suspending the judiciary) but also implies de facto impunity for all Spanish politicians. This law, nullifying court rulings against separatist

leaders, corrupt politicians, and terrorists, has been met with skepticism by European institutions, reminiscent of a similar case involving the former socialist Prime Minister of Romania, Nicolae Liviu Dragnea, where the European Commission threatened to impose the heaviest punishment for a Member State deviating from rule of law fundamentals.

However, the European Commission’s response to the amnesty law, presented as a series of questions, was considered “weak” by young Spaniards who uphold the rule of law. In this regard, it is hoped that once the Commission receives the answers, a much stronger response will be given. Otherwise, the confidence of the Spanish People in the European institutions, historically characterized as very high, will be severely affected. The Spanish youth hopes that Europe will pay heed to the hundreds of organizations and institutions, as well as the millions of citizens who have demonstrated in Spain during this time. Pedro Sánchez is governing like an autocrat, and he must face the consequences.

Young people in Spain are not only concerned about the erosion of the rule of law but also about wages (which are relatively lower than in many European coun-

tries), youth unemployment (the highest in the EU), and access to housing. This situation largely results from socialist policies, not only at the national level but also in various municipalities and regions they govern. For instance, in Barcelona, housing has become inaccessible to young people due to the intervention of the separatist government and the communist Barcelona City Council in real estate development and renting businesses.

Our mother party (Partido Popular) is seen by Spanish youth as the main opposition party and is voted for accordingly (the second most voted-for party by 18-24 year-olds, while the Spanish socialist party is first). Dangerous left-wing ideas are vehemently contested in universities and other crucial areas—a battle of vital importance.



“The Border”

Book Review by Ola Svenneby

What do North Korea and Norway have in common?

That’s one of the questions Norwegian author Erika Fatland attempts to answer in her book, “Grensen” (The Border). Published in 2014, the book is a travelogue spanning over 500 pages. The journey begins in North Korea and traverses through 13 countries, ending in Norway. Despite being cultural, political, and economic opposites, both Norway and North Korea share a border with the world’s largest country:

Russia.

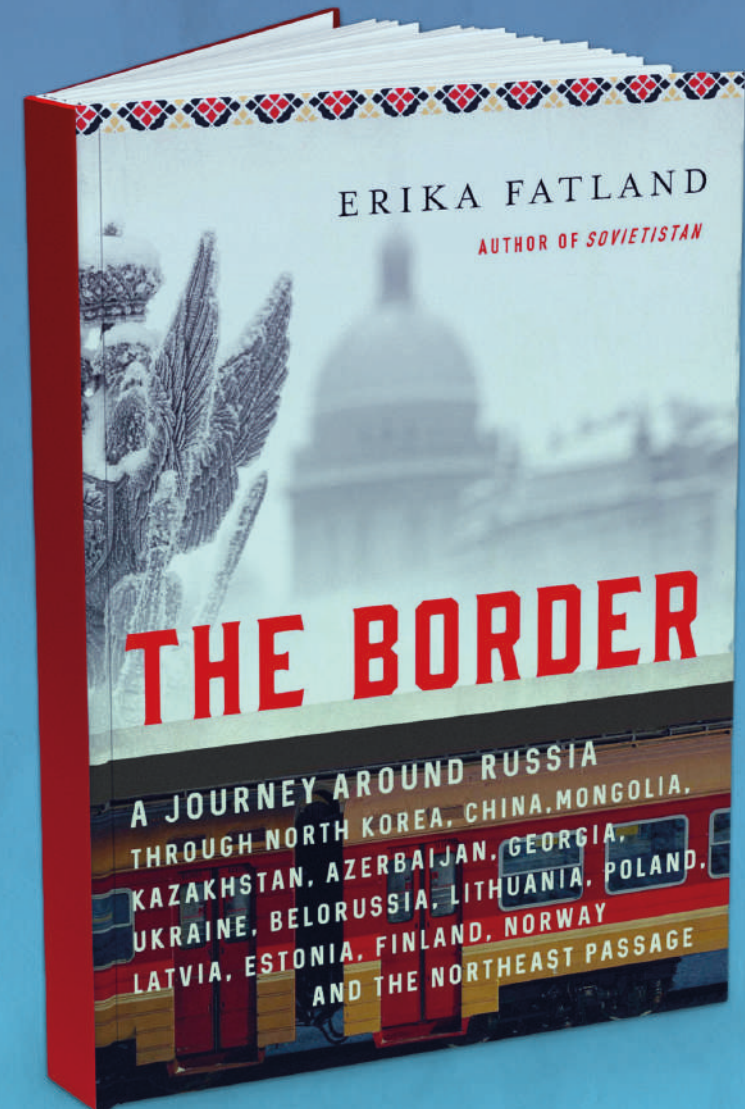
The purpose of the journey and the book is to describe how Russia and Russians influence their neighboring countries—politically, economically, socially, and historically. In other words, it is not a travelogue in a traditional sense. The author argues that one cannot understand a nation based on that nation’s understanding of itself alone. One should also find out how a nation is understood by its neighbors.

Fatland’s book is chronological, starting in North Korea and passing through China and Mongolia before reaching the “Stan” countries. The journey then crosses the Caspian Sea, leading to the Caucasus, and before going through Ukraine, heading north towards Norway.

Regardless of the vast differences between the 14 nations bordering Russia, Fatland shows that there are several similarities. Notably, Norway is the only modern country that has neither been occupied nor at war with Russia. On the contrary, the northern part of Norway was liberated by Soviet soldiers who chased the Nazis out in 1945. None of Russia’s other neighboring countries share such a fate.

For years several of Russia’s neighbors felt dismissed in their descriptions of Russia by other nations. Western powers sought peace and de-escalation with Russia, even though we were warned by several post-Soviet nations. The invasion of Ukraine in 2014 partially changed the narrative. But it wasn’t until Putin launched a full-scale attack against Ukraine that a more fundamental shift occurred. The book shows how Ukraine’s fate could, and still can, become other neighboring countries fate as well. In fact, Ukraine’s present relationship with Russia has historically been the norm for Russia’s neighbors.

Fatland describes how the remnants of Russian and Soviet occupation play a crucial role in several countries. Nations like Estonia, Latvia, and Kazakhstan still have



a significant Russian population, posing various challenges. Especially after Putin declared that Russia's interests lie wherever Russians are residing. Russians and locals often have different interests in domestic policies as well.

The book also shows the issues for Russians ending up in other nations. They are by no means a "winner" of the story. Many of them where themselves deported from other places in Russia, before being made to settle other places to "Russify" the Soviet empire. Reading about the journey through Ukraine in a book published in 2014 is somewhat peculiar. Crimea is occupied, and the war have started in Eastern Ukraine. Nevertheless, it is challenging to shake off the thought of how history might have looked different if there had been a different reaction pre 2014. Or if the West would have listened to the Eastern European nations in their description of Russia earlier on.

At the same time, it is hard to find a definitive answer to what it feels like to be Russia's neighbor. In the book's visit to the Caucasus, the author, explores Nagorno-Karabakh. This area, formally part of Azerbaijan but inhabited by Armenians for ages, is where Russia operates as a peacemaker and long served as a guarantor on behalf of Armenia.

In neighboring Georgia, however, Russia supports separatists in both South Ossetia

and Abkhazia. The different perspectives of Armenians and Georgians on Russia are therefore not surprising. It is particularly in the description of the Caucasus that the book provides a good overview of the consequences of Soviet ethnic policies that still endure. Whether its ethnic groups deported by Stalin or borders deliberately drawn to create chaos, Soviet politics continue to affect our neighborhood to this day.

Even a historian may struggle to keep up with the mosaic of nations, people and historic events, but the author makes it simple and easy to understand the history. Which is an impressive accomplishment. The book is in general easy and entertaining to read.

Russia will be a topic of discussion for many years to come. Historians, political scientists, and politicians are unlikely to agree on how to relate to the country. However, everyone should agree that we once again have an imperialist, wealthy, and authoritarian neighbor. In that regard, it may be wise to listen to those who have had the same neighbor before.

I recommend everyone who has the opportunity to read Erika Fatland's book.



Erika Fatland

Born in 1983 in Norway, Erika Fatland is an Anthropologist. In recent years, she has mainly written travel books. In 2014 she published «Sovietistan», a travel between five former Soviet Republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In 2020 she wrote "High Up. A Journey through the Himalayas". Her books have been translated into 26 languages. "The Border" was awarded among the 10 best non-fiction texts of our century in Scandinavia.

Social Media Highlights

y youthepp



19.594 views

YEPP welcomes another step towards EU #Enlargement. Yesterday, the European Council agreed upon the...

View all 627 comments

24 of August

y youthepp



10.328 views

Last Thursday, March 21st, YEPP organised a 2-hour #workshop in partnership with @microsoft...

View all 328 comments

10 of October

y youthepp



ews

for the future! 🇪🇺

ulations @ursulavonderleyen 🙌

5 comments

Get to Know our Candidate for the EU Elections

Sophia Kircher

What was your first event at YEPP?

I got to know YEPP during the European Parliament election campaign in 2014. YEPP did a road trip campaign and there was also a tour stop in Vienna. What impressed me most back then was that young people from different countries, with various cultural backgrounds are moving in the same direction. I realized that there is one thing that unites all of them. It is the same mindset and one goal: to promote basic European values and democracy building.

What was your favorite moment at YEPP? One you would highlight?

There are several moments and memories that I will cherish forever. So it is difficult to pick one. But it was definitely a highlight to be elected to the board at the Congress in Braga.

What is the first word that comes to your mind when you think of YEPP?

Passion

Wiener Schnitzel or Moules Frites?

Wiener Schnitzel in Vienna, Moules Frites in Brussels;)

To live in Vienna or in Brussels?

Neither nor: my home is Innsbruck.

Lounging at the beach or hiking in the mountains?

Hiking in the mountains

Most heard song on Spotify?

Higher Power (Coldplay)

Favorite book?

The Café on the Edge of the World (John Strelecky)

If you could have a conversation with any historical figure, who would you choose?

Konrad Adenauer

What is your hidden talent?

Writing rhymes

If you had to choose one of the following activities with each person—going to a party, going for a hike, and having dinner—among Charles Michel, Von der Leyen, and Roberta Metsola, whom would you pick for each activity, and why?

I would like to hike in the Austrian Alps with Von der Leyen to show her the beauty of the Alps and also discuss the transportation challenges and issues stemming from the significant volume of transit traffic passing through the Tyrol region of Austria. These challenges encompass traffic congestion, environmental concerns, and their impact on local communities.”

I would relish the chance to join a party with Roberta Metsola, as she is very approachable to young people, and I believe it would be fun to go out with her and meet many young individuals.

I would select Charles Michel for a dinner to gain insights and a better understanding of the complexities of EU governance, diplomacy, and decision-making processes.

If you could solve one practical problem in the lives of the Youth, what would it be?

I would aim to solve the practical problem of young people being able to afford purchasing affordable homes.

Campaign strategy: grassroots or digital?

Emphasizing grassroots campaigning while utilizing digital tools to expand the audience.

Best wish for the 2024 EU elections?

I wish all the YEPP candidates running for the European Parliament lots of success and hope that many of them will become MEPs after the elections.



YEPP in the Future

Next Council Meeting » The Hague

The European city symbol of international peace and justice, The Hague, will host YEPP's next Council Meeting in April. Organised by CDJA, the event "Navigating Global Turmoil: Building Economic Resilience" will consist of 3 days of discussions on the topics of defence, security and European resilience in the face of geopolitical threats. YEPP delegates will bring to the table matters that deep dive into a scenario of instability in Europe and the globe. Among these, the need to control military threats with a common European approach and the economic challenges that we face in this ever-evolving context.

The conference will benefit from the contribution of important political figures, such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hanke Bruins Slot, and the EPP Chairman himself, Mr. Manfred Weber.

The Netherlands is a country of projection towards the future, often a pioneer in implementing innovative business solutions. A recent study case saw the conversion of the BMW cars production into military vehicles to avoid closing production sites and therefore saving jobs. It demonstrates the necessity of adapting new solutions while pushing for more autonomous defence capabilities. In the current unstable scenario, the whole of Europe must walk in this direction, investing in defence technologies to enhance deterrence and adaptability against evolving threats, including those in the sector of information warfare and cybersecurity. Once more, the conference will demonstrate YEPP's advocacy action for international cooperation in building resilient defence systems in collaboration with the industry, to build a stronger European economy.

EPP Congress

March 6th and 7th marked the electoral Congress of the EPP in Bucharest, which officially designated the current president of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, as the Spitzenkandidat for the next mandate. The Congress was the perfect occasion for YEPP to present its own Manifesto for the elections and to push its agenda with important representatives of the mother party such as Von der Leyen herself, the president of the EP Roberta Metsola, former Commission President Durão Barroso, the PM of Luxembourg, Luc Frieden, of Croatia, Andrej Plenković, MEP Francois-Xavier Bellamy, and many others.

The need to strengthen safety and defense in Europe, the commitment to act on environmental policies, to facilitate access to mental health care, and to fight youth unemployment are some of the points that YEPP brought to their attention. On the main stage, President of YEPP Lidia Pereira participated in a panel titled “Intergenerational Solidarity”, advocating for YEPP’s willingness to fight for Generational Renewal in political institutions by pushing for Young Candidates.

YEPP also engaged in discussions with companies to address current political challenges, having a fruitful discussion with Microsoft and the American Chamber of Commerce to the EU, focusing on the importance of digitalisation and new technologies, like AI, to enhance competitiveness in Europe.





NEWS YEPPER

Youth of the European People's Party

0838.695.157

Rue du Commerce 10, 1000 Bruxelles

Editor: Tomás Cruz

Visuals: BLAT - Creative Powerhouse Lda