EPPer ANEW BEGINNING

EDITORIAL 03

By Sophia Kircher

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Editorial

Lead, shape and protect.

My vision for the future of YEPP

Being elected President of the Youth of the European People's Party fills me with two equal feelings: sincere gratitude for your trust and firm determination to turn that trust into results. In this role, I will continue to work to ensure that young voices are heard at all levels, to develop concrete solutions, and to guarantee that our generation's priorities shape the Union's agenda.

As I believe in something very simple, but very powerful: that our generation has the courage to lead, the ambition to shape, and the responsibility to protect what matters most — freedom, democracy, and opportunities for all.

My journey began more than ten years ago as a YEPP delegate, and ever since I've seen our organisation's burning determination to uphold its values and step up to make a real difference. Let me say it clearly: beyond the titles, positions and tasks, one thing has never changed — YEPP is a mission close to all our hearts.

YEPP must be more than a youth wing. It must be a political force. A political force that honours and further shapes the European peace project, that stands firmly against populists and extremists from the left and the right. A political force where everyone has a voice, not only in Brussels, but in all places where our future is being shaped: Paris, Bucharest, Köln and Cork, but also Washington, Kyiv, Chişinău, Skopje, and wherever our generation's future is at stake. A platform that brings young decision-makers to the table.

In times of uncertainty, we must remain a reference point for democracy and youth participation. We will fight for a Europe that needs more freedom on the inside, a strong internal market, and effective border protection. We must lead with ideas, courage, and clarity. We must fight back against authoritarian narratives, stand up for open civic debate, and restore a shared sense of European purpose. Furthermore, we need more projects where people in our regions benefit from cross-border cooperation. The motto is: Single European Ticketing must be the new Roaming.

We will stand with our friends from Ukraine, but also those in Georgia, Moldova and the Western Balkans who fight for democracy and a European path for their country and their generation! YEPP will stand firm—for secure borders, stable institutions, and a European Union that protects to ensure a good and safe life for our citizens.

Over the past couple of years, YEPP gifted me with unforgettable memories and paramount opportunities. Now it is time to give something back. Together, we will make YEPP a home — not just a structure, not just a name. Together, we will become a HOME for every young person who believes in freedom, in opportunities, and who wants to shape a better tomorrow.

Sophia Kircher YEPP President



Op-ed YEPP, the "doers"

Politics must be for everyone, engaging and motivating from the youngest generations to the oldest. YEPP continues to carry the immense task not only of calling on new generations across Europe to participate in politics but to involve themselves responsibly, nurturing a sense of commitment and enthusiasm. And how do we intend to do this from Europe's largest political youth organization? By offering real commitment—and, above all, by keeping the promises we make.

The main problem young people have with politics is the discredit that haunts it, the lack of trust in public institutions and in our political representatives at all levels. It's almost taken for granted that no matter who we vote for, "nothing will change," or in other words, "they're all the same." Well, at YEPP, we continue—and will keep doing so—proving that it's not the same to bet on center-right youth policies as it is to support initiatives from other political groups.

According to the "Young Europe" survey by the TUI Foundation, only 57% of young Europeans prefer democracy over any other form of government.

Additionally, the survey reveals that a striking 48% of respondents believe democracy in their country is in danger. In Spain, the figure is 39%, while in Germany, it rises to 61%. And only a worrying 6% of young people think their country's political system works well and needs no changes.

Likewise, 39% of the 6,703 respondents regret that the EU does not function in a particularly democratic way. While two-thirds of them consider their country's EU membership positive, half believe it's "a good idea, but very poorly executed."

Although all these figures must be studied and understood in the context of each coun-

try's political, social, and economic circumstances, at YEPP, we cannot overlook the disillusionment many young Europeans are experiencing with politics in general—and the lack of motivation they feel toward the European Union, which they often see as a bureaucratic giant, made up of thousands of institutions where projects stagnate or fail to be implemented where and when they're needed.

Therefore, YEPP still faces many crucial challenges: building trust among young people and, above all, leading by example. We must be living proof that politicians can be honest, committed, and—most importantly—keep their promises.

The first step is recognizing that young people don't want to be passive members



of an organization—they want to own it. They want to know that their work has weight, that their voices can shape decisions, not just decorate them.

On my part, as Secretary-General, it falls to us to carry out tasks that are sometimes invisible but no less critical. We must work tirelessly to ensure everything runs efficiently in the management of an organization composed of more than 60 member organizations with different voices and needs.

I have always believed in YEPP's enormous potential, and I believe our duty is to expand our influence and continue building international alliances that allow us to further highlight our activities, campaigns, and aspirations—while helping other democracies grow stronger.

In my previous four years as Vice-President of the organization, we've had to fight and grapple with the consequences of a pandemic, a war—for the first time in many years—on Europe's doorstep, deeply polarized elections in many regions of the world, the erosion of the rule of law in many of our EU member states, and now a trade war. The greater the challenge, the greater our commitment and responsibility must be.

But commitment alone is not enough. Action is what defines us. At YEPP, we must go beyond rhetoric and create tangible opportunities for young people to engage, lead, and influence. That means rethinking how we operate—moving from a top-down approach to one where every member feels ownership over our collective mission.

One way to do this is by expanding skill-building programs that equip our members with the tools they need to be effective leaders. Workshops on public speaking, policy drafting, and campaign management should not be occasional perks but core pillars of our organization.

We must also rethink our outreach. The youth disillusionment with politics isn't just about distrust—it's about relevance. Many young Europeans don't see how policy affects

their daily lives. It's our job to bridge that gap. That means launching campaigns that speak directly to their concerns: the cost of living, housing shortages, digital privacy, and climate adaptation. We don't just need to defend democracy—we need to prove it works for them.

And let's not forget solidarity beyond borders. YEPP's role isn't limited to Europe; it's about standing with young democrats worldwide. Whether it's defending our borders and supporting pro-democracy movements in authoritarian regimes or sharing best practices with sister organizations in Latin America or Asia, our fight for democratic values doesn't stop at the EU's edges.

At YEPP, we don't settle for speeches—we act. Our latest YEPP's Manifesto embodied this "doer" mentality. Among our key goals is creating the conditions for youth employment to thrive, not just talking about it. We defend European values against authoritarian threats through democracy resilience training and partnerships with frontline organizations, like those in Ukraine. On sustainability we push for a realistic Green Deal and on AI we demand agile legal frameworks that foster innovation. To those familiar with our work, our dedication to advancing mental health initiatives will remain a priority through workshops, podcasts and social media content.

This is YEPP's essence: we're not bystanders to change, we're the architects. Every line of our manifesto translates into tangible projects, from entrepreneur grants to civic patrols against disinformation. And we do it without losing sight of the human factor—policies with first and last names, ones that touch the real lives of those around us. Now more than ever, Europe needs "doers"—and we're here, ready to keep building.

<mark>Edelmira Ferri</mark> YEPP Secretary General

YEPP XV Congress 2025

YEPP Elects New Leadership and Sets Future Agenda at Electoral Congress in Brussels

From July 11th to 13th, the Youth of the European People's Party (YEPP) held its Electoral Congress in Brussels, bringing together more than 200 young delegates from across Europe. Over two intensive days, participants engaged in high-level debates on youth policy, innovation, and Europe's future—culminating in the election of a new leadership team to steer YEPP into its next chapter.

A Congress Focused on Ideas and Action

The Congress opened with remarks from MEP Siegfried Mureşan, who addressed the delegates via video message. In his speech, Mureşan emphasized the critical role of youth organizations like YEPP in defending Europe's democratic institutions and advancing new political ideas at a time of global uncertainty.

Two policy panels set the tone for the Congress, encouraging fresh thinking and dynamic exchanges on key issues facing Europe's next generation of leaders.

Panel I: Youth Engagement focused on strategies to boost youth participation in politics and civic life. The panel was moderated by **Edelmira Ferri**, now YEPP's

newly elected **Secretary General**. Speakers included **Antonia Herunter**, Member of the Federal Council of Austria, and **Matias Pajula**, Special Adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Together, they explored how to empower young Europeans to take a more active role in democratic processes.

Panel II: Sustainability Through Innovation addressed the balance between technological advancement and sustainable development. Speakers included Derek-Groot, former YEPP Vice President, Victoria Sarmiento Herrero from Microsoft, and Henrique Laitenberger from the Technology Industries of Finland. The discussion focused on how Europe's youth can lead the way in building greener economies without compromising technological progress.



Day Two:

High-Level Speeches and New Leadership

The second day of the Congress welcomed a distinguished lineup of speakers who shared their perspectives on Europe's economic and political future.

Maria Luís Albuquerque, Commissioner for Financial Services, Savings, and the Investments Union, opened the day with a keynote address on EU financing and youth. She underscored the importance of creating policies that foster innovation, promote financial inclusion, and secure long-term prosperity for Europe's next generation.

Following Commissioner Albuquerque, Dolors Montserrat, Secretary General of the EPP Group, delivered a powerful message on defending Europe's core values. She urged young leaders to take on greater responsibilities in shaping the continent's future, stressing the importance of standing firm in the face of growing challenges to democracy.

Delegates then proceeded with the **election of the YEPP Board for 2025–2027**, casting their votes in a pivotal moment for the organization.

Later in the afternoon, François-Xavier Bellamy, Member of the European Parliament, delivered a thought-provoking speech on the moral and philosophical challenges facing Europe today. He called on young political leaders to act with courage and conviction, reminding them of their duty to uphold Europe's cultural and democratic foundations.

The final address of the day came from Claudia Plakolm, Austrian Minister of Europe, Integration and Family, who focused on youth policies at the European level. Plakolm emphasized the importance of making young people a priority in policymaking, highlighting the need for their voices to be heard at every level of government.

A Time of Transition: Farewell and New Beginnings

This Congress also marked a significant moment of transition for YEPP leadership.

Outgoing YEPP President Lidia Pereira, who has led the organization for the past six years, delivered a heartfelt farewell speech. She reflected on her journey with YEPP, highlighting its evolution into a stronger, more dynamic force in European politics. Under her leadership, YEPP has become a platform that truly amplifies the voices of young Europeans and has had a meaningful impact on Europe's political discourse.

Alongside Pereira, **Heidi Hanhela**, YEPP's outgoing **Secretary General**, was also recognized for her invaluable contributions. Known for her diplomacy and tireless work, she has been a cornerstone of YEPP's success, ensuring the organization's smooth operations behind the scenes.

Looking Ahead

With a new leadership team and a renewed sense of purpose, YEPP is ready to continue its mission of empowering young Europeans, fostering innovation, and shaping the political agenda for a stronger and more united Europe. The Brussels Congress set the stage for the next chapter one that promises fresh ideas, bold leadership, and a steadfast commitment to Europe's future.







First Vice President: Tea Jerković (Croatia)

Nobody is strong on their own. Real strength is built together, united, speaking as one. That is the message I want to send: we are young, we are powerful, and we are here, to lead and to be heard.

Deputy Secretary General:

Eoin Scarlett (Ireland)

My top priority over the next two years will be getting YEPP back to proper campaigning on the key issue facing young people - the high cost of living, in particular soaring housing and rent prices faced by Gen Z and millennials.

Treasurer:Carl Pfeiffer (Sweden)

As Europe's largest political youth organisation, we have a duty to shape the day-to-day agenda - making sure our voices are heard on key policy issues, such as the EU's economic development, our collective security, and, above all, support for Ukraine amid Russia's full-scale invasion. Tackling these challenges requires strategic planning, dedicated resources, and close collaboration throughout our organisation.

Vice President: Severin Hirmer (Germany)

Severin serves as the former Vice Mayor and current municipal council member in the city of Weiherhammer in Bavaria in the 3rd term.

He also holds positions in his local district council for CSU and is involved in every organisational Level of JU in Germany. He works professionally as Chairman of the Executive Board of Directors for LUCE Foundation, that is pushing professional education in Bayaria



Vassilis is Vice-President of YEPP and International Secretary of ONNED. He studied at the National Technical University of Athens and University College London. He works in infrastructure development and investment advisory, focusing on major projects in energy, transport, and urban mobility. He has held multiple positions of responsibility within ONNED and YEPP.

Vice President: Todor Koneski (North Macedonia)

Todor Koneski serves as the International Relations Coordinator at the Ministry for Energy, Mining, and Mineral Resources. He is also the International Secretary of the Youth Forces Uvnion of VMRO-DPMNE. Todor's commitment to building international partnerships and promoting Christian Democrat values are at the heart of his professional and organizational goals.



Vice President: Ludovico Seppilli (Italy)

Ludovico holds a Degree in Economics from the University of Turin. Since 2016 he is a City Councillor in his hometown in Piedmont, Pino Torinese. He is serving ans the International Secretary for Forza Italia Giovani. He is also a member of the Forza Italia Foreign Affairs Committee. In 2023 he was chosen as Board Member for the Camillo Cavour Foundation. Besides the political activity, he is a public and international affairs consultant.

Vice President: Metty Steinmetz (Luxembourg)

Metty is President of CSJ Luxembourg. He works as a communication advisor to the Minister of Finance in Luxembourg. He believes it's vital for young people to stand up for what we believe is right: for democracy, peace, and our European values. We need to have a seat at the table when decisions are made about our future.

Vice President: Max Špachta (Czech Republic)

Max is a well-travelled Czech with a background in political science and experience across both national and EU institutions. His focus is on international affairs and security policy. At YEPP, he wants to help strengthening young people's voice on core issues—security, freedom, and a Europe that protects without overreaching.

Get to Know: Unge Høyre, Norway

The Young Conservatives – Today's answers to tomorrow's challenges

The Young Conservatives, the youth wing of Norway's Conservative Party (Høyre). Our organisation was founded in **1922.** The Young Conservatives is guided by the principles 'freedom and responsibility'.

Our most important values are about the inviolable freedom of individuals, and at the same time responsibility for their own lives. We usually say that we are committed to freedom with responsibility. The Young Conservatives are committed to a society that creates opportunities for everyone and makes room for diversity. Everyone doesn't have to be the same, but everyone should have equal opportunities to succeed.

Since 2020, **Ola Svenneby** has served as the organization's leader. The Young Conservatives is a breeding ground for future leaders—many of whom already serve in city councils, regional parliaments and the national assembly. Its members influence policy within the Conservative Party and challenge political debates in Norway.

This year there are parliamentary elections in Norway. This means that the role of youth parties is particularly important for mobilising voters and communicating the party's policies. We are a youth party with local organisations all over Norway. The local associations are organised under

our county associations. All the county associations meet four times a year with the central board to discuss the running of the organisation and adopt new policies. Every second year, the Young Conservatives' national assembly is held. This is where we adopt a new political programme and elect the leadership of the organisation for the next two years. The next time the Young Conservatives hold their national convention is in 2026.

The Young Conservatives work every day to influence Norwegian politics. We have elected representatives at all political levels and are represented in the Conservative Partys leadership. For the Young Conservatives, our most important task is to be the youth party that pulls Norwegian politics in the right direction.

Norway as a neighbour to Russia

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, how we relate to the world has changed drastically. As one of Russia's neighbours, Norway has been forced to change its domestic and foreign policy priorities. Shortly after the invasion of Ukraine, the Young Conservatives were the first political party to speak out in favour of Norway sending weapons to Ukraine. At the time, we challenged both our own mother party and Norway's foreign minister. Subsequently, both our own mother party and Norway's then foreign minister realised that it goes without saying that Norway should send arms to Ukraine.

Norway needs a new political direction

Being an organisation that shows direction in tough times is the most important ambition for the Young Conservatives. Where we don't always mean what is popular, but first and foremost what is right. Our most important goal is simple: The generational contract must be restored. Our generation risks becoming the first in modern European history to have fewer opportunities than our parents. This is a breach of the fundamental social contract.

The Young Conservatives is an organisation that is clear about the foreign policy challenges we face. We believe that Norway should have some clear foreign policy priorities that we work for. As a small country with an open economy, Norway must be clear about its interests. The Young Conservatives believe that Norway's most important foreign policy interests are:

- To ensure the country's security, stability and safety.
- 2. To be a good ally.
- 3. Ensure market access for businesses
- Fight for our values to prevail.
- And to maintain the West's influence in the world.

The Young Conservatives may be a youth organization, but it has real impact. Its members influence policy within the Conservative Party and challenge political debates nationwide.

By Maria Strand Munkhaug, Unge Høyres (The Young Conservatives) International Secretary.



Social Media Highlights









Die Wahl zur Präsidentin der Jungen Europäischen Volksiist für mich eine große Ehre und ein klarer Auftrag.

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From July 11th to 13th, YEPP held its electoral Congress in Brussels, bringing together over 200 delegates from across Europe!

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