



MISSION EUROPA

THE EUROPEAN A MANIFESTO FOR
AGENDA FOR YOUTH THE FUTURE OF THE
EUROPEAN UNION

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MANIFESTO**

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PREAMBLE |

In this fast-changing world, we as young people recognize the importance of speaking out and expressing our thoughts and visions for the future we want to be part of. We will stand up for what we believe in and shape our future. We do not want to stand by and watch Europe and the world develop in ways we do not like. We will be actively involved.

Today, many people are afraid of losing their culture, their identity and their way of life. Some feel that European societies are drifting apart, and there is a growing sense of isolation. The European Union (EU) is threatened by decreasing support from its citizens due to various crises. This in turn has sparked the growth of populist ideas, euro-skepticism and a general drift towards more divergence across Europe.

But we are not scared by this development. Now, more than ever, it is important to talk about the future of Europe. Cases like the British referendum in favor of Brexit and the rise of euro skepticism have motivated us to take a more active stance. In one year we will have the European election, which may be the most important election the European Union has ever faced. We stand at the crossroads between a liberal, open-minded Europe and a Europe of separation and nationalism. We want to encourage the younger generation to vote and take their future into their hands. Therefore, we believe that now is the time to shape the future of Europe according to our ideals.

We are a young group of people from 15 different countries with different educational and cultural backgrounds, yet all of us are bound by the European spirit and care deeply about what is happening in Europe.

We are united because we feel so strongly. We believe in Europe, and we are willing to take action for it. We stand up for Europe.

All of us believe in a European identity that is built around a common history, shared cultures and values. We believe the European spirit to be about peace, solidarity, social protection, prosperity, equal opportunities and a sense of community, values which the European Union can and should promote. Furthermore, the European Union allows us to speak as a single voice and play a role on the world stage, to cooperate in addressing global challenges.

In this manifesto, we address five key topics, which we identify as crucial concerning the future of Europe. They include a lack of communication, support for the European Union, the digital transformation, regional disparities and institutional reforms. Although there are many more issues that could be discussed, we believe that working on these areas will help us achieve a genuinely democratic European Union. With this manifesto, we are proposing our vision of the future of Europe, because we are the future. In this sense, we are inventing Europe. And we want to be heard.

ENCOURAGING THE EUROPEAN UNION

PREAMBLE

The European Union is under threat from decreasing support stemming from various crises and the absence of a shared vision. Apart from necessary institutional reforms, it is crucial to keep stressing one of the European Union's core achievements: unity in diversity.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

One of the main problems of the European Union is the decreasing support for the European Union itself in many member states, both from citizens and national or local politicians.

Due to a lack of transparency, visibility and communication about the European Union and its politics:

- There isn't enough awareness for the values the European Union represents.
- The European Union is deficient in communicating its achievements, goals and values.
- The European Union and its history are not sufficiently integrated in national school curriculums.
- There is a lack of accountability, which in turn is strengthening the idea of "European technocrats". It is also partly due to national politicians who do not communicate European policies or connect them to their national or local issues. This makes citizens feel disconnected from the European Union's policies.

- The European Union lacks physical presence and therefore feels distant, especially in rural regions.
- European exchange programs are not sufficiently promoted.

VISION

We want a present, visible and inclusive European Union supported by a strong European identity throughout all member states so that European citizens acknowledge the European Union's importance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

We propose an annual European Week with the aim of gathering the momentum to raise awareness and strengthen a European identity around the date of May 9. May 9, already Europe Day, could become an EU-wide holiday. One of the key places to implement it would be in schools, but we believe it shouldn't just be limited to children and students, and instead must mobilize all of society. We propose to:

- Promote a European Week in schools, during which all school levels will discuss EU topics. For this purpose, provide easily accessible and comprehensible material to teachers, for example through an internet platform. This would include information about the Europe Week, and notably about the European Union. The intention is to make it as easy as possible to teach

in schools. In addition, European Commissioners, EU-Staff and Members of Parliament are encouraged to meet school pupils in person.

- Promote exchange programs and EU organizations during this week.
- Hold public events, discussions, and cultural events.
- Identify and label places and monuments that play an important role in the European Union's history and in a European identity.
- Make European symbols more visible, for example by cooperating with sports associations.

Second, we call for **increased local, physical and permanent presence of the European Union to make it more visible**. In that way, people will be able to identify with the European Union and sense that it is part of their lives. Furthermore, citizens will have easy access to information and can raise their concerns. To achieve this:

- The European Union should rejuvenate the already existing European Union direct offices e.g. through combining it with the European Voluntary Service (EVS).
- The European Union should expand the network of offices, especially into rural areas.
- It should hold regular public events and citizen dialogues with EU parliamentarians, and not only before elections.

Third, we **recommend a centralized exchange platform** to expand and intensify exchange programs and reach more people from different age, educational or professional backgrounds.

- Create a centralized, simple and accessible “one-stop-shop” platform for all exchange programs to collect information for opportunities to work/study/travel/volunteer in another EU country. This would be similar to the existing “Your Europe” page which could be improved with a clearer structure and better promotion. In particular, more emphasis should be put on exchanges for students in non-university curricula and for adults.

Lastly, **transparency needs to be increased** in order to counter the “scapegoat strategy” in which national representatives vote in one way on the European level and promote different things on a national level, blaming problems on Brussels without recognizing their responsibility or role in European policy.

- Better promote and make more accessible information on how each country votes in the European Council and Council of the European Union. These votes are already public and the information can already be accessed and downloaded, but it needs to be communicated more effectively to the media and the public.

DIGITAL TRANSFOR- MATION

PREAMBLE

The industry 4.0, alongside the automatization of production processes and the internet of things will have a long-lasting impact on our society, politics and economies, and will affect all of our lives.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Although digitalization facilitates our daily lives, our societies risk a surge in unemployment caused by automatization and people who lack the appropriate skills to work alongside the newest technological innovations.

Currently, the European Union is characterized by an imbalanced and insufficient infrastructure, due to:

- limited access to the internet,
- outdated and incompatible equipment and software
- bureaucratic and lengthy processes.

In addition, the education system in Europe relies on an outdated system in terms of content and equipment and unequal access in terms of entry requirements or scholar fees.

Furthermore, the tech industry in Europe is rather fragmented. Instead of working together and connecting with each other, the players in the tech-industry often compete amongst themselves.

VISION

We want a state-of-the-art educational system that provides relevant and accessible digital and soft skills alongside the current state curricula.

Europe will remain a beacon of data and cyber security by maintaining the highest security standards, but without compromising on digital progress.

We envision interconnected European smart cities, with jobs for everyone in this new digital economy.

Furthermore, the European Union will be a place for a united and collaborative European tech industry by sharing best practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS

WE CALL FOR A “DIGITAL BOLOGNA REFORM” FOR AN UPDATED EDUCATION SYSTEM:

- Adopt the Bologna Reform as a guiding example to update education systems in Europe, especially with a focus on digital and soft skills.
- The aim is to achieve a comparable European standard in digital education. The implementation and adaptation of the curricula in each country remain a responsibility of the state.

Invest in infrastructure, e.g. in (public) transportation means, education system, health system, administrative bodies, to counterbalance the current inequalities and establish well-functioning IT systems.

Engage in Public-Private-Partnerships to finance and implement diverse projects concerning the technical equipment of institutions, to foster the development of smart cities, invest in infrastructure or education projects.

With an increasing automatization of production processes, **rethink the current tax system and consider starting taxing robots instead of human labor.**

In order to be properly skilled for the new economy, we **recommend offering access and support to lifelong learning.** These educational programs may be offered by Federal Labor Agencies, schools or universities.

REGIONAL DISPARITIES

PREAMBLE

Cohesion is a core value for European solidarity, yet recent developments have signaled a drift towards more divergence. Yet, it is crucial for all citizens of the European Union to have equal opportunities.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

When it comes to an equal access to education, mobility, services and infrastructure, the European Union is divided in several ways:

- West-East and North-South in terms of economic opportunities, infrastructure, political power.
- North-South in particular in terms of employment.
- And urban-rural in terms of opportunities.

Deriving from all of this is also political division, while migrants streaming towards Europe's central countries and urban centers are causing further brain drain and reinforcing disparity and inequality.

VISION

We envision an equality of opportunities in all of Europe, hence a Europe where the place where you live or where you come from does not limit your prospects.

We further aim for an integrated European Union that will make everyone better off, not only certain countries, regions or sectors. Thus, an infrastructure that ensure a high quality of life in rural areas as well as in urban regions.

Institutional setup needs to include everyone and not create a two-tier Europe.

We need to realize and implement the infrastructure preconditions for a truly free movement within Europe, in particular between the West and East.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION OF A MANDATORY EUROPEAN CIVIL SERVICE WITH A DURATION OF AT LEAST 12 WEEKS:

- While serving our European society in their home country or abroad, young people will also strengthen their own professional outlook by accumulating knowledge, skills, orientation and networks for their own future during their time in the civil service scheme.
- As voluntary schemes are predominantly accessed by demographics that are already privileged, we recommend a mandatory civil service of at least 12 weeks that would involve all the different strata of the population, thereby benefitting in particular people from disadvantaged backgrounds and also fostering solidarity and cohesion in society.

Develop Smart Villages in addition to Smart Cities. Hence, create an inclusive digital agenda that emphasizes technology benefits for the countryside.

- The potential for digitalization is not only in the urban centers and digital hubs. It can also be used to improve quality of life and opportunities in rural areas as well, such as through e-health and smart, autonomous transport solutions to bridge infrastructure gaps

**FOCUS THE COHESION FUNDS MORE ON
CROSS-BORDER TRANSPORT
INFRASTRUCTURE:**

- Improve cross-border infrastructure, in particular along the former Iron Curtain that often still cuts the infrastructure links, making the people on its both sides feeling spatially, economically, personally and politically remote.

**USE THE EURO ACCESSION AND
STRUCTURAL REFORMS INSTRUMENT TO
FOSTER ECONOMIC CONVERGENCE AND
PROMOTE PROSPERITY.**

- Thereby ensuring stability, inclusiveness and resilience of the Eurozone architecture.
- Stepping up financial and technical assistance to support structural reforms in current and prospective Eurozone members.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

PREAMBLE

The European Union suffers from a strong disillusionment with the 'Brussels bubble' and wide criticism of a European democratic deficit that tend to dominate the debates on Europe. Institutional reforms are necessary to address this euro skepticism.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Today, there is a perception across Europe that some citizens never have their voices heard. Further, elections in the European Union are seen as not important and only of second order. This also correlates with campaigns which are fought fully on national issues. Currently, it often remains unclear who influences the decision-making process in the European Union and in what ways. This in turn raises concerns about democracy and accountability.

In addition, the European Union's budget is currently too dependent on the political whims of member states. We therefore wish to strengthen the European Union's financial independence by giving it more 'own resources' for example through the taxes proposed below.

VISION

We want the European Union to be:

- Democratic, so that citizens feel represented.
- Transparent, in terms of making information about decision-making processes publicly available.
- Effective, when it comes to a quick and efficient decision-making process.

- Inclusive, so that different interests and opinions are taken into consideration.
- Employ experts, who are highly knowledgeable in their field.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS

We endorse the **creation of a citizens' assembly as a forum for discussion amongst European Union citizens**, which will bring together 500 individuals closely reflecting the diversity of society in the European Union's:

- Each Citizens' Assembly will work for one week that will be convened on an issue-basis and that will result in a non-binding recommendation for the European Parliament.
- The Citizens Assembly will ensure a greater diversity than currently at the European Parliament and allow voices to enter the political process that are usually not heard.
- The selection of citizens will occur on an invitation basis by using demographic data and employers should allow them to participate (such as for army reservists).
- The European Parliament provides the infrastructure, including meeting rooms and a translation service.
- Citizens will be able to invite and hear experts of various backgrounds.

Concerning **a reform of the European Parliament**:

- We reaffirm the importance of creating transnational lists, initially for 46 seats left vacant after Brexit, as a first step towards

a transnational culture in the European Union's political system.

- Concerning the idea of Spitzenkandidaten, we believe that the leading figure of the European Commission should have strong and publicly comprehensive support from the European Parliament.
- We believe that the European Parliament should be granted the same right of initiative as the European Commission, therefore strengthening the democratic nature of the European Union's legislative process.

We furthermore advise **establishing a fully mandatory lobbying register to cover all European Union institutions** including the Council of the European Union.

With regards to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), we strongly support current proposals to increase the European Union's own resources by creating new taxes such as:

- digital tax (for big tech companies)
- plastics tax
- CO₂ border tax

A focus of the next MFF should be to strengthen the European Union's technical capacity.

LACK OF COMMUNI- CATION

PREAMBLE

The European Union faces a communication deficit with its citizens. In order to convince them, the European Union must improve its story-telling competence. We therefore believe the time has come for a new era of communication by the European Union, for the European Union, and within the European Union.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

At present, the European Union has had limited success in communicating its visions and policies to the wider public. For many citizens, the European Union is perceived as being boring, irrelevant and inaccessible. Most people do not understand what exactly the European Union's Commission does, cannot relate to the benefits of the European Union and rather tend to see it only as a cost, an administrative or problem factor. This has likely contributed to increased abstention in elections and euro skepticism.

VISION

We envision a communication strategy by the European Union that encourages a dialogue with its citizens instead of a monologue.

The communication needs to generate interest and be inclusive, while the European Union should strive to connect with the new generation's platforms of communication.

Overall, the aim should be to strengthen a sense of community and establish an emotional attachment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS

DEVELOP A NEW DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY:

- Upload a series of clips on social media, on topics such as "How life would be without the European Union".
- Commence cooperation with YouTubers to disseminate interviews, for example.
- Better use of social media by merging the activities into a single account for the European Union.
- Create a "Humans of Europe" Facebook account to tell relatable stories of European citizens.¹
- The social media campaign should be run by young people and rely on diverse social media channels, including Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook.

CREATE AN OUTREACH CAMPAIGN ON THE LOCAL LEVEL:

- Provide support for European Union orientated outreach organizations.
- Erlebnis Europa in Berlin is a huge success: reproduce it!
- More local town hall meetings in rural areas that are engaging and interactive and employ a horizontal organization. Furthermore, these local town hall meetings should be better promoted and more widely covered in the traditional and local press.
- Rejuvenate the European Union Direct Offices, for example through merging them with the European Voluntary Service offices, especially in rural regions.

- It should be mandatory for Erasmus students to make a presentation when they return from their semester abroad about their experience with Erasmus. They should also lead school activities about the EU to promote their experiences in schools.
- We recommend including EU studies in the national school curriculum. This can be mandatory if the states agree.

Make election campaigns more engaging:

- Campaigns should be based on simplified and impactful messages.
- Use understandable and comprehensible language in the election programs.
- Candidates need to present themselves properly to increase the citizens' awareness about them.
- Technocratic “Euro-speak” should be avoided.

¹ Similar to other “Humans of Facebook” accounts, anonymity can be provided to the story-tellers.



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