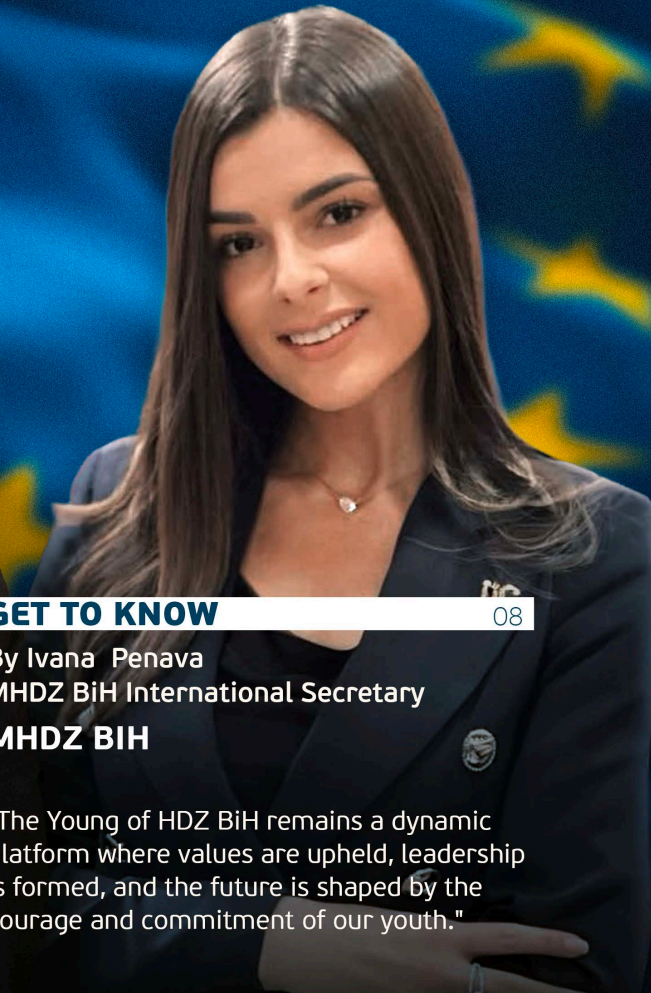
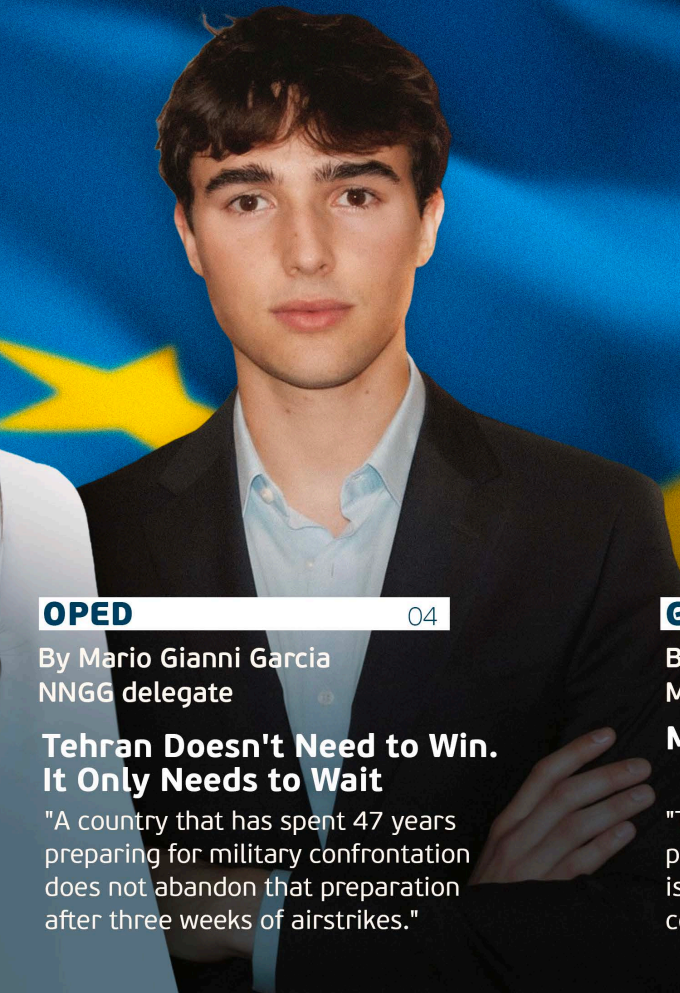


NEWS YEPPer

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YEPP President

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Editorial

Europe Must Make the Internet Safer for Girls and Women

The internet should be a place of opportunity. It should allow young people to learn, to connect, to speak up, to create and to participate in public life with confidence. For many girls and women, however, the digital space is too often a place of humiliation, intimidation and fear.

This is one of the defining rights issues of our time. Violence against women does not stop at the front door, on the street, or in the workplace. It extends into the online world, where abuse can spread faster, travel further and remain visible longer. A threatening message can be sent in seconds. An intimate image can be shared without consent in minutes. A lie, a deepfake or a coordinated campaign of harassment can destroy a reputation overnight.

And behind every figure stands a person. A teenage girl who no longer wants to go to school after being targeted online. A journalist who stops writing because the threats become unbearable. A young activist who withdraws from public debate because every post brings a new wave of hatred. When women are pushed out of digital spaces, society loses voices, talent and leadership.

That is why Europe has to act decisively. In 2024, the European Union adopted its first-ever directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence. It is a big step forward because it recognises that online abuse is real abuse. It criminalises, across the EU, serious forms of cyberviolence such as cyberstalking, cyberharassment, the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and incitement to hatred or violence on the basis of gender. This matters enormously. Rights cannot depend on a postcode. A

woman in one Member State deserves the same protection of her dignity as a woman in another.

But passing a law is only the beginning. Member States now have to implement this directive quickly and properly. That means training police and prosecutors, strengthening victim support services, financing hotlines and counselling, and ensuring that illegal content is removed swiftly. Justice delayed online is often justice denied, because the damage multiplies every hour abusive material stays online.

Recent cases involving AI-generated sexualised images have shown how urgently we need enforcement. New technologies can be used to innovate, educate and empower. But they can also be used to degrade and exploit. A normal photograph taken from social media can now be manipulated in seconds into fake sexualised content and spread without the victim ever knowing who created it first. The violation is digital, but the harm is deeply human. Shame, anxiety, fear, self-censorship and professional retreat are not virtual consequences. They are real.

Europe is not powerless in the face of this. Alongside the directive, we already have tools that must be used seriously. The Digital Services Act creates responsibilities for major platforms when it comes to illegal content and systemic risks. The AI Act introduces transparency obligations so that AI-generated content, including deepfakes, can be identified clearly. These rules matter. But rules alone will not protect anyone if platforms continue to react only after public outrage, instead of designing their systems to prevent foreseeable harm.

This is also a question of democracy. When female journalists, politicians, entrepreneurs or activists are targeted with misogynistic abuse, the aim is often not only to insult them, but to silence them. Recent research by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) for UN Women in partnership with UNESCO, found that 75% of women journalists and

media workers experienced online violence while doing their jobs in 2025, up from 73% in 2020. We should be under no illusion: online abuse is being used as a weapon to narrow the public space and to push women out of leadership and visibility. A democracy in which women participate under threat is not fully free.

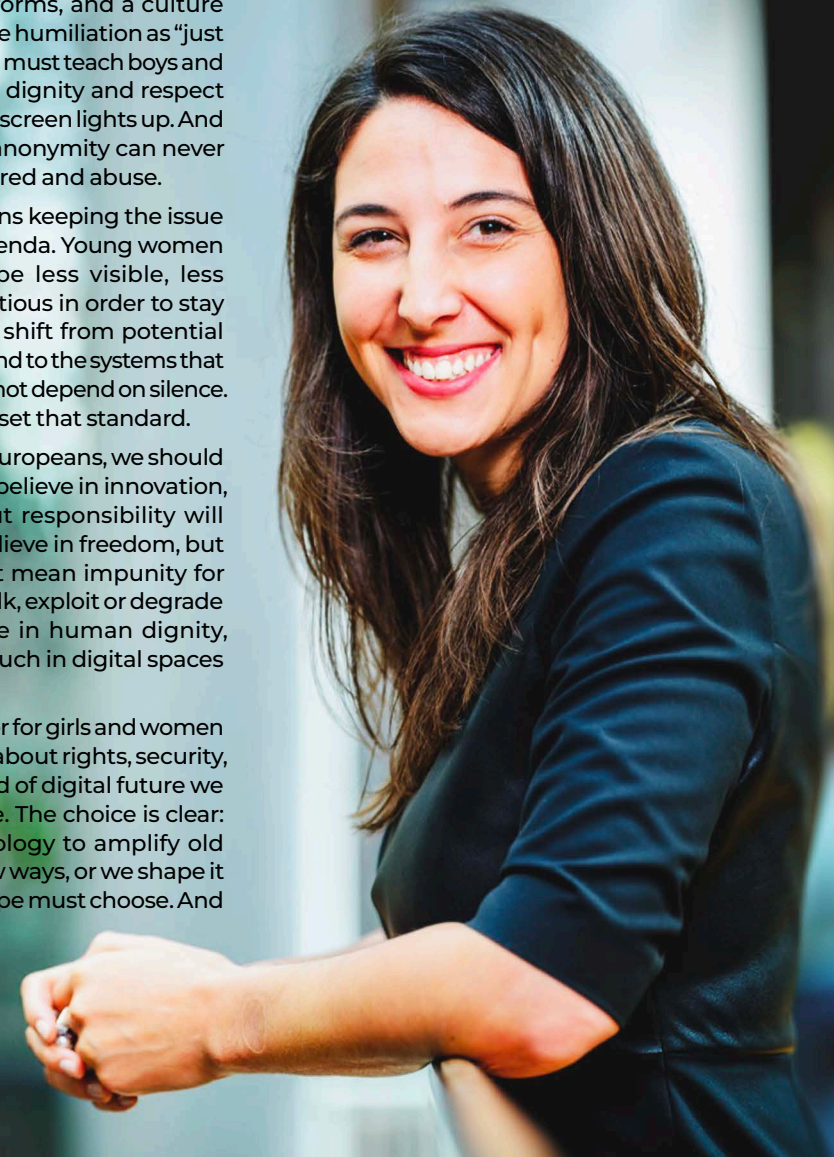
That is why the response must be broader than punishment alone. We need prevention, digital literacy, faster reporting tools, clearer accountability for platforms, and a culture that refuses to normalise humiliation as “just part of being online”. We must teach boys and girls alike that consent, dignity and respect do not disappear once a screen lights up. And we must be clear that anonymity can never become a shield for hatred and abuse.

For YEPP, this also means keeping the issue high on the political agenda. Young women must not be told to be less visible, less outspoken or less ambitious in order to stay safe. The burden must shift from potential victims to perpetrators and to the systems that enable them. Safety cannot depend on silence. Europe can and should set that standard.

As young centre-right Europeans, we should be ambitious here. We believe in innovation, but innovation without responsibility will never earn trust. We believe in freedom, but freedom online cannot mean impunity for those who threaten, stalk, exploit or degrade others. And we believe in human dignity, which applies just as much in digital spaces as it does offline.

Making the internet safer for girls and women is not a niche issue. It is about rights, security, democracy and the kind of digital future we want to build in Europe. The choice is clear: either we allow technology to amplify old forms of violence in new ways, or we shape it around our values. Europe must choose. And it must choose now.

By Sophia Kircher,
YEPP President



OpEd

Tehran Doesn't Need to Win. It Only Needs to Wait

A country that has spent 47 years preparing for military confrontation does not abandon that preparation after three weeks of airstrikes.

That is the uncomfortable reality the United States appears reluctant to confront as its war against the Iranian regime enters a decisive phase. Recently, U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth announced that Iranian attacks had fallen by 83% since the opening days of the conflict. There is a temptation among analysts to read this reduction as proof that the strategy is working—that Tehran is running out of resources to sustain its offensive and that victory is within reach. The evidence for that conclusion, however, is far from convincing. The particular nature of the Iranian regime suggests something quite different.

Following the fall of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi in 1979, Iran was shut out of Western defence markets and cut off from military technology. Since then, its defence industry has relied on reverse engineering and the modernisation of Russian-imported equipment. The aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War accelerated the development of asymmetric capabilities specifically designed to counter U.S. and Israeli regional presence. These include low-cost drone systems such as the Shahed-131, as well as ballistic and cruise missiles launched from distributed, frequently underground sites scattered across the country—making it exceptionally difficult to locate and accurately assess Iran's real reserves. This decentralisation, despite CENTCOM's claims of having

destroyed over 8,000 military targets (as of 21 March), is not a vulnerability. It is a deliberate feature designed to ensure the regime can sustain a prolonged conflict.

The Shahed-131 drone, costing around \$20,000, has been the weapon of choice for attacking U.S. bases in the region and energy infrastructure. That said, the nominal drop in attacks could be down to any number of reasons. For one, Shahed drone strikes, as Russia learned in Ukraine, are most effective when launched in large numbers, since they saturate air defences and achieve a higher penetration rate. During this period, Iran may be recalibrating its strategy—gathering more intelligence on enemy assets, adjusting its tactics, or stockpiling drones to shift the conflict to the Strait of Hormuz or elsewhere.

The conflict has also shown that war is increasingly becoming a function of economics. American interceptors, including SM-6 missiles and Patriot systems—costing millions of dollars each—have been the primary tool of defence against relatively cheap Iranian drones. This is simply not sustainable. The UAE is already placing orders for Ukrainian drone interceptors costing a fraction of the price, in the region of \$1,000 per unit. Europe cannot afford to watch from the sidelines. The Gulf has just demonstrated—just as the Russo-Ukrainian war did—what asymmetric warfare looks like at scale, and European counter-UAS capabilities are nowhere near ready for it.

Moreover, with the midterms coming up in November, the Trump administration needs

a win—and a decisive one. Iran, by contrast, does not operate on the same political clock that governs American conflicts. The regime's legitimacy does not hinge on delivering a quick battlefield victory or keeping casualties low. So every week that passes without the Iranian regime collapsing can, by that logic, be read as a win for Tehran.

Europe must resist the pull of a conflict whose tempo is being dictated by forces entirely external to its interests: American electoral imperatives on one side, and Iranian strategic patience on the other. We must not be dragged into this conflict. We must commit to closing the counter-UAS gap, build genuine supply chain resilience in the energy sector, and continue developing a foreign policy that does not simply serve Washington's interests.

Mario Gianni Garcia,
NNGG delegate and student at
Columbia University and
Sciences Po Paris





Past Events

Online Workshops

In the past month, YEPP has had the honour to host two workshops on highly relevant topics for young people across Europe and beyond.

On 17 March, our online workshop on gender balance brought together experts from Europe and Africa to discuss the state of gender equality and women's political representation. The discussion highlighted both the progress achieved through legislative efforts and the persistent structural barriers that remain, underlining the importance of intercontinental cooperation and youth engagement in driving lasting change.

Earlier in the month, YEPP also launched its new seminar series "Geopolitics of Tomorrow" with a first session featuring MEP Reinhold Lopatka. The workshop addressed key geopolitical challenges, including the situation in Iran, international security, and Europe's role in a shifting global landscape. The discussion reaffirmed YEPP's commitment to promoting dialogue and understanding on the issues shaping our future.

We extend our sincere thanks to all speakers and participants who contributed to these insightful discussions.

Past Events

50 Anniversary and Associations and Associated Entities Forum

Last 18 March the EPP celebrated its 50th Anniversary, a moment to reflect on the history of the EPP, that is also the history of the European Union.

The event brought together key EPP leaders, including EPP President Manfred Weber, EPP Secretary General Dolores Montserrat, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, and President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola, who also delivered inspiring speeches. Former leading figures such as Jean-Claude Juncker likewise addressed the audience, reminding the EPP family that, over the past 50 years, we have helped shape the European Union as we know it today.

Earlier that day, we attended the Associations and Associated Entities Forum, a valuable space to meet, exchange ideas, and discuss how to move the EPP family forward together.



YEPP Brussels Network Afterwork

On 24 March, the YEPP Brussels Group Network hosted an afterwork gathering that brought together a vibrant community of young professionals, current members, and YEPP alumni—highlighting the unique strength of a network that continues to grow beyond mandates and positions, forming a lasting and dynamic YEPP family in Brussels.

In her opening remarks, YEPP President Sophia Kircher emphasised the importance of this intergenerational network, underlining how the connection between current and former members enriches the organisation and strengthens its impact across Europe.

This message was echoed by Chelsea Nshuti, International Secretary of JONGCD&V, and Saskia Langer, Co-President of Junge Mitte Belgium, who both highlighted the value of belonging to a broader YEPP community that fosters collaboration, friendship, and shared purpose beyond borders.

The evening offered a perfect balance between meaningful exchange and a relaxed atmosphere, creating space for connection, engaging conversations, and a touch of fun as we continue to nurture a strong and united network in Brussels.

We warmly thank everyone who joined us and contributed to making this gathering such a memorable and energising occasion.



News from the EU Bubble

Viktor Orbán was ousted as prime minister: The pro-European Hungary is back.

After 16 years in power, Viktor Orbán was ousted as prime minister of Hungary after the opposition party, Fidesz, won a stunning victory in the national election on Sunday, 12th April 2026.

After winning the election, former Orbán loyalist Péter Magyar vowed to repair Hungary's strained ties with the European Union and NATO. Campaigning against corruption and focusing on everyday issues like healthcare and public transport, Magyar quickly drew congratulations from European leaders.

A new chapter begins for Hungary, bringing renewed hope for reform, trust, and stronger partnerships in Europe.

Digital Euro Seen as Answer to Europe's Dependence on US Card Networks

Europe's dependence on American payment giants Visa and Mastercard has come under fresh scrutiny after US sanctions left International Criminal Court judges unable to use their bank cards, even on European soil.

The episode exposed a serious weakness in Europe's financial autonomy and reignited debate about sovereignty. In response, the European Union is stepping up plans for a digital euro, issued by the European Central Bank and intended to operate beyond outside political pressure.

Yet the idea remains controversial, as private banks fear losing deposits and revenue, while rising interest in cryptocurrencies raises doubts over whether the digital euro can truly win public trust.

Serbia Faces EU Punishment Over Democracy and Rule of Law Concerns

Serbia is facing the possible suspension of up to €1.5 billion in EU funding, as the European Commission raises concerns over democratic backsliding, judicial reforms, and pressure on media and protesters.

Although a candidate country since 2014, Belgrade's progress toward EU membership is now under increased scrutiny, with a key legal opinion expected to influence the final decision. Tensions have grown amid criticism of President Aleksandar Vučić's government, ongoing protests, and Serbia's balancing act between Brussels and Moscow.

The coming weeks will be decisive in determining whether Serbia can realign with EU expectations and keep its membership ambitions on track.



Get to know

The Young of HDZ BiH

34 Years of the Young of HDZ BiH

Forming Leaders for a European Bosnia and Herzegovina

This year, the Young of HDZ BiH celebrates 34 years of empowering young Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Founded in 1992 as the youth wing of the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH), our organization has been shaping youth into responsible leaders grounded in freedom, democracy, national identity, and Christian values. HDZ BiH has always been committed to defending Croatian interests in Bosnia and Herzegovina, promoting democratic institutions, and supporting the country's European path, and the Young of HDZ BiH carries this mission forward by preparing the next generation of leaders.

We believe youth are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but they also actively shape society today. Many of today's young politicians began their journey within the Young of HDZ BiH, gaining the skills and knowledge to serve their communities, participate in national institutions, and contribute to European initiatives. Through close cooperation with the Young of HDZ Croatia, we exchange experiences and strengthen our shared commitment to youth leadership and European values.



Supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina's European path is central to our mission. Through YEPP and other European networks, our members exchange ideas, develop European perspectives, and strengthen cross-border cooperation—all while promoting the values that define our community. Our activities include workshops, debates, educational campaigns, and volunteer initiatives, combining civic engagement, political education, and international collaboration to prepare young Croats for leadership at all levels.

Celebrating 34 years is a moment to honor our founders, recognize achievements, and recommit to empowering youth, strengthening civic responsibility, and advancing Bosnia and Herzegovina's European integration. The Young of HDZ BiH remains a dynamic platform where values are upheld, leadership is formed, and the future is shaped by the courage and commitment of our youth.

By Ivana Penava,
International Secretary of the
Young of HDZ BiH



The YEPP Show

With MEP Arba Kokalari

Who writes the rules of the digital world? Over the past decade, the EU has set the pace, with flagship policies like GDPR, the Digital Services Act, the Digital Markets Act, and the AI Act. Now, a new chapter begins with the Digital Omnibus, aiming to simplify the rulebook while strengthening Europe's digital competitiveness.

In this episode of The YEPP Show, MEP Arba Kokalari, member of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, helps us understand the European Union's real potential to lead in the digital age — not only by setting the rules, but by driving innovation and shaping the future of the digital economy.

Watch the full episode of The YEPP Show and join the conversation on Europe's AI Development.

With Commissioner Jessika Roswall

Big achievement for the YEPP Show!

For the first time in the history of the podcast, we had the honour to interview a European Commissioner.

In this episode of The YEPP Show, we were joined by European Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, Jessika Roswall

From drought challenges in southern Europe to the need to scale up innovative solutions, we discussed issues that are truly central to our generation's future. Water, sustainability, and competitiveness are not abstract debates — they are real European challenges that require joint action.


How can we protect the environment while keeping European industry competitive? Join the conversation to learn how Europe is working to secure a resilient, thriving future for everyone.

Thank you, Commissioner Jessika Roswall, for sharing such an insightful and engaging episode.



Social Media Highlights

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Why is Europe the best environment for AI Development? - with MEP Arba Kokalari

The YEPP Show

10:36 -27:00

Who writes the rules of the digital world? Over the past decade, the EU has set the pace.

View all 69 comments

6 of March

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WOMEN LEADERSHIP POLITICS

YEPP CAMP


03-07 JUNE 2026
MADRID, SPAIN

YEPP is proud to announce the launch of the Women, Leadership, Politics Camp

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16 of March

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EVERYONE!

..., during the EPP 50th anniversary celebration, President @sophia.kircher interviewed (...)

73 comments

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