

#YEYS2025



YOUR EUROPE

YOUR SAY !

PREPARATORY PACKAGE





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@youreuropeyoursay #YEYS2025

Dear YEYS attendee,

We are living in uncertain times, and this uncertainty is especially tough for those that are yet to build their paths – for you, **the European youth. Your future is in your hands**, and therefore **it should be up to you to shape it**.

As today's world is changing fast, with new technologies and pressing social, political and environmental challenges, **we need young people like you to engage and work together more than ever**. You most certainly represent the future, but you are also part of the present. **You can be active agents of change**, thanks to **your fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and sense of justice**. Your insights, shaped by different lived experiences, offer unique solutions to some of the biggest problems we face as societies.

Yet, despite your undeniable potential, it is not always easy for young people to have their voices heard. Barriers such as institutional constraints, generational biases, or systemic inequities often get in the way. With a long overdue, Europe is starting to realise that old ways will not create a better future. We have to break down the barriers **and create inclusive spaces where you can freely share ideas, collaborate with peers and mentors, and influence decisions that affect your lives** – both **now and in the future**.

Youth involvement is essential. We need your input on all kinds of topics, at all levels of decision-making, and far beyond the traditional "youth issues". **Policies and laws should work for, not against or regardless of our youth**. Your voices and opinions should be louder, your ideas need to be taken seriously, and you need the tools to make real change. **Without this, we cannot build a sustainable and wished-for future**.

That's what YEYS is all about – a space where young individuals are not only heard, but empowered. Here we invite you to engage in meaningful dialogue, to share your stories, and to collaborate across disciplines and generations. **This is your chance to celebrate your ideas and to make a difference**.

As Jacques Delors said, ***"How can we ever build Europe if young people do not see it as a collective project and a vision of their own future?"***.

This is your Europe, your project, and it should most certainly be your say!



Oliver Röpke, EESC President



1. About the EESC

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is an **EU advisory body** that works closely with the Council, the European Commission, and the European Parliament, helping to shape EU laws and policies. It brings together **representatives from all areas of [European organised civil society](#) [1]** – people like farmers, small and medium-sized business owners, environmentalists, youth leaders, trade union members, activists and more – from across the EU. **With 329 Members appointed from the 27 EU Member States, the EESC works to make sure everyone's voice is heard.**

The Members are organised by Groups at the EESC depending on their organisations and background: **Group one represents Employers; Group two represents Workers; and Group three represents Civil Society Organisations.**



Each member of each of these three Groups represents their communities in the work they do at the EESC and comes together to make the EU better for everyone.

The EESC actively hosts numerous annual initiatives and events dedicated to fostering civil society involvement and enhancing citizen engagement. These initiatives serve as platforms for dialogue, collaboration, and collective action. They bring together stakeholders from diverse sectors to address pressing societal issues, advocate for meaningful change, and promote participatory democracy at the European level.

You can also take a look at [our PowerPoint Presentations](#) about the EESC and its role in the EU!

On 15 February 2024 **the EESC officially launched its initiative to welcome civil society representatives from EU candidate countries.** A total of **131 'Enlargement Candidate Members' (ECM)** were selected to make up the pool of civil society experts who will be participating in the Committee's work, thus **making the EESC the first institution to actively open its doors to EU candidate countries.** The initiative set new standards for involving candidate countries in EU activities. The initiative has been very successful, with [ECMs participating in more than 10 EESC opinions](#). In 2025, 20 more EESC opinions are planned to include the active participation of Enlargement Candidate Members.

[1] A civil society organisation is an organisational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and citizens, EUR-Lex, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/civil-society-organisation.html>

2. Your Europe, Your Say!: Giving Youth a Voice

What to expect

Your Europe, Your Say! (YEYS) is the annual youth event organised by the EESC. **The primary goal of this event is to connect young people from all EU Member States, candidate countries and the UK with the European Union.** Since its first edition in 2010, selected participants have gathered in Brussels to engage in discussions and debates of topical themes of interest addressing their concerns. **Together, they formulate resolutions that reflect their ideas, proposals, and hopes for their future as European citizens.** These resolutions are then shared with EU institutions and highlighted at other European youth events.

The 2025 edition of YEYS, marking the **16th year of this event**, is addressed to **participants from secondary schools, national youth councils and youth organisations.** The selected delegates come from **all EU member states, candidate countries and the UK.** The selected secondary school students will be accompanied by one teacher. This diversity of participants creates a unique space for productive conversations, highlighting different points of view and making YEYS the platform for youth engagement and dialogue.



Outline of the #YEYS2025 event

#YEYS2025 will take place in **Brussels over the course of two days on Thursday 13 and Friday 14 March.**

On Thursday, day 1, participants will have the opportunity **to meet other YEYS-ers** and to lay the foundation for their **collective work** the following day, all under the **moderation of expert facilitators**. They will also be greeted by EESC representatives.

In the official **opening session** on Friday, **keynote speakers** will aim to inspire participants **on themes of civic engagement and creating a collective future.**



YEYS-ers will then work in groups to discuss the issues that matter to them, their vision for the future and their role in forging a Europe that reflects that vision.

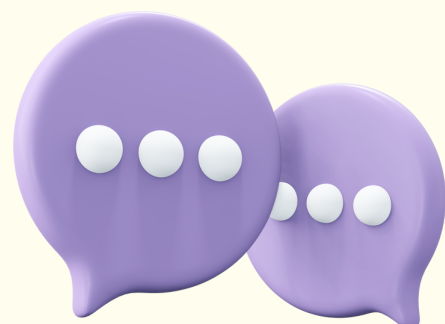
The aim is to exchange ideas and perspectives that **inspire fresh strategies for sparking dialogue and working together.**

This dedicated focus highlights how much the EESC values young people's contributions to shape their future and create impactful discussions that could lead to real solutions.

The objective of the second day is to **create recommendations on the issues that participants choose together.** These recommendations will **reflect the needs, hopes, and expectations of young people for the future of Europe.**

This part of the event gives YEYS-ers the chance to **dive into meaningful discussions** and explore **how they can help shape the Europe you envision.**

Topics could be on **any issue that is important to participants** such as, but not only, inclusion and diversity, migration, mental health, social media and disinformation, climate change, and education.



Format and style of YEYS 2025

During the morning and afternoon sessions of YEYS, on Friday, **a team of facilitators will guide participants, ensuring that their valuable ideas and suggestions are heard.**

Using **collaborative methods**, the aim is to reflect their concerns and aspirations, in proposals that could be reflected in the EESC's advisory and political work.



These collaborative methods are from a practice called participatory leadership or The Art of Hosting. The practice offers fun and effective ways to work together on serious or other issues and where **everyone feels empowered to contribute.**

The intention is for participants to leave YEYS with the confidence to make a difference in their community.

In the **closing plenary on Friday, YEYS-ers will present their five recommendations before voting on them to give them an order of priority.**

The voting system will simulate the EESC plenary sessions.



Outcome

In addition to **enriching the discussions and the output of the sessions of Civil Society Week**, **the EESC's Youth Group** will disseminate the YEYS recommendations so that they **can be considered potential input for the EESC's advisory and political work.** The EESC's Youth Group **will also explore how to integrate them in the opinions selected for the EU Youth Test at the EESC** and they will **also promote them at external events where possible.**

The YEYS 2025 recommendations will also be presented at the **European Youth Event (EYE) on 13-14 June 2025.** In collaboration with the EESC Youth Group, the YEYS team has developed **a two-hour workshop that will engage young participants (aged 16-30) in a simulation of the EU Youth Test.** This exercise will allow the workshop's registered participants to **assess and shape policies through dialogue and collaboration**, working in small groups to explore and propose various perspectives on the YEYS recommendations.

Curious? Here's what #YEYS2024 looked like...



“ —

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

Johanna Herlitz, Sweden



“ —

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



“ —

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 Welch, Austria



3. The Youth Group at the EESC

Meaningful youth participation is an important priority at the EESC. In September 2022, the EESC adopted the [EU Youth Test at the EESC](#), an initiative that aims to **include young European voices in the opinion-making process**. In July 2023, the EESC formed [a special group to work on youth engagement](#) (called the **EESC Youth Group**).

The Youth Group, consisting of 12 EESC members, who are working on:

- ✦ Creating opportunities for dialogue between EESC members and youth organisations.
- ✦ Coordinating the EESC's projects and partnerships with youth organisations.
- ✦ Strengthening the cooperation with external youth organisations.

Want to know more about EESC projects involving youth or get involved?

Besides Your Europe, Your Say!, keep an eye on the [Youth Test](#), [the Youth Climate and Sustainability Round Tables](#), and the [Youth Delegate to COP!](#)

The EESC cares about shaping youth-focused policies, adopting, for example, opinions on [Strengthening the EU Youth Dialogue](#), [EU-UK Youth Engagement](#), and [Youth Involvement in Social and Civil Dialogue in the Mediterranean Region](#).



**YOUTH
AT THE
EESC**



4. Civil Society Week

Following last year's successful debut, the second edition of the EESC's [Civil Society Week](#) will take place on **17-20 March**. **This flagship event will gather people of all ages and different backgrounds, including youth, journalists and EU institutions, for four days of exchanges, vibrant debates and consultations on topics that matter to our everyday life and Europe's future.** With **polarisation threatening the stability and unity of our communities**, deepening societal divisions and eroding trust in democratic institutions, **the aim of #CivSocWeek 2025 is to explore what civil society can do to to strengthen cohesion and participation in polarised societies.**

The **5 recommendations from Your Europe, Your Say! 2025** that the participants will develop the week before, **will feed into Civil Society Week, serving as a basis for youth-focused discussions.** Additionally **3 YEYS-ers**, selected in a draw in January, **will represent the participating schools, youth organisations, and National Youth Councils during Civil Society Week**, showcasing their work from YEYS.

#CivSocWeek 2025 brings together

[EESC Liaison Group Panels](#) – showcasing how organised civil society contributes to shape a European Union that meets citizens' expectations on crucial issues for our societies.



[The European Citizens' Initiative Day](#) – a high-level annual conference, providing a forum for registered and future ECI organisers and stakeholders to exchange information, experiences and present their ECI-related activities to the public.

[The Civil Society Prize award ceremony](#) – the prize rewards effective, innovative and creative initiatives; it is granted annually and this year's theme is combatting the harmful polarisation of European society.



5. Useful material

In this section, you will find **useful sources to help you familiarise yourself and navigate the EU landscape in preparation for YEYS**. You are invited to take the time to **consult the material before you travel to Brussels so that you are better prepared to contribute and collaborate with your peers**, some of whom may already have such experience.

Topical Digest

Your Europe, Your Say! 2025



European Parliament
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY
RESEARCH SERVICE

[This digest](#) presents a selection of relevant publications from the [European Parliamentary Research Service \(EPRS\)](#), which can help stimulate discussions at the event.



Youth policy dialogues: Young people's participation in EU policy-making

Briefing by Silvia Kotanidis, EPRS, November 2024

Involving young people could be considered an ethical requirement in any inclusive approach to the policy-making process. However, while young people are often the direct addressees of specific policy initiatives, their voices are little heard – whether at Member State or EU level. Over the past 5 or 6 years, the younger generations have been able to claim more attention from politicians, and from society at large, on matters close to their hearts. A case in point was the school climate strikes movement in 2018 and 2019. However, the impact of policies on younger generations cannot be perceived through the lens of adults alone. It is widely acknowledged that more attention needs to be given to the voices of young people themselves.



Children's participation in the democratic life of the EU

Briefing by Maria Margarita Mentzelopoulou, EPRS, March 2024

Present-day European children have been through a lot: a global pandemic, a global financial crisis and wars in the EU's neighbouring regions. In just a few years, once they become adults, they will have to face the consequences of the decisions taken today. Therefore whether these decisions have to do with the protection of the environment, public health policies or demography, governments should seek to ensure that children are sufficiently empowered to contribute to responsible choices for their generation's future. According to EU and international instruments, children have the right to be heard and to have a say in all decisions that may affect them and their well-being, whether in their home, community, school, or in legal and administrative matters.



Intergenerational dialogue: Addressing future challenges and consulting young people in the EU

Briefing by Tarja Laaninen, EPRS, December 2024

The European Union now has its first ever Commissioner dedicated to Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, Glenn Micallef. He has been specifically tasked by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen with preparing a 'strategy on intergenerational fairness' that takes fully into consideration the impact of today's decisions on future generations, and seeks feedback from all age groups. This briefing delves into the mechanisms already in place in the EU for listening to young people, and explores the incoming Commission's plans for further engaging young people in decision making processes. From now on, for example, every Commissioner must organise an annual youth policy dialogue dealing with his or her area of competence. Additionally, as of 2025, all new initiatives in the Commission's annual work programme that are of significant relevance for young people will undergo a specific 'youth check'.

Further reading



Ten issues to watch in 2025

In-depth analysis by Étienne Bassot, EPRS, January 2025

Learning for a greener and more sustainable future

Briefing by Krisztina Binder, EPRS, September 2023

Erasmus and green cities: Towards a European youth climate action corps?

Briefing by Tarja Laaninen, EPRS, September 2024

Protecting children in virtual worlds (the metaverse)

'At a glance' note by Maria Niestadt, EPRS, April 2024

Cyberbullying among young people: Laws and policies in selected Member States

Briefing by Colin Murphy, EPRS, June 2024

Young people and the news

'At a glance' note by Tarja Laaninen, EPRS, November 2024

Fact-checking compass: How to spot information manipulation

'At a glance' note by Naja Bentzen, EPRS, July 2024

Youth participation in European elections

Briefing by Micaela Del Monte, EPRS, December 2023

Young people in the EU: Democratic participation and attitudes towards the EU

Infographic by Ivana Katsarova, EPRS, December 2022

Citizenship education in national curricula

Briefing by Izabela Bacian and Marie-Astrid Huemer, EPRS, November 2023

Promoting learning mobility opportunities for all

'At a glance' note by Krisztina Binder, EPRS, December 2023

Fostering participation in education and training throughout life

Briefing by Krisztina Binder, EPRS, December 2024

Teachers: Key to achieving the European education area

Briefing by Krisztina Binder, EPRS, April 2024

Protecting EU shared values: How the European Parliament is responding to citizens' expectations

Briefing by Maria Díaz Crego and Rafał Mańko, EPRS, April 2022

Question time: Legacy of the 2022 European Year of Youth

'At a glance' note by Krisztina Binder, EPRS, April 2023





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Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



The Youth Partnership fosters synergies between the priorities and programmes pursued by the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the youth field. It provides an added value to their work and contributes to implementing:

- ✦ **The EU Youth Strategy**: engage, connect, empower and the legacy of the **European Year of Youth**;
- ✦ **The Council of Europe's Youth Strategy 2030**: revitalising pluralistic democracy, young people's access to rights, living together in peaceful and inclusive societies, youth work and **the Reykjavik Declaration** of **the 4th Summit of the Heads of State and Government**.

The Youth Partnership promotes the idea and practice of participatory youth policy based on knowledge and aims at enhancing a dialogue within the youth sector between youth policy makers, researchers and practitioners (youth NGOs and other youth work providers), at times called a “magic” or “golden triangle”.

Youth participation

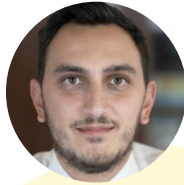
Youth participation in political, social and economic life is crucial for a healthy democracy. It has many diverse forms – it can be conventional or unconventional, including activities such as voting, being members of political parties, serving on a local youth council, engaging through a youth organisation, or taking part in online political activism, boycotts, or a protest movement.



The Youth Partnership research on youth participation aims to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomena linked to youth political participation by looking at a range of topics, including **shrinking space for civil society**, gender, digitalisation, new forms of participation, **participation in climate movements**,

EU Youth Dialogue, **impact of Covid-19 on youth spaces**, advancement of populist ideologies, increased inequalities, and a rise of global youth movements. Find out more here: **Participation - Youth Partnership (coe.int)** and check out the study on **new forms of political participation**.

Your voice matters!



“ —

It's a commitment that we have made to give [...] a greater role to younger generations in our Union, to be able to shape the Union in their own voice.

European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, Glenn Micallef



“ —

Our task as policymakers is not simply to listen to young people, but to elevate them and their voices to positions of equality and responsibility.

President of the EESC Youth Group, Katrīna Leitāne,

“ —

The main reason [why YEYS and youth participation, in general, is so important]: hearing the ideas of young people and doing something with them. It brings two worlds together, politics and youth – it makes them learn from each other and work together.

YEYS 2024 participant - President of the Dutch National Youth Council, Lotte Prins



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See you in Brussels!

