Stand up for democracy & speak up for Europe
Youth priorities for the next EU legislative term

SUMMARY REPORT
Youth Event · 6 March 2024
The 2024 YEYS edition marked a year of transition for the EESC’s youth event with a new target audience of young and first-time voters, aged 18 to 25 years old, from all EU members states, the nine candidate countries and the UK.

The YEYS 2024 hosted 107 participants from 36 countries, and managed to bring together 60 youth organisations, out of which only 9 were of a European scale or Brussels-based.

As the timing of YEYS coincided with the EESC’s first Civil Society Week (CSW) in March, the event was exceptionally integrated into the CSW. This timing allowed for the recommendations from YEYS to contribute to the Committee’s pre-election engagement, and the European Parliament’s go-to-vote campaign, while also offering insightful input to the EESC’s resolution on the EU elections.

The decision to change the target audience resulted in a remarkably positive shift in the event’s narrative and output as outlined in the annexed report. In terms of engagement, impact, metrics, outreach insights, the remodelling of YEYS has delivered measurable and quality results that could be further taken into consideration in the work of the EESC, particularly the implementation of the EU Youth test in the work of the Sections.

The 2024 approach created space for tangible policy proposals and offered room for youth engagement in a participatory manner.

In parallel with the new target audience, the event featured other significant changes, corresponding to:

- **Duration**: YEYS 2024 was a shorter event than past editions. As a result of holding the event during the Civil Society Week, YEYS was held over one day instead of 1.5 days and this shortening impacted all aspects of the event. This had an impact on networking, both with the participants and between the participants too. It also squeezed the time participants had at their disposal to work on their recommendations, and available for interaction and engagement. Nevertheless, the shorter event did offer some budget savings (accommodation, catering).

- **Methodology**: YEYS 2024 used tools of the participatory leadership methodology in its consultation sessions (workshops). This methodology transformed the dynamics of those sessions, moving from educational and pedagogical to an engaging and interactive nature. This gave a sense of freedom and ownership to the young adult participants over their work to come up with recommendations on the issues they care about. Many of the participants expressed their appreciation and surprise at the nature of YEYS compared to the traditionally organised events they are used to attending (speeches plus Q&A), which leaves very little room for engagement and involvement.
- **Agenda**: YEYS 2024 hosted no teachers or other side events which saved time and human resources from the organising team. A cultural activity was still offered in the broader context of the Civil Society Week.

Very few synergies and economies of scale were achieved from organising the YEYS 2024 during the Civil Society Week (CSW), however of no particular reference for the purposes of this note.

In the course of the organisation of YEYS, the Secretariat consulted its established youth outreach interinstitutional network, invited observers to attend and hosted information stands at the main event. With regards to the voter turnout campaign run by the European Parliament and in view of the EU elections, the YEYS team integrated promotional elements into the event’s social media campaign and used the toolkits available for youth mobilisation.
In the opening session, EESC Vice-President for Communication, Laurenţiu Aurel Plosceanu, emphasized the threat of disinformation to democracy, especially through social media and foreign interference. Alice Stollmeyer echoed this concern, stressing the need for collective action and compelling storytelling to
counter misinformation and boost voter engagement. Davide Ferrari, head of research and partner of EUmatrix, highlighted the challenge of filtering vast information and urged leveraging technology for credible sources. He emphasized the importance of active participation beyond voting to protect democracy.

Following the opening session, participants were involved in consultation sessions. Their goal was to flesh out recommendations on the issues selected by participants – by consensus – which encapsulate young people’s needs, expectations, and hopes for the next EU legislative term. The participants were guided by a team of facilitators, who made sure that their in-depth discussions remained impactful, collaborative and inclusive.

In the closing plenary EESC President Oliver Röpke remarked:

Today’s youth hold the key to Europe’s future. We must listen to their voices, and we must tackle their demands.

Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+, Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot, invited to address the plenary as a keynote speaker, highlighted that the Commission’s goal should be:

..to give young people a stronger voice in policy-making, not only at a EU level, but also at a Member State, and even regional and local level.

EESC Vice-President for Communication, Larențiu Aurel Plosceanu, commented:

Certainly, 2024 is a crucial year which, through the participatory and effective involvement of civil society, especially young people, will lead to a substantial change in policies at European level.

Founder and director at Defend Democracy, Alice Stollmeyer also said:

Each of us can make a difference. We are like the proverbial butterfly who just by flapping a wing can cause a storm. Each of us can inspire someone else to vote and to create a better world. So let’s just do it.

Davide Ferrari, the head of research and partner of EUmatrix, highlighted the fact that:

I know that young generations face a huge number of challenges but there are also many opportunities, especially thanks to new technologies.
eu elections

credible sources

active voter engagement participation

collective action
disinformation
The more than 100 young people from across the EU, candidate countries, and the UK who joined YEYS for vibrant youth consultations shared their expectations for the future of the EU and proposed 5 impactful recommendations:

01 Create a youth quota for the European Parliament elections.

02 Approve the directive for due diligence to make human rights and environmental considerations mandatory in supply chains and in companies for transparency.

03 Develop a legal framework for social media to mitigate polarisation and disinformation.

04 Develop a standardised common strategy on sexual and reproductive rights.

05 Special taxation guidelines for goods and services that are harmful to climate, e.g. luxury goods, and use the money to fund climate-friendly measures.

Participants presented their policy proposals, which were then voted for in order of priority. These proposals are the outcome of the event; they will be included in an EESC resolution on the upcoming EU elections and handed over to EU institutions and policymakers.
An EU Survey open to YEYS participants revealed results exceeding expectations. The survey indicated strong participant satisfaction and a high likelihood of future engagement. Some key highlights are further illustrated in the infographics above.

The EU survey was conducted from 10 until 25 March 2024.
Let’s hear from YEYS participants

Testimonials from participants illustrate the deep impact of the Your Europe Your Say (YEYS) event. From fostering European connections and experiencing unity across diverse backgrounds to gaining new perspectives and finding reassurance in the collective future, these testimonials offer a glimpse into the transformative power of YEYS.

I really felt this European connections between different countries’ representatives. We all spoke in English, common language for us all and we share common values I felt that unity, and it was exciting.

Mihail Nesteriuc
Moldova

Now I feel calm, because I feel like our future is in good hands.

Johanna Herlitz
Sweden

You meet so many new people with other backgrounds and new perspectives and that’s, I think, what makes this event also so enlightening in many aspects.

Michael Weilch
Austria

I thank all the organizers European Economic and Social Committee, speakers, and participants for their dedication and for making this day truly impactful event.

#YEYS2024

Maria Muñoz García
Spain
The YEYS social media accounts saw a notable increase of **930 new followers on Instagram** during the YEYS campaign and event preparation. This accomplishment is especially noteworthy considering the significant reach, impressions, and engagement achieved solely through organic posts, without the addition of any paid advertisement.
Instagram

- **Followers**: 10,562 +930 new
- **Interactions**: 2,150
- **Reach**: 18,400
- **Engagement Rate**: 2.274 - 0.63%
- **Impressions**: 73,237

- **Number Posts**: 123
- **Number Stories**: 89
- **Video Views**: 29,279
- **Story Views**: ±220

Facebook

- **Followers**: 6,467 +11 new
- **Interactions**: 55
- **Reach**: 2,900
- **Engagement Rate**: 265 - 0.17%
- **Impressions**: 2,721

X

- **Followers**: 1,714 +7 new
- **Interactions**: 23
- **Reach**: 41%
- **Engagement Rate**: 45 - 0.19%
- **Impressions**: 762

*The collaborative post with the @EU_civilsociety and @eesc_president was a success (198 interactions, 5 comments, 6,816 views)*
Given its integration into Civil Society Week, this year’s YEYS edition reached only 5 press mentions, a significant drop from approximately 40-50 from previous editions.
YEYS2024 in numbers

- **107** YEYS participants from **36 countries**
- **28** YEYS participants from National Youth Councils
- **44** YEYS participants from the Open Call (741 applications)

Number of YEYS participants per country:

- **107** YEYS participants:
  - **52** men
  - **53** women
  - **2** other

Number of YEYS participants per country:

- Male
- Female
- Other

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<th>Youth Organisations</th>
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<td>Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond - Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique</td>
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<td>The Polish Confederation Lewiatan</td>
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<td>Asociaciones de Trabajadores Autónomos</td>
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<td>Bosnian Chamber of Craftsmen</td>
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<td>Youth Work Ireland (Laois)</td>
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<td>Konfederácia odborových zväzov Slovenskej republiky</td>
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<td>L’Unione Italiana del Lavoro</td>
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<td>FFE Young Entrepreneurs network</td>
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<td>Fire Industry Association/UK</td>
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<td>Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging</td>
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<td>Gesa Mediación/Isabel Yglesias Youth Chapter CEOE</td>
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<td>Giovani Imprenditori Confindustria</td>
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<td>General Workers Union Malta</td>
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<td>Hungarian Farmers Association</td>
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<td>IFJ (International Federation of Journalists)</td>
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<td>Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations</td>
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<td>Secret Sound/Isabel Yglesias Youth Chapter CEOE</td>
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<td>Solidarnosc</td>
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<td>The Youth Council of Slovakia (RMS)</td>
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<td>United Nations Youth Delegate of Slovenia coordinated by the National Youth Council of Slovenia (MSS)</td>
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<td>Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>Spanish Trade Union CCOO</td>
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<td>Maltese Trade Union GWU</td>
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<td>Youth Health Organization International</td>
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<td>Udruga Zamisli</td>
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<td>World Organization of the Scout Movement</td>
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<td>European Sustainable Development Network</td>
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<td>European Youth Parliament</td>
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<td>European Youth Forum</td>
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<td>Generation Climate Europe</td>
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<td>JA Alumni Europe</td>
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<td>JAEUROPE.ORG</td>
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<td>Rural Youth Europe</td>
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<td>Young European Leadership</td>
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<td>International Center for Peace and Integration (ICPI)</td>
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<td>Austrian Youth Council</td>
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<td>British Youth Council</td>
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<td>French National Youth Council (CNAJEP)</td>
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<td>Croatian National Youth Council (Youth Network of Croatia)</td>
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<td>Youth Network of Montenegro</td>
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<td>Association of Youth Advisory Councils of Georgia (AYACG)</td>
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<td>Cyprus Youth Council</td>
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<td>Czech Council for Children and Youth</td>
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<td>National Youth Council of Ireland</td>
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<td>National Youth Council of Moldova</td>
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<td>Youth Council of Spain (CJE)</td>
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<td>National Youth Forum of Bulgaria</td>
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<td>Ukrainian Association of Students (NYCU Ukraine)</td>
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<td>Polish National Youth Council (PROM)</td>
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<td>Portuguese National Youth Council (CNI)</td>
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<td>Romanian National Youth Council (CTR)</td>
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What did YEYS participants post on their SoM?

Michael Nesteriuc is in Brussels.

10 March at 17:48

Honoured to represent Moldova at @youreurope in Brussels. Happy to be part of all those young Europeans who got together here to work on our common prosperous future.

#togetherstronger #eesc

Nuria Meerschaert • 2nd Student International Politics at KU Leuven

Yesterday I had the honour to join the Your Europe Your Say (YEYS) 2024 event at the European Economic and Social Committee. The YEYS 2024 was part of the Civil Society Week ‘Rise Up for Democracy’. This event was very inspiring and motivational as we had the opportunity to discuss with peers what themes are important for us (youth) and the ability to propose recommendations. The top 5 recommendations were presented to the president of the EESC: Mr. Oliver Röpke and the director of the European Commission’s DG for Youth, Education and Erasmus+: Ms. Sophia Eriksson Waterskow. My group’s recommendation was the introduction of youth quota for MEPs to combat the lack of youth representation in the European Parliament.

I am proud to say that our recommendation got the most votes and will be included in a policy document that will be proposed after the elections to the new parliament.

I am very grateful to have been selected to join this event and to gather more information that will be useful in my master thesis.

Riccardo Imperiosi is in Brussels.

8 March at 16:17

Your Europe Your Say: una meravigliosa esperienza al Comitato Economico e Sociale Europeo a Bruxelles, dove insieme a decine di altri giovani provenienti da tutta Europa abbiamo tentato di immaginare il futuro della popolazione europea su molti temi dirimenti.

Dai diritti ai salari, fino alle crescenti polarizzazioni, alla disinformazione, all’emergenza affetti e molti altri argomenti sono stati al centro di dibattiti e lavori di gruppo, che hanno portato all’elaborazione di cinque proposte chiave.

1. La creazione di una “quota giovani” alle elezioni europee
2. Approvazione di una direttiva che imponga a rendere obbligatoria la trasparenza nei diritti umani e nelle prerogative ambientali nelle aziende e nell’indotto.
3. Sviluppo di un quadro normativo che mitighe la polarizzazione e la disinformazione sui social media.
4. Sviluppo di una strategia standardizzata comune sui diritti sessuali e riproduttivi.

Nick Amozashvili

8 March at 20:48

On March 6, in Brussels (Belgium) I had the honor to participate as a Georgian delegate in the annual youth event organized by the European Economic and Social Committee (The European Economic and Social Committee), named Your Europe. Your Say! (YEYS).

After granting candidate status, our country was first included in the list of participating countries.

At the event, recommendations were prepared to tackle important challenges for European youngsters, which were presented to the European Economic and Social Affairs Committee for discussion.

I thank Association of Young Advisory Councils of Georgia (AYACG) for this opportunity!

Your Europe, Your Say
EESC - European Economic and Social Committee

Muhammet Polat • 3rd+
Student at Bogazici University

From engaging discussions to collaborative challenges, it’s been a platform for me to voice ideas and connect with others. I am grateful for the lasting impact on my perspective and aspirations.

#RiseUpForDemocracy

Like · Reply
What did YEYS participants post on their SoM?

Dear Mr. Milh,

We are delighted that you have been nominated to take part in Your Europe, Your Say! (YEYS) which will be hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels, on 8 March 2024 as part of the EESC’s Civil Society Week (4-7 March 2024).

We invite you to complete (as soon as possible) a registration form in order to register you for the event and arrange your travel and accommodation.

Maria Munio Garcia + 1h 4d • Edited •
Marketing specialist
Brussels

I had the opportunity to participate in Civil Society Week 2024. During the day I had the privilege of connecting and sharing with leaders and peers from across Europe innovative ideas and solutions to address the aspirations and needs of young people in the EU.

Thank you for this unique and unforgettable experience. I thank all the organizers European Economic and Social Committee speakers, and participants for their dedication and for making this day truly impactful event. YEYS2024

Mohammad Alkasem is at EESC - European Economic and Social Committee.

And here’s my contribution to the dialogue that took place inside EESC - European Economic and Social Committee on March 6th in Brussels!

- Having the experience within Your Europe, Your Say and being delegated by WatchDog.MD at the debates “@your europe Consiliul Național al Tinerețui din Moldova !”, during the event I tried to emphasize not only the aspects related to youth policies, but also the hybrid threats that we see in the Republic of Moldova, which of course also affect the youth.

- As a representative of the Republic of Moldova, one of the points I insisted on were these hybrid threats and polarization, these are obstacles that the Republic of Moldavia currently welcomes, in the context of the European course, but also in the context of an electoral period.

- chestiuni i had the opportunity to participate in the working group that proposed measures on these issues. After discussions with young participants from different parts of Europe, the proposal included several elements, such as:
  - Creating a legal framework that would mitigate misinformation and polarization
  - Reviewing the algorithms of social media platforms
  - Mobilizing social media moderators in a more tailored way that fulfills the needs

I hope this will be a step in continuing the conversation on polarization and disinformation that Moldova, the European nations, and even the entire world, is facing right now.

Aleksa Povjesic • 2nd - Comparative Law student at U of R University. Top 12% of iage... 4d • Edited •

Today, I attended a flagship youth event of the European Economic and Social Committee, YEYS in Brussels. Upon being selected by this influential EU institution among students from all EU 27 and candidate countries, we discussed topics that are pressing to young European voters, and proposed solutions to issues that our generation finds important. I engaged in open discussions with Alice Stockley, the founder of Democracy, and Charles Ferrari, the Head of research and partner of iEuropean. This event is significant as it provided the EU decision makers with feedback from its youngest voters in light of the upcoming elections for the European Parliament in June. Following an enriching debate and projects throughout the day, President Olivier Ropke’s closing remarks reminded us of the importance of active participation in democracy and the impact of young voters.

Incredibly grateful to Montenegro & Rotary Club for nominating me for this opportunity!
Annex

What did YEYS participants post on their SoM?

OLYA YURENTS is at EESC - European Economic and Social Committee.
14 March at 18:43 - Brussels

Eng summary below.

Last week integrated a bit into the European youth environment to identify the top problems of European countries of concern to the younger generation and to work out recommendations that will be further considered by the European Parliament and the Commission.

For the first time this year, delegates from candidate countries were invited to the annual conference EESC - European Economic and Social Committee organized by Your Europe, Your Say! So it is pleasing that Ukrainians have the opportunity to start real integration into the European environment that is somewhat different from our realities. Unfortunately, the war not only economically pushes the country away from Europe, but also mentally. First and foremost, because over the last 2 years, the needs of mankind have fallen, at least, a step in the Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The needs of Ukrainians are on 2 (safety). And until this ladder is completely overcome, we cannot move forward.

The top problems of Europeans are equality, tolerance, greater involvement of young people in work in EU institutions, women's reproductive rights (4 stair pyramid) and ecology. Top problem of Ukrainians - survival (1-2). Probably the only thing in common now in Ukraine and the EU is the fight against social disinformation of the networks.

I'm not denying that the climate crisis and social equality are the real problems. Yes they are real but sadly in a different world. Sorting garbage, responsibility of companies for pollution, and switching to green policy will only make sense when the real threat to the world stops destroying fields, soils, cities, polluting air, destroying forests... and throw humanity 10 years back into development.

The positive is that Ukraine is listening, for which we need to thank our diplomats, volunteers and everyone who continues to work on the international arena. Despite all the challenges, we are actively moving towards the EU, where we are sincerely welcomed (by the way, Europeans are more optimistic about the moment Ukraine joins the EU than I am).

And we have to continue to work, approach victory and move towards "higher" needs and problems.

P.S. Told everyone that the reason for the absence of elections is not a problem with our democracy, but rather the lack of the physical ability to hold them. So mission completed😊

Last week, I had the opportunity to integrate into the European youth community to address the top issues facing European countries and develop recommendations to be considered by European institutions. It was encouraging to see Ukrainian delegates participating in the annual conference YEYS organized by

ASTRA Network
13 March at 10:34 - QA

Developing a standardized common strategy on sexual and reproductive rights is one of the powerful 5 recommendations of the European youth!

This week, the EESC - European Economic and Social Committee hosted the annual Your Europe, Your Say! (YEYS) event, designed to unite young people from all EU Member States and candidate countries in discussions about the upcoming elections and the future of the EU. Over 100 youths actively engaged in lively consultations, expressing their aspirations for Europe and proposing a total of 15 impactful recommendations.

However, among these suggestions, only five recommendations emerged as the most urgent. Foremost among them is the imperative to establish a standardized common strategy on sexual and reproductive rights. This crucial initiative reflects a collective desire to ensure that everyone has access to the information and resources necessary to make informed choices about their health and well-being.

Their recommendations are not merely suggestions but a call to action — a call for a Europe that upholds the rights and dignity of all its citizens. The takeaways will be incorporated into an EESC resolution in July that will outline what civil society expects from the incoming leadership of the European Parliament and European Commission.

With anticipation, we await the next steps in this vital dialogue.

#YEYS2024
#SexualRights #ReproductiveRights #YouthMovement #YouthEU