



Youth Vision for the Future of Europe



Policy Recommendations by
YOUNG AMBASSADORS ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE



Foreword

This publication was created within the framework of “Young Opinions on the Future of Europe”, a project run by European Youth Parliament (EYP)¹ with the support of the European Parliament. The “**Young Opinions on the Future of Europe**” project aims to amplify youth voices and opinions on the future of Europe, as well as to connect young European citizens by involving them in the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe. The forging of meaningful connection across different European nations and the discussion of political and social issues that the European youth, as a whole, find relevant are especially important aspects of this project, which will culminate in the planned Conference on the Future of Europe in 2022.

25 young people from 20 European countries between the age of 17 and 25 were selected to be Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe. The group of Ambassadors represents the EU’s diversity and includes young people with a migratory background, people belonging to minorities in their country as well as participants with various educational levels. It should be

noted that during the process the Ambassadors also observed that both they – and to a similar extent the respondents to the Youth Poll – displayed a greater-than-average likelihood of living in an urban area, a less-than-average likelihood of belonging to a racial or ethnic minority, and a far greater-than-average likelihood of identifying themselves as belonging to a minority sexual orientation, though some of this can also be explained by the age-group.

The Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe had already taken part in EYP events specifically related to the Future of Europe project, which took place across Europe in spring and summer 2021, where they discussed their ideas with hundreds of other young people in multi-day events². Amongst others, the ideas discussed within the framework of **EYP’s Power Shifts – Reflecting Europe’s energy** project events and the **Franco-German Youth Conference #Ensemble** form part of this paper. The group was moderated by Sophie Scannell, EYP alumnus and industrial mathematician. The Visions paper produced by young people was presented and discussed with multiple stakeholders and decision-makers of the European Union.

The Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe have summarised the opinions of more than 1.000 young Europeans into the following paper on the **Youth Visions on the Future of Europe** focusing on the following issues:

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¹ **The European Youth Parliament (EYP)** is a peer-to-peer educational program that brings together young people from across Europe to debate the pressing issues of our time. Gathering over 30.000 participants annually in over 500 events across Europe, the EYP’s activities promote international understanding, intercultural dialogue and diversity.

² **International Sessions of EYP** in Milan (IT), Warsaw (PL), Ljubljana (SI), International Forum in Thessaloniki (GR). National Sessions of EYP in Barcelona (ES), Larnaca (CY), Yerevan (AM), Cesis (LV), Cork (IE) and others.

Key facts



Results of the Youth Poll

With the **Youth Poll on the Future of Europe**, the European Youth Parliament aimed to get more insight and a better understanding of the youth expectations ahead of the **Conference on the Future of Europe** and, more importantly, the place of young people in the future in Europe. In the poll, young people could evaluate the relevance of important European topics for them, and share their stance on some of the proposals and ideas outlined in the poll. By the time of the review, 950 respondents had taken part in the Youth Poll with extensive contribution and input. Responses came from 41 different countries, represented Europeans aged between 14 and 35.

Promoting fundamental rights was one of the top two priorities for

28.7%

of the ~1,000 survey respondents, and was mentioned by 40 separate individuals as **“the one social or political issue that is the most important to [them]”**.

More than **70%**

of respondents agreed that declaring Europe an **“LGBTIQ+ freedom zone”** would improve living conditions in their communities.

“Strengthening the power of regions” was the number one priority from the options shown on the future of democracy in Europe, with nearly

70%

of first preferences.

When asked about the **“most important reasons [they see for feeling optimistic]”**, only

22 young Europeans

highlighted the inclusion of digitalisation and digital innovation in the future of Europe

Young Europeans answering the survey rated the role of the EU in world affairs at a

7.9/10

relevance to the future of Europe. However, the majority do not consider **“strengthening the EU’s role in world affairs”** a goal in itself but as a means to realising cross-border ambitions.

85.6%

of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that **“The EU should increase the budget dedicated to mental health research in Europe and make mental health a priority.”**

42.2%

More than **half of respondents** believe that **“generating a healthy and balanced workplace”** should be one of the top priorities for strengthening the economy of the EU.

of youth poll respondents believe that out of multiple ideas offered, reaching a **“unified position on global affairs”** should be the top priority to improve the EU’s role in world affairs, and lament its slow response to regional and global challenges as a result of Member States’ vetos in most matters of foreign affairs.

Vision for European Values, Fundamental Rights, and Freedom



37 separate respondents

mentioned Hungary and Poland as “the most important reason [they] see for feeling pessimistic about the future of Europe”, while 24 mentioned the rule of law as an important topic when answering free text questions.

Equality and privacy irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity was the most pressing social issue for nearly

10% of all respondents.

Mission Statement:

We believe the EU must go further to protect fundamental rights and EU values. We believe it necessary to enforce those values, because they contribute significantly to a free, fair, and democratic European society. These aims can only be reached by protecting a specific set of rights that are currently not fully protected, and by the Union taking a more active stance.

As Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe, we call upon the EU to:

1 Promote European values in and outside the Union, noting that a European identity can safeguard fundamental rights tied to those values; and increase civic involvement in European governance, for example with active use of the European Youth Portal.

2 Enhance the protection of democracy within the Member States through stronger and stricter control on the rule of law. Democracy and the rule of law are integral values of the EU that can be protected both by working within the current institutional framework and on the framework itself, such as by eliminating the unanimity needed in article 7(2) of the TEU.

3 Ensure a balance between press freedom and regulation by guaranteeing fair treatment for sources; introducing efficient fact-checking mechanisms; empowering journalists by allocating funding in the European Social Fund for legal protection against unjust charges and initiating a networking platform for young journalists.

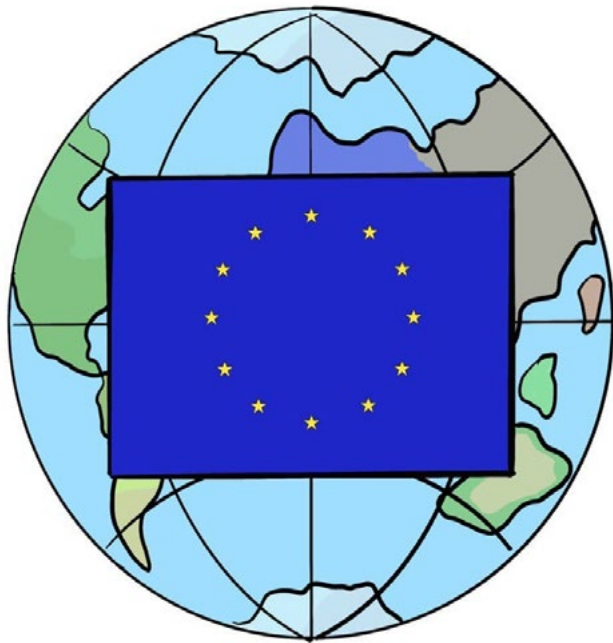
4 Uphold the freedom of choice, most notably concerning reproductive justice and personal bodily autonomy, and provide access to family planning services, including contraceptives, and financial and professional support for abortion services.

5 Ensure the right to privacy and family life regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Non-governmental organisations and advocacy groups must be enabled to make change in their communities and engage people to actively take part in fighting for equality, e.g. via both the LGBTQI+ Equality Strategy, and the Equal Treatment Directive. We also request that Member States guarantee suitable traineeships for police forces across Member States to counteract anti-LGBTQI+ hate crime and hate speech.

6 Protect refugees entering the Union by revising existing agreements and developing a distribution system between States to improve accommodation and support; funding the European Council on Refugees and Exiles to improve medical and accommodation standards; collaborating with the UNHCR and the JHA Council to establish a European Refugee and Asylum Seeker Database to facilitate family reunification and offering help, asylum and protection to political refugees escaping from Belarus.

7 Upholding the right to employment for people with disabilities in the EU, by providing training and awareness programmes to reduce discrimination, prejudice and bias, and ensure that every company policy is in line with the work of the European Disability Expertise, including the proposals above.

Vision for Europe's Role in World Affairs



Almost **80%**
of respondents

say a **more active EU stance on the violation of humanitarian and democratic principles** abroad is required to improve the EU's international position.

To achieve this, almost **half the participants**

think that the EU's diplomatic activities "**must have priority over Member States**", versus 17% who disagree.

Mission Statement:

We call upon European leaders to intensify cooperation between the EU and international partners to better address global challenges. In an ever-changing global order, the European Union must become a serious, autonomous, and independent actor on the world stage, capable of responding to rising challenges quickly and decisively. The EU must prioritise, advocate for, and champion human rights and the rule-based international order.³

As Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe, we call upon the EU to:

1 Use international cooperation to tackle global challenges. Young Europeans see European foreign policy as a means to an end. Therefore, European leaders must:

- strengthen the EU's role in the multilateral protection of international law and advocacy for a rules-based global order;
- live up to the EU's fundamental membership principles by removing political barriers to, and speeding up, the enlargement process;
- offer a distinctly European counterbalance to influences from foreign actors such as the USA, Russia, and China.

2 Offer an impactful and value-driven foreign policy. The EU must play its own, supranational role on the world stage, and:

- prioritise human rights in external relations;
- keep domestic policy consistent with the values propagated abroad;
- turn the areas of climate action, refugee protection, and the safeguarding of human rights, into red lines for negotiations on international agreements [see also: Vision for policy on fundamental rights, page 06].

3 Drive internal political and institutional reform, by urging European leaders to:

- identify foreign policy sub-areas where the unanimity-requirement may be dropped;
- identify alternative voting methods for the Foreign Affairs Council;
- streamline decision-making processes to reduce crisis response time.

4 Ensure strategic autonomy. Young Europeans fear that the EU relies too heavily on foreign actors. The EU should strengthen its strategic autonomy and invest more in its foreign affairs and security toolbox. To become a resilient and sovereign major power, the EU must:

- diminish security, energy supply, and economic dependency on (respectively) the USA, Russia, and China;
- reduce dependency on neighbouring countries in controlling the flows of refugees and migrants;
- intensify internal cooperation in these fields to find suitable and sustainable European replacements for the dependencies described above.

³ **The rules-based international order** here refers to the international system consisting of a set of rules and principles that encourage peaceful and cooperative behaviour among states, and is overseen by institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, and the World Bank.

Vision for Policy on Digitalisation and Digital Transformation of the EU



When asked about their fears,

9 young Europeans

spoke about their **fear of the impact of digitalisation on employment opportunities.**

Only

5 young Europeans

think that **the GDPR is a digital success of the EU**, though none included it in responses about failures.

Mission Statement:

We believe that the digital future of the European Union lies in digital literacy, safety and technological development, and putting citizens at the centre of the digitisation process. Building upon the Digital Services Act, we can achieve a digitally advanced and competitive Europe. We aim to implement a coherent, resource-efficient, and inclusive strategy that will further enhance safe, reliable, and accountable digital practices.

As Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe, we call upon the EU to:

1 Encourage a goal of universal digital access and literacy by 2030, as only 91% of European households had access to the internet in 2020.

2 Create an action plan for digital skills, particularly in early career employees, and provide incentives for the public and private sectors to reskill their employees, allowing for lifelong learning and professional development in order to adapt to technological advancements.

3 Encourage Member States to further invest in the development of national education systems befitting the digital age, and to ensure equal access to digital tools in all levels of education.

4 Require digital businesses and online service providers to provide a clear, brief, and prominently displayed summary of the user consent form that includes information on the collection, storage, and processing of data, as well as the consequences attached to data leaks or violations of terms and conditions, taking the “cookie law” (ePrivacy Directive) as an example.

5 Encourage the creation of an EU-wide eidentification and eSignature which can further digitalise the democratic processes. We aim for secure, trusted, and reliable national

e-governance, with minimal discrepancies between Member States.

6 Require artificial intelligence systems to be robust, transparent, accountable, and easily understandable. Nevertheless, constant risk assessment and mitigation shall be pursued in order to dynamically adapt measures taken to future developments in the field.

7 Ensure fair taxation and adherence to tax regulations by digital businesses, while providing comprehensive harmonisation and clear definitions of digital taxation law, which take into account the novel methods in which digital revenues are produced, especially the role that users play in creating value for digital firms.

8 Encourage tech solopreneurs and small and medium enterprises through incentive programmes, such as tax relief.

9 Further fund programmes such as Fiscalis 2020, in order to enable the development and operation of large trans-European IT systems, and encourage best practices by bringing together national tax administration professionals from across Europe to share their experience.

10 Introduce transaction taxes for cryptocurrency and NFT markets, as they allow for higher returns than traditional savings while lower-income groups are discouraged from partaking in them due to the required knowledge and their volatility.

Vision for Policy on Employment Opportunities and Conditions in Europe



More than a **half of respondents**

believe that **generating a healthy and balanced workplace** should be one of the top priorities for strengthening the economy of the EU.

1 in 5

of the young Europeans who responded to the survey think that **ensuring employment opportunities and fair conditions** is “extremely relevant” for the future of Europe.

Mission Statement:

We stand at a crossroads where digital transformation brings vast benefits but also makes tens of millions of Europeans fear their jobs will become obsolete. We envision a Europe where the EU places financial, social, and personal wellbeing of workers at the centre of its employment policies.

As Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe, we call upon the EU to:

1 Prioritise the social welfare and working conditions of all workers, taking into account regional differences across Europe.

Workers' rights should be protected by ensuring a living wage and meeting the minimum welfare requirements, regardless of the employment type (e.g. including gig workers). The EU should explore possible implementation of the Universal Basic Income (UBI) in Member States with stable welfare policies.

2 Tackle the impacts of digitalisation on employment.

With many young people entering a transforming job market, many of their concerns revolve around digitalisation, with the primary example being long working hours and overtime arrangements. The Working Time Directive should be revised and enforced with the focus on workers' mental and physical health. Additionally, financial assistance must be provided to all workers who require information or communication technology infrastructure to perform their job responsibilities.

3 Ensure that the younger generation is equipped to combat the skills shift.

School curricula should be modernised in accordance with the demands of the current job market. Additionally, topics surrounding employment and career paths should be taught from an early age through career guidance

sessions, funded internships, and extracurricular activities for the acquisition of skills outside of the academic setting.

4 Support upskilling and reskilling efforts through an extensive cooperation with the private sector.

From mapping already existing training opportunities across the EU to funding new courses, the EU should focus on the development of advanced technological and cognitive skills that suit the current skill shift in the job market. As many lower skilled workers were laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic, their upskilling should be prioritised to support their return to the job market.

5 Focus on creating equal opportunities for all workers, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or disability.

To achieve this, the emphasis should be placed on raising awareness about inequality in employment (e.g. the gender pay gap, lack of disability assistance) through educational campaigns and workshops, as well as transparent reporting of employee salaries and promotions to detect inequalities. As a further step, penalties should be imposed upon those employers who disregard the protection of disadvantaged groups and fail to comply with policies that combat inequality in workplaces.

Vision for Policy on Social Justice and Equality in Europe



50 %
of survey respondents

say that ensuring that people have **similar opportunities regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, (dis)ability or socio-economic background** is “extremely important”.

In the Youth Poll
there were roughly around

50 to 60

separate references to **women’s general rights** in open ended questions about important issues.

Mission Statement:

We envision a Europe in which everyone is equal. Education, women’s rights and LGBTQ+ rights are particularly important to us. Everyone across the EU should enjoy the same rights and liberties throughout. The Union should ensure that people have similar opportunities regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, (dis)ability or socio-economic background.

As Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe, we call upon the EU to:

1 Ensure equal educational opportunities and access across all member states. We seek to create a stable and uniform educational system throughout the EU. At-risk students should be supported by in-school counsellors. We invite the EU to invest in programs such as WiFi4EU in order to improve access to education.

2 Implement policies to allow women to be in charge of their own bodies. We recommend that Member States implement healthcare insurance schemes that subsidise abortions and create policies that allow women to access these services regardless of any other actors’ ethical beliefs. Sanitary and contraceptive products should be affordable and easily accessible to women across Europe.

3 Make LGBTIQ+ rights equal across all member states. We urge the EU to quickly implement the current LGBTQ equality strategy. Parental and marital rights recognized in one Member State should be recognised across all member states. All EU states should remove

sex markers from legal documents or provide a neutral option. The EU should punish Member States that breach EU laws regarding the discrimination of LGBTQ people.

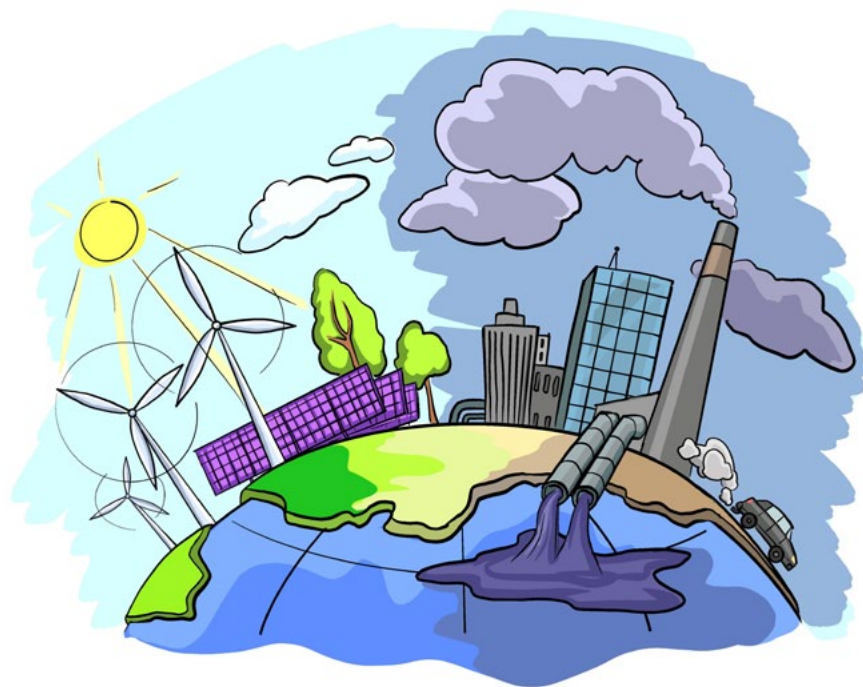
4 Combat economic inequality in all the different ways it appears. We recommend the creation of new aid schemes for specific economic areas of concern in Member States, that would proactively target at-risk households. We direct the EU to impose stricter taxing on capital income, multinational corporations, and cryptocurrency transactions.

5 Remove prejudices against and create opportunities for disabled people. We ask the EU to legally define disability based on the social model.⁴ There needs to be mandated training in public and private institutions to educate on bias, discrimination and disability-conscious hiring. We urge the EU to enforce legislation that would protect the rights of disabled workers.

6 Embrace its multicultural and ethnically diverse society. We recognise racism as an urgent issue to be tackled. A start to this would be combatting discrimination in school curricula. Other solutions need to be explored in order to boost the representation and inclusion of racial minorities.

⁴ Identifies barriers, attitudes, and ways of social inclusion (intentional or not) which make it difficult or impossible for a disabled person to attain their social functionalities.

Vision for Policy on Climate and Energy



Over **3/4** of all

youth poll participants agree that an obligation to “**quickly phase out coal at any cost**” should be included in the European Green Deal.

According to **a majority**

of youth poll responses, transport services within the EU **do not allow for sufficiently sustainable travel options.**

Mission Statement: We envision a sustainable future for Europe where planetary boundaries are respected; this can be achieved through a holistic approach where policies touching on all aspects of our lives are fully aligned with the goal of net-zero carbon emissions before 2050. We further insist on enshrining accountability, transparency, and equity as core pillars of the green transition.

As Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe, we call upon the EU to:

- 1 Transition energy systems to 100% renewable energy** by funding research into new technologies for energy production and storage and reducing greenhouse gas emissions; incentivising the use of renewable energy and the interim use of nuclear alternatives; and linking energy companies, research centers, and Member States, thus expanding Trans-European Networks.
- 2 Ensure that infrastructure and transportation systems align with a sustainable future**, by developing smart cities with smart grids, energy-efficient buildings, sustainable public transport and accessible and widely used electric vehicles; expanding Trans-European Networks for Energy and implementing the European Strategy for Low-Emission Mobility.
- 3 Support communities that are most affected by the climate crisis**, by financing mitigation, adaptation, and recovery from the impacts of climate change and supporting and reskilling workers whose jobs are affected by the green transition.
- 4 Address the global climate crisis through global action**, enshrining climate change as a priority in all components of European foreign policy, holding other countries accountable to climate goals by deploying a robust toolkit of incentives and sanctions and revising European migration policy to officially recognise and support climate refugees.

5 Fully align economic instruments with climate priorities to foster a green circular economy, by ending investments in fossil fuel infrastructure; reforming the Emissions Trading System; increasing the price of carbon, and working with companies to prevent deceptive practices related to their environmental record (“greenwashing”).

6 Fully incorporate agriculture and food systems into the European Green Deal, by reforming the Common Agricultural Policy, incentivising and regulating more environmentally-friendly food production methods, including changing the diet of livestock and offering cultured meat alternatives, and establishing stricter environmental standards for basic direct payments, such as requiring the use of diverse cover crops, in-farm fertility, multiple crop rotation, and reducing the use of nitrogen fertiliser.

7 Establish strong measures for environmental protection to safeguard biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of land, waters, and resources, expanding protected areas such as national parks and designated wilderness areas; encouraging research into alternatives to single-use plastics and funding schemes that encourage waste separation and reduction.

8 Reform European governance structures to provide a sound legal framework for addressing the ongoing climate crisis, with legal mechanisms to ensure funds disbursed through the European Green Deal conform to the UN SDGs and principles of equity, transparency, and accountability; and by taking on a greater role in the oversight of national climate plans, including greater ambition in legally binding targets.

Vision for Democracy in the EU and its Member States



Mission Statement:

We envision a Europe with more transparent, corruption-free, democratic systems that promotes media pluralism and literacy. We desire the digitalisation of democracy and a strong concept of the rule of law in European countries. We wish for a Europe where everyone's voice is heard regardless of their background, and human rights are respected.

As Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe, we call upon the EU to:

- 1 Research and develop alternative voting and civic engagement systems.**
- 2 Make state bodies more transparent and efficient** by creating active databases and platforms for their annual reports; conducting regular public opinion polling on government effectiveness; promoting press freedom (see also: Vision for policy on European values, fundamental rights, and freedom, p.5) and strengthening the role of non-governmental projects that raise awareness on democratic rights.
- 3 Further introduce democracy, politics, and active citizenship topics to the school curricula** in order to establish the general public as a more active and educated actor in the decision-making process.

4 Further maintaining the concept of the Rule of Law by supervising judicial appointment procedures and monitoring national governments encroaching on the independence of the judiciary, and eliminating the need for unanimity in order to determine a "serious or persistent breach of values".

5 Fight against corruption on all levels both in the public as well as the private sector, in order to enable democracy to reach its full potential, while focusing both on ethical and legal aspects.

6 Recognise the special circumstances during the COVID-19 crisis which have exacerbated democratic backsliding in some countries (e.g. Hungary and Poland), which saw the establishment of states of emergency and emphasise the importance of returning to ordinary legislative procedures after the crisis.

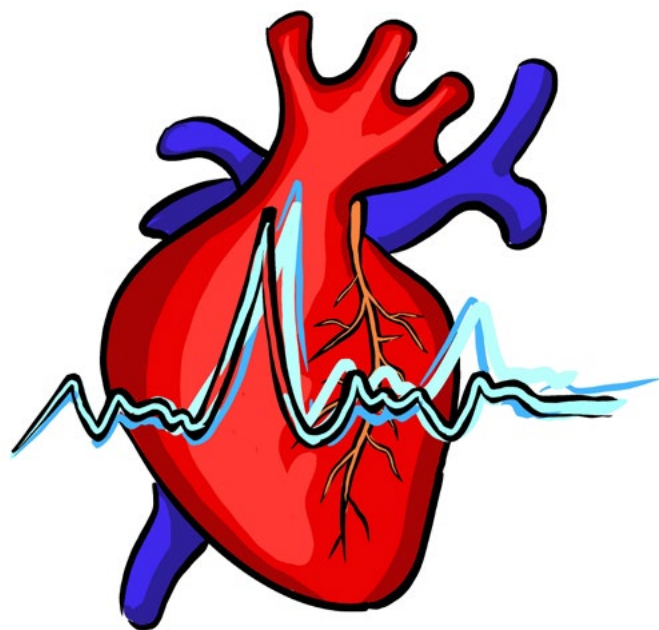
More than
83%
of all respondents

agree or strongly agree with the statement "the EU should intervene more in Member States to guarantee the basics of democracy".

More than
2 in 3

survey respondents think that European Parliament elections should become more European and less national

Vision for European Health Union



74,3 %
of survey respondents

believed the EU's initiative to build a European Health Union as a way to **"improve EU-level protection, prevention, preparedness and response against human health hazards"** would benefit EU citizens.

81,9 %
of poll respondents

supported the EU's joint vaccination deals, rather than each Member State negotiating their own individual deals.

Mission Statement: We strive for the creation of a European Health Union, in which every EU citizen has access to high quality healthcare, while each Member State aims to minimise disparities in healthcare systems. Through pan-European cooperation in disease and pandemic prevention, we aim to place Europe at the forefront of medical research, treatment and innovation.

As Young Ambassadors on the Future of Europe, we call upon the EU to:

- 1** Foster greater cooperation between Member States by working alongside the European Medical Association (EMA) to hold annual public health summits, **enhancing the exchange** of best-practices. With the goal of **modernisation and equal service access** for all citizens, Member States should produce annual development plans for public health systems.
- 2** Ensure the availability of **future emergency vaccines**, such as the COVID-19 vaccine, by removing EMA-approved vaccine patents and intellectual property licences to ensure faster and easier mass vaccine production in the case of future World Health Organisation (WHO)-declared pandemics, while offering economic incentives for research.
- 3** Prevent the spread of disinformation by utilising the EU Rapid Alert Scheme on social media platforms, ensuring future disease prevention and a healthy lifestyle for all citizens.
- 4** Bring **mental health** to the forefront of the Union's agenda and to promote it by:
 - a.** Encouraging Member States to include mental health in school curricula,
 - b.** Fighting for the deinstitutionalisation and social inclusion of people with mental disorders and people who have received mental healthcare,
 - c.** Creating policy guidelines and designating mental health specialists to foster safer environments in workplaces and educational facilities,
 - d.** Publicising accessible mental health solutions, such as mobile apps, online therapy sessions and considering the introduction of paid mental health leave at work.
- 5** **Address patient discrimination** by imposing strict penalties on discriminatory behaviour and offer education for medical professionals about implicit bias.
- 6** Prevent the rise of **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)** by promoting increased cooperation between the EMA and Member States to implement the WHO's Global Antibiotic Resistance Surveillance System. Funding for research into antimicrobial compounds and the spread of AMR should be increased, and misuse of antimicrobials in treatment and agriculture ended.
- 7** **Intensify the fight against cancer** by researching its disproportionate effect on minorities and its psychological effects on patients and relatives, while equalising the medical infrastructure differences across the EU through investment in healthcare systems and pan-European knowledge-sharing of developments in the field of oncology.
- 8** Further invest in the safe research and implementation of **technological innovations in the medical field**, such as genome editing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and machine learning by establishing quality controls for new AI technologies before they are widely used. A framework should be first established clarifying the party that should be held accountable in cases of AI malfunction during treatment. Data protection measures must also be reinforced in healthcare servers so that the anonymity of medical information is preserved.

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Sophienstraße 28/29
10178 Berlin
info@schwarzkopf-stiftung.de

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Aileen Dietrich & Carlotta Weiser
actu & tactu
www.actu-tactu.de

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