



European Economic
and Social Committee

**Your Europe,
Your Say!**

GIVING YOUTH A VOICE!

SUMMARY REPORT



The EESC's annual Youth Assembly concluded its 17th edition in March 2026



The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) held the 17th edition of Your Europe, Your Say! (YEYS) on 19 and 20 March 2026 in Brussels. The event brought together 100 young people aged 16–25 and nearly 40 accompanying teachers from EU Member States, candidate countries and the UK. The strength of the participation once again reaffirmed YEYS's role as the EESC's key initiative for engaging young people in European affairs and its functioning.

Over one and a half days, participants took part in interactive workshops, teambuilding activities and collaborative discussions, creating a dynamic youth assembly to foster **meaningful connections, active participation and democratic engagement**. The programme was designed to move participants from individual reflections to collective action, encouraging dialogue across different backgrounds, education systems, and levels of civic engagement.

An inspiring opening plenary, chaired by EESC Vice-President for Communication Marija Hanževački, set the tone for the event and featured motivational speeches by Carolin Hochstrat, Boris Gurzhy and EESC Youth Group member Miroslav Hajnoš. Building on this momentum, the day centred on workshops guided by experienced facilitators, ensuring dynamic, inclusive and empowering sessions in which participants identified key challenges facing young people and developed proposals to address them.

This resulted in participants co-creating 17 proposals, five of which were presented in the closing plenary to EESC President Boland, the European Commission and EESC Members.

The 17 proposals address issues that the YEYS 2026 participants want the upcoming EU Youth Strategy to reflect. Their expectations and vision for their European future, include:

- tackling the housing challenges affecting young people,
- improving media literacy and digital awareness,
- enhancing communication and understanding of the European Union,
- strengthening youth participation in decision-making.

The proposals reflect both the diversity of the participants and an ambition **to formulate actionable ideas that can feed into wider EESC reflections on youth engagement and will be channelled into the Committee's advisory work, for example, through implementing the EU Youth Test on selected EESC opinions**.

Alongside the youth assembly, accompanying **teachers followed a parallel programme exploring new ways to bring EU topics into the classroom** and support democratic participation at school level, reinforcing the event's



educational impact and outreach. For this parallel programme, **the Committee was partnered by 9 EU institutional initiatives, offering visibility and recognition to the event itself.**

In preparation for the event, **EESC members acting as national contact points and members of the Youth Group carried out school visits across all 27 EU Member States, the nine candidate countries and the United Kingdom.** These visits are considered an **essential and distinctive component of the YEYS initiative**, as they place EESC members directly in the role of **EU ambassadors to young people.**

By engaging with students and teachers in their national contexts, members strengthened connections with participants, enhanced understanding of the EESC's role and expectations, and significantly expanded the outreach of the initiative.

This direct engagement with young audiences represents a unique added value of YEYS, offering EESC a rare opportunity to connect with, listen to and engage young people in settings they are otherwise difficult to reach, and reinforcing the link between youth and EU-level policymaking.

Once again, **YEYS demonstrated the value of structured dialogue with young people and highlighted the Committee's role as a forum where youth voices are not only heard but translated into tangible contributions to democratic life.**



Séamus Boland
EESC President

"[...] we are actually trying to put in place institutional arrangements where young people can be represented. [...] my motto as a president is civil society is the heart of Europe, which means and includes young representatives"



Marija Hanževački
EESC Vice President for Communication

"[...] democracy does not live in institutions alone. It lives and thrives wherever people connect, participate and decide to care about an idea, or the future, together."



Boris Gurzhy
representative of Junior Enterprises Europe

"[...] it's on you to go the step up, to reach out and to participate in EU decision making processes [...]."



Carolin Hochstrat
co-founder of The Democratic Spin

"[...] backlash always means you are on the right track [...] When you feel the backlash and you feel scared, think about all the people you can actually represent with your voice."

YEYS in numbers

This year, YEYS brought together a diverse group of participants, including 37 secondary school students aged 16-18 years old with their teachers and 63 young adults aged 18-25 years old. Secondary schools were selected through an open call that attracted 515 applications. Similarly, young adults, individuals who were affiliated to a youth organisation or were motivated to be civically engaged, were selected from the 2,596 applications received through an open call.

85 YOUTH ORGANISATIONS
from across Europe

In total, **85 youth organisations** from across Europe were represented:

Country	Youth Organisation
Albania	Next Gen Advocate, New Life' Institute, State Authority for Geospatial Information (ASIG)
Austria	Rotaract Wien Belvedere, European Forum Alpbach IG Wien, European Youth Parliament Austria, UNICEF Austria Youth Advisory Board, Austrian National Union of Students
Belgium	CNCD-11.11.11, Student Council of RUN – European University, GoGlobal Ukraine, ADES Brussels
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Association of High School Students of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) – Superschools, Nansen Dialogue Centre, Spin NGO – Future4Youth, AIESEC Banja Luka, Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina
Croatia	SUPUES – Student Association for Promoting Energy Efficiency, Student Council Croatia
Czech Republic	ESN Czechia, BETA – Bringing Europeans Together Association Croatia
Denmark	Danish Debate Association
Estonia	National Foundation of Civil Society Communications
Finland	Scout Movement Finland, Student Union of the University of Eastern Finland
France	La Cimade, Union pour la Terre, SAME – Solidarity Action Day Movement in Europe, NGO Center for Youth Education, CRJ – Conseil Régional de la Jeunesse (Centre-Val de Loire)
Georgia	Association of Georgian Future Leaders, Georgia Labor Trade Union
Germany	IndustriALL, World Ocean Day Youth Advisory Council, IGBCE, GBYEN – German-Baltic Youth Exchange Network, Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum
Greece	EUNICE Alliance, Kalamata Youth Municipal Council
Hungary	Saint Bernard Scout Group, JUNO – voice for refugee women
Ireland	Youth Work Ireland, Student Council Ireland, OBESSU – Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions, Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Italy	Junior Enterprises Global, Confindustria, Municipal Youth Council
Latvia	Young Latvia Federalists (JEF Europe)
Lithuania	Lithuanian Students' Union, Open Youth Center
Luxembourg	Northern Europe for British Scouting Overseas, Scouting Trustee Boards for Luxembourg BSO
Malta	Swieqi Local Council, Generation for Change CY – ESC Project, ESDN Youth Network, National Youth Agency of Malta (Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ) – Young Reporters Programme
Moldova	Association of Francophone Lawyers of the Republic of Moldova, Interact Chisinau Club NGO
The Netherlands	COC Haaglanden, National Youth Institute
North Macedonia	Young Leaders Collective NGO
Poland	BETA Poland
Portugal	JEUNE – Young Entrepreneurs Organisation of the EU, ESN Minho

Country	Youth Organisation
Romania	Alacrity Education
Serbia	EUSAIR Youth Council
Slovakia	IKReON
Slovenia	ZLRO – Children’s Holiday and Recreation Association
Sweden	European Youth Parliament, YES-Europe
Türkiye	Educational Volunteers Foundation of Türkiye (TEGV), ESTIEM
Ukraine	A-Players BA, AP-Ukraine youth-led educational nonprofit, European Youth Parliament
United Kingdom	End Child Poverty, Dignity Period, IWill, Youthlink, World Wide Foundation, UK National Council , Youth Council UK, Pupil Council UK

Selected schools:

Country	Selected school
Albania	Vlora – Ali-Demi High School
Austria	Perg – Bundesoberstufen-realgymnasium Perg
Belgium	Brussels – Hellenique School of Brussels
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mostar – Gimnazija Mostar
Bulgaria	Ruse – Secondary school for European languages “St. Constantin-Cyril The Philosopher”
Croatia	Rijeka – Prva riječka hrvatska gimnazija
Cyprus	Nicosia – Latsia Lyceum
Czech Republic	Kladno – SZS and VOSZ Kladno
Denmark	Middelfart – Middelfart Gymnasium & HF
Estonia	Väike-Maarja – Väike-Maarja Gümnaasium
Finland	Iisalmi – Iisalmen lyseo (Iisalmi Upper Secondary School)
France	Tours – Lycée Descartes
Georgia	Tbilisi – Green School Dighomi
Germany	Düsseldorf – Goethe-Gymnasium Düsseldorf
Greece	Veria – 1 st Lyceum of Veria
Hungary	Budapest – Budai Ciszterci Szent Imre Gimnázium
Ireland	Rathfarnham – Coláiste Éanna
Italy	Arzano – I.I.S. Don Geremia Piscopo
Latvia	Ādaži – Ādažu vidusskola

Country	Selected school
Lithuania	Panevėžys – Panevėžio Juozo Balčikonio gimnazija
Luxembourg	Hamm – St George’s International School
Malta	Birgu – De La Salle Sixth Form
Moldova	Floresti – Theoretical Lyceum “Ion Creanga”
Montenegro	Podgorica – “Mirko Vešović” Secondary School of Economics
North Macedonia	Kochani – Ljupco Santov
Poland	Kraśnik – Zespół Szkół nr 2 w Kraśniku
Portugal	Lisbon – Escola Profissional Magestil
Romania	Bucharest – Gheorghe Asachi Technical College
Serbia	Vrnjačka Banja – Gimnazija Vrnjačka Banja
Slovakia	Bratislava – School of Applied Arts Josef Vydra
Slovenia	Kranj – Gimnazija Kranj
Spain	Cáceres – IES El Brocense
Sweden	Gothenburg – Klara Teoretiska Gymnasium Postgatan Gothenburg
Türkiye	İstanbul – Haydarpaşa Lisesi
Ukraine	Kyiv – Lyceum
United Kingdom	Greenock – Notre Dame High School
EU	Brussels – European School of Woluwe

The YEYS 2026 Proposals



The 17 proposals below are the result of an intense day and a half of dialogue, collaboration and exchange between young people from across Europe and members of the EESC.

The icebreakers that kicked off the event were intended to help the young participants get to know each other and start engaging more freely. This meant that the workshops that followed were immediately hands-on, with participants working together to explore shared concerns, challenge assumptions and turn lived experiences into concrete ideas.

As the proposals started to take shape, EESC members – including members from the EESC’s Youth Group - joined the discussions, listened to youth perspectives, shared their own insights and engaged in open exchanges on how EU policymaking works in practice.

In the closing plenary, **five proposals were presented to the EESC President and the European Commission and were discussed as a way to showcase the diversity of ideas developed and to allow participants to experience how debates and voting take place within the EESC.** The vote in the closing plenary was not intended to rank or filter proposals, but to give the young participants first-hand insight into the decision-making tools used by EESC members in their daily work.

All 17 proposals are equally valued and will be shared within the EESC and with EU institutions, contributing to ongoing reflections and future work on youth-related policies.

1. Go BIG or NO home

This proposal aims to address the youth housing crisis through affordable housing policies, fair renting rules and stronger community-based solutions.

2. Think before you click: make privacy sexy again

The aim of this proposal is to promote digital rights and data protection by raising awareness, regulating tech platforms, and helping young people take control of their online lives.

3. Nothing about us without us

The proposal is about guaranteeing meaningful youth participation in EU policymaking by ensuring young people are consulted, represented and listened to at every level.

4. Bring youth and start-ups to the center of attention

This proposal supports youth entrepreneurship and innovation by connecting start-ups to education, funding, mentoring, and EU-wide opportunities.

5. Most googled thing AFTER Brexit: What is the EU?

The proposal seeks to improve understanding of the EU by making its role, benefits and opportunities clearer, more visible and easier for young people to access.

6. Healthcare without borders

This proposal is about making healthcare more accessible and affordable across Europe through paid traineeships, digital health solutions, and stronger youth awareness of medical careers.

7. Maintaining the very foundation of democracy

This proposal is about strengthening democracy by empowering young people through civic education, volunteering, debate spaces and meaningful participation in decision-making.

8. T.R.U.S.T. Transparency, responsibility, unity, security, truth

This proposal is about rebuilding trust in institutions by improving transparency, accountability and communication, especially around digital governance and public decision-making.

9. From migration to integration

The aim of this proposal is to shift the focus from migration management to integration by investing in education, language learning, youth mentoring and inclusive local policies.

10. Your Money Your Choice!

This proposal is about boosting financial literacy and inclusion among young people so they can make informed decisions about saving, spending, and borrowing.

11. C.H.A.L.K. : Changing how all learners know

This proposal is about modernising education by prioritising critical thinking, practical skills, and teacher training to better prepare young people for fast-changing societies.



12. GenState Safety in the digital space

This proposal is about protecting young people online by strengthening EU digital safeguards, improving enforcement and involving youth in digital policy-making.

13. Addressing the climate crisis and its associated injustices

This proposal is about tackling the climate crisis through fair, youth-inclusive policies that link environmental action with social justice and intergenerational responsibility.

14. Transport to all for all

This proposal is about ensuring equal access to education, work and mobility by investing in affordable, safe and well-connected public transport across regions.

15. What is the point of an economic block if you can't be free

This proposal is about reducing social and regional inequalities by fighting discrimination, supporting marginalised communities and promoting inclusion at local level.

16. Brain in Storm

This proposal is about improving youth mental health by expanding access to care, reducing stigma and embedding mental health support in schools and workplaces.

17. Make EU fundings more accessible

This proposal is about simplifying EU funding systems so young people and small organisations can easily access opportunities without excessive bureaucracy.



Teachers at YEYS



“It was fun to meet engaged teachers from (almost) all over Europe. It was also rewarding to learn more about the EU and how to teach it more effectively. The visit to the House of European History was also inspiring (I would like to take students there on a visit!). The Swedish EESC member, Emma, was also very helpful and inspiring both for my student and for me.”

Teacher, quote from survey

In parallel to the youth workshops, 37 accompanying teachers took part in a dedicated programme focused on innovative ways to teach EU-related topics and foster active citizenship in schools.

Over two days, teachers engaged in practical exchanges and interactive learning aimed at strengthening EU education in the classroom. Following a visit to the House of European History and a networking exchange with members of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), participants took part in two complementary workshop formats.

A key highlight was the **EESC’s success in mobilising nine EU institutional initiatives, bringing them on board as partners of the Teachers’ Agenda.**

The first workshop, focused on EU learning resources, used a rotating small group format that enabled teachers to explore educational platforms, outreach programmes and teaching materials directly with representatives from EU institutions.

The second workshop, centered on participation and active citizenship, followed a similar interactive approach and introduced tools and opportunities designed to help teachers engage students beyond the classroom.

Together, the two formats offered a structured yet dynamic setting, providing educators with concrete inspiration, tools to apply back in the classroom, and practical takeaways on how to actively enhance civic engagement.

Hosts of the teachers’ programme

European Commission - The EU Learning Corner

Council of the European Union - DG Communication and Information - The Council’s ready-made and interactive materials about the EU

House of European History - HistoriCall

European Commission, DG EAC - Schools and Multilingualism- European School Education Platform, eTwinning and SELFIE for teachers

Eurostat - Statistics for teachers and students

European Commission, DG Grow - Your Europe - your practical guide for studying, living and travelling in the EU

European Commission, European Citizens’ Initiative

European Citizens’ Initiative - How to propose or support ideas for new EU rules and EU Democracy in Action toolkit for school

European Commission, Public Consultation & Feedback - Have a say on upcoming EU policies and on simplifying existing laws

European Commission, Citizens’ Engagement Platform - Join the debate and engage with citizens on issues that affect us all

“I really enjoyed the teachers’ program on both days, as I was able to pick up useful hints and tips for incorporating EU-related materials that can greatly help facilitate the academic programs back home.”

Teacher, quote from survey



What's next?



The European Economic and Social Committee recognises the essential role young people play in shaping Europe's future and is committed to ensuring that their voices contribute meaningfully to EU policymaking. The diversity of views, backgrounds and ideas expressed by the YEYS participants, including young people with and without formal links to youth organisations from across the EU, is considered a valuable input to the Committee's advisory work.

The policy proposals developed during YEYS reflect young people's priorities not only in the field of youth policy, but also on broader challenges facing the European Union, including peace, democracy, social cohesion, inclusion, housing, mental and emotional health, environmental sustainability and innovation.

Following YEYS, these seventeen proposals will serve as the youth contribution to a future EESC opinion on the next EU Youth Strategy, while they are channelled into relevant consultations and discussions feeding into the Strategy.



The Committee will also seek to link the proposals to upcoming EESC opinions, integrating the EU Youth Test, sharing them with relevant rapporteurs and, where appropriate, encouraging direct follow-up with the youth representatives who drafted them.

All proposals will be communicated to EU institutions, reinforcing the EESC's role as a bridge between organised civil society and EU decision-making.

In this context, President Boland underlined at the closing plenary that the proposals are not merely ideas on paper but reflect genuine concerns and thoughtful solutions for Europe's future.

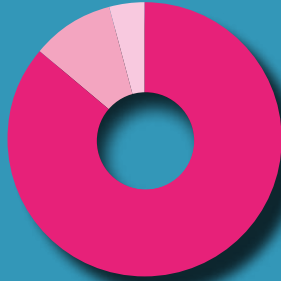
He reaffirmed the Committee's responsibility to ensure that these voices are heard, notably through tools such as the EU Youth Test, which aims to systematically assess the impact of EESC opinions on young people.

Emphasising participatory democracy, he encouraged participants to remain engaged at local and European levels, stressing that their involvement in YEYS is part of a wider movement of young people across Europe actively shaping policy and public debate.

Feedback survey: results

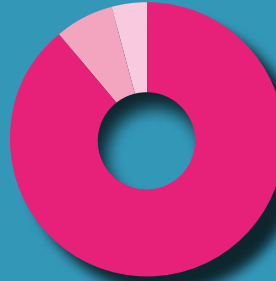
YOUTH

1. Were you happy with the overall organisation of the event?



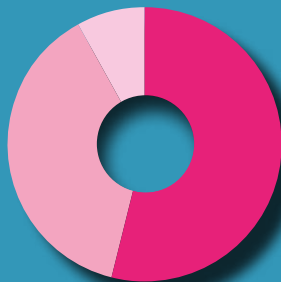
87%
Very satisfied and satisfied
10%
Neutral
4%
Unsatisfied

2. Did you find the event useful?



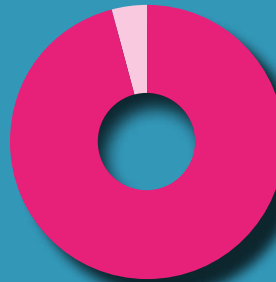
89%
Very useful and useful
7%
Neutral
4%
Unuseful

3. What do you think about the composition of this year's YEYS assembly, particularly the mix between high school students and young adults?



54%
Very successful and effective
38%
Quite successful and effective
8%
Not very successful or effective

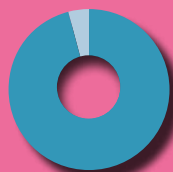
4. Will you recommend YEYS! to your friends, fellow students, colleagues, or others?



96%
YES
4%
NO

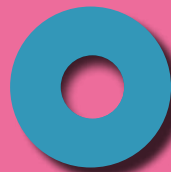
TEACHERS

1. How useful did you find the event?



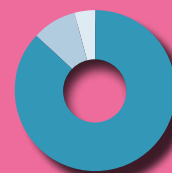
96%
Very useful and usefull
4%
Neutral

2. Did your perception about the EESC improve after this event?



100%
YES

3. How likely are you to use the learning resources introduced during the event in the school where you teach?



87%
Very likely + Likely
9%
Neutral
4%
Negative



Social media insights

The evolution of the YEYS Instagram social media account (@youreuropeyoursay) was noticeable, having a growth of 33,1%, 6628 new followers, in the period between September 2025 and March 2026. The promotional component of the event is completely organic, which indicates great results from also reach, impressions and interactions across the platform.

From 1 September until 26 March:



Total followers
20020
(+6628 new)



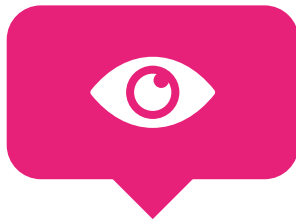
Number of content pieces
462



Interactions
4196
(increase of 89.18% compared to previous year)



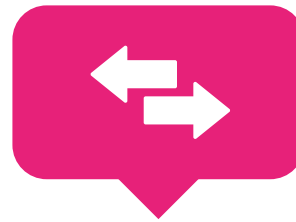
Average reach per media type
(Daily average post reach):
2640 (Reel)
1815 (Carousel)
361 (Video)
192.8 (Photo)



Views
440497
(increase of 20.0K compared to previous year)



Reach
52967
(increase of 50.8% compared to previous year)



Content interactions
8133
(increase of 18.8K compared to previous year)

Some of the most engaging posts

@youreuropeyoursay

Press and media coverage

7 Journalists from Romania (Radio Romania International/RRI), Slovenia (RTV Slovenija), Croatia (Radio Rijeka), Poland/Germany (Deutsche Welle), Latvia (youth-focused social media communication platforms), and France (Toute l'Europe) attended YEYS, where they covered the event and conducted interviews with participants as well as EESC members.

The event received **positive media attention, with 43 media coverage pieces on YEYS published in several European and candidate countries.** These press publications highlight the impact and outreach of the initiative.

School visits played an important role in engaging local communities and raising awareness. In addition, the April edition of EESC Info featured a dedicated focus on YEYS, including articles and interviews that showcased diverse perspectives and key moments from the event.

Home / Irish News / Education

'With technology, we're the pioneers' – Dublin student heads to Brussels to share visions and needs of younger generation

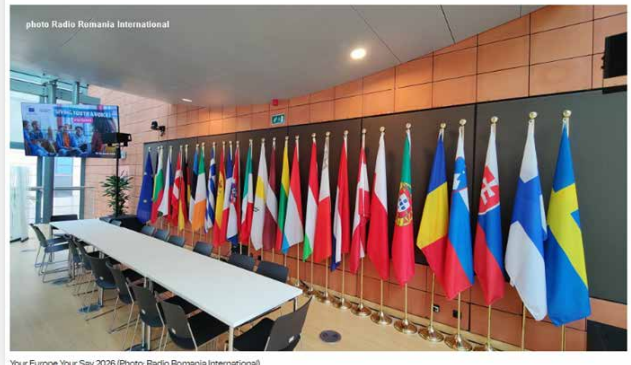


Students at the annual youth event Your Europe Your Say

Homepage - Close-Up - RRI Special - YEYS 2026: Voices of experts and teachers

YEYS 2026: Voices of experts and teachers

Many experts and teachers have voiced their ideas during discussions with the young participants.



Your Europe Your Say 2026 (Photo: Radio Romania International)

"Les jeunes doivent être au cœur de l'avenir de l'Europe" : comment le CESE veut renforcer l'engagement des moins de 25 ans

Publié le 26.03.2026
Léa Deselle à Bruxelles

Créer un PDF



Chaque année, le Comité économique et social européen convie des jeunes de l'ensemble des pays membres à réfléchir aux problématiques de l'Union européenne et aux solutions pour y faire face. Cette année, Toute l'Europe était sur place.

Viktoria Dovođa predstavnica hrvatskih srednjoškolaca u Bruxellesu

Ingrid Šestan Klčić
03. ožujak 2026 22:11



Početa stranica - Aktualnosti - Intervju sa Katarinom Romanov, profesorkom u gimnaziji Vrnjačka Banja o učešću na prestižnom evropskom događaju „Your Europe, Your Say! 2026“

Intervju sa Katarinom Romanov, profesorkom u gimnaziji Vrnjačka Banja o učešću na prestižnom evropskom događaju „Your Europe, Your Say! 2026“

Evropski ekonomski i socijalni komitet (EESK) organizovao je 19. i 20. marta u Briselu događaj „Your Europe Your Say! – YEYS“.

Tvoja Europa, tvoje mišljenje (YEYS) – posjet srednjoškolcima u Rijeci

09.03.2026 | [Novosti](#), [Novosti iz EGSO-a](#)

Evropski gospodarski i socijalni odbor (EGSO) i ove godine organizira događanje za mlade *Tvoja Europa, tvoje mišljenje* (YEYS). Ovogodišnja tema glasi: „**Sadržajne veze - Aktivno sudjelovanje - Demokratsko angažiranje**“. Uoči skupa, članica EGSO-a Lidija Pavić-Rogošić početkom ožujka posjetila je Prvu riječku hrvatsku gimnaziju kako bi učenike i nastavnike pripremila za sudjelovanje.

What did YEYS participants post on social media?

Alexis Catelein • 3rd+
European solidarity | Youth participation & internationalism...
3rd+ • Edited •

I had the pleasure of taking part in 'Your Europe, Your Say' at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels. Over two days of discussions, workshops and debates, we came together to share our concerns, from housing and the cost of living to media literacy, youth participation, and the role of AI in our democracies.

Beyond raising issues, we also worked on concrete proposals. These recommendations will now feed into the work of the Committee and contribute to shaping the next EU Youth Strategy. This shows that youth participation is not symbolic, it can have a real impact.

Participants came not only from EU Member States, but also from candidate countries such as Albania or Serbia. If we want a meaningful enlargement process, we need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with these countries.

Thank you to Sémias Boland to all the speakers, the organisers, and of course to all the participants for these enriching exchanges.

#YEYS2026
#EESC

Andra Krupa Ramsay • 3rd+
Student at Faculty of Economics of University of Zagreb...
3rd+ • Edited •

Last week, I had the opportunity to participate in #YEYS2026 at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels via Zoom.

Together with young representatives from EU Member States, candidate countries, and partner countries across the wider EEA region, we worked on shaping ideas that will contribute to the future EU Youth Strategy.

I was part of the team "go BIG or NO home", focusing on affordable housing, one of the most pressing challenges young people face today. Having the amazing opportunity to be a spokesperson, I also had the chance to present our proposal and deliver a message I strongly stand by.

"This is a moment for ambition, not hesitation. We either go big on housing solutions, or we fail the people who need them the most."

Over two intense and inspiring days, we turned discussions into concrete policy proposals - showing that youth participation is not symbolic, but impactful.

It was especially meaningful to share this experience and to exchange perspectives with peers from across Europe and beyond.

Experiences like YEYS reinforce one key idea: young people are not only the future - we are also the present, and our voices belong at the table where decisions are made.

#YEYS2026 #YouthParticipation #EuropeanUnion #Housing #PublicPolicy #FutureOfEurope

Celia Mazy • 3rd+
Student with advocacy experience seeking...
3rd+ • Edited •

I am honored to have participated in 'Your Europe, Your Say' 2026 at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels.

It was such a privilege to discuss and debate with inspiring young people from across Europe. Our proposals will feed directly into the EESC's advisory work and the next EU Youth Strategy. On top of that, it was a pleasure serving as a discussion host on migration. I thoroughly enjoyed facilitating our group's discussions and presenting them to the rest of the cohort.

Our top three priorities:

1. Go BIG or NO home - Focusing on housing affordability and local community safeguards.
2. Think before you click - Promoting media literacy and digital privacy.
3. Nothing about us without us - Enhancing engagement for underrepresented groups.

The event kicked off with a welcome address by Marija Hanzevacki (EESC Vice-President) and Peter B. (EESC representative). The opening plenary welcomed insights from Miroslav Hájnoš (EESC Youth Group), Caroline Hochstrat (The Democratic Spin), and Boris Gurzhy (Junior Enterprises Europe). We concluded with a powerful closing plenary alongside Sémias Boland (EESC President), Ingrid Belander-Todino (DG for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture), and Laure Niciot (EESC Youth Group).

Proposals for presentation at plenary:

1. Housing: Affordable housing for all
2. Digital Safety: Prioritizing media literacy and transparency in the age of AI
3. Democratic Inclusion: Creating real potential for young people to influence political and social life.

Dániel Benedek Szabó • 2nd
International Economics Student | Aspiring Thinker | Br...
2nd+ • Edited •

"Why did you say yes to YEYS?"

That question stayed with me. At 'Your Europe, Your Say 2026', we worked with the European Economic and Social Committee to develop policy recommendations for the EU's next Youth Strategy. With over 3000 applicants and only 137 selected, saying 'yes' didn't feel like a simple choice; it felt much more like a privilege to even be in the room.

Surrounded by inspiring speakers such as Caroline Hochstrat and Boris Gurzhy, and motivated participants ranging from future policymakers to former interns at the US Congress, we identified these issues the EU should focus on:

- Housing affordability and protection of local communities
- Improving digital literacy
- Strengthening youth participation in decision-making

I left the forum wondering: Participation is not only about willingness, it is also about access.

Grateful to EESC President Sémias Boland and the entire YEYS team for the opportunity to be one of the 137.

#YEYS2026 #FutureOfEurope #YouthParticipation

Photos: EESC

Katrina Leitāne • 3rd+
Standing strong for youth participation and youth emp...
3rd+ • Edited •

What does the next EU Youth Strategy look like? After two days of intense workshops and collaboration at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)'s flagship youth event, "Your Europe, Your Say" (YEYS) 2026, the answer is clear.

Gathering more than 100 young leaders from the EU, candidate countries, and the UK, the participants are calling for:

- 🏠 **Housing First.** A strategic focus on affordable student housing and protecting local communities.
- 🔒 **Digital Safety.** Prioritizing media literacy and transparency in the age of AI.
- 🗣️ **Democratic Inclusion.** Creating real potential for young people to influence political and social life.

On a personal note, I was also delighted to welcome the delegation from Latvia and see their energy contribute to these vital European discussions! Thank you also to the EESC YEYS team and volunteers! 🌟

#YEYS2026 #EUYouth #EESC #ActiveCitizenship #FutureOfEurope #Latvia

La semaine passée était organisée l'assemblée pendant deux jours et dans tous les pays de l'UE ainsi que des ateliers pour l'Europe et découvrir l'économie et sociale européenne.

À un an de la publication de la stratégie, on peut faire émerger de nouvelles idées et améliorer leur vie: en la crise du logement ou encore en aidant les jeunes dans toutes les décisions.

J'ai eu l'occasion de prendre la parole avec les membres de Sémias Belander-Todino (Chef de l'unité DG Education, Youth, Sport & Culture).

En tant que membre du groupe jeunesse du CESE et plus jeune membre du comité, il me tenait à cœur de témoigner de plusieurs points:

- La dimension collective de l'engagement, en particulier au sein des organisations de jeunesse, qui permet aussi d'être mieux équipée pour lutter contre le syndrome de l'imposteur (qui surgit parfois (souvent) quand on est le plus jeune dans la pièce).
- L'importance de ne pas se conformer à ce qu'on pense être attendus de gens qui influencent les politiques publiques: il y a déjà trop de personnes en costumes qui nous disent qu'on ne peut pas faire de ce monde un endroit meilleur, alors ne devenons pas comme eux aussi!
- Et enfin, qu'il faut pouvoir se reposer sur les alliés des jeunes à Bruxelles, dont le CESE fait partie: avec le Youth Test qui sert aujourd'hui de modèle à travers l'Europe et son groupe jeunesse entre autres initiatives, la maison de la société civile de l'UE garde les portes grandes ouvertes pour les voix des jeunes.

Un grand merci et bravo à l'équipe d'organisation du YEYS pour cette édition! Crisna Kokkini Julie D Aloia Dimitra Panagiotou Adela Burazan Parmlinder Mudhar

CNAJEP Les Jeunes Européens - France Mouvement Européen - France EESC Civil Society Organisations' Group European Economic and Social Committee.

Kings Grafia • 3rd+
Deputy Director General for European Affairs, Member...
3rd+ • Edited •

Dynamism, creativity, and a clear call for action - this is my main takeaway from #YEYS (Your Europe, Your Say), one of the European Economic and Social Committee's flagship events, which brought together around 100 young participants aged 16-25, along with about 40 educators.

Over two days, they formed a true youth assembly, debating, exchanging views and developing concrete policy proposals reflecting their expectations for the next #EUYouthStrategyEU. What stood out was not only the quality of their ideas, but also their determination to shape Europe's future in a meaningful way - because they truly care.

These proposals will not remain on paper, they will feed into a future #EESC opinion and contribute to our broader advisory work, including the implementation of the Youth Test.

Full of energy and curiosity, open hearts and minds - this is exactly what the EESC stands for. A heartfelt thank you to the young people and their teachers, as well as to the wonderful EESC communication team 🌟

#EESC Employers' Group

It was a pleasure to have these young people from the EESC Youth Group in the final plenary. They are bringing their own ideas to the table, which is particularly encouraging for me in the use of an absolute question and answer to meet their needs.

Equally getting the opportunity to ask a question in the closing plenary to Sémias Boland was an incredible experience. President Boland was very generous to give as much of his time as possible.

Grateful for the experience and for all the incredible people who made it so memorable.

hollmanfamily that done back
steeleyhollmanfamily that done back
steeleyhollmanfamily that done back

Vera Mendes • 3rd+
Driver of Youth Innovation | GGS Teacher Ambassador...
3rd+ • Edited •

#Energy, #Ideas, #Impact: #Voices that Will Shape #Europe

Just returned from #YEYS2026, organised by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), with my student Alexandro (Manager at Magestil Vocational School, Lisbon - Magensinus SA).

I leave with deep admiration for these young participants and their commitment to shaping Europe's future.

Their ability to reflect, exchange ideas, and develop concrete proposals is remarkable. I was particularly impressed by the students' final plenary - thoughtful, confident, and full of vision and determination which clearly demonstrated their drive to make a difference.

Experiences like this highlight the European Economic and Social Committee's vital role in empowering young people to contribute meaningfully to European policymaking and the #EUYouthStrategy.

A special highlight was the opportunity to reconnect with Gonçalo da Gama Lobo Xavier, an inspiring moment for Alexandro that will certainly stay with him.

#EESC #YouthVoice #Education #FutureOfEurope

with Gonçalo da Gama Lobo Xavier and 2 others

Miroslav Hájnoš • 2nd
EU youth and AI policy professional focused on data...
2nd+ • Edited •

YEYS 2026 was truly colourful. This event is not just another gathering. It is the flagship of the European Economic and Social Committee for the next generations: it is a real fact-finding trip for EU generations. And you can feel it in every discussion, every idea, every voice in the room.

I was very glad to be part of a panel with Boris Gurzhy and Caroline Hochstrat. Their thoughts were strong, inspiring and honest. After their interventions, I genuinely felt that we do not need to be afraid of the future. In my own intervention, I wanted to highlight that what we are building today stands on strong foundations. Already in 1991, through the SOC/206 opinion "Youth for Europe", the Committee was calling for more accessible mobility, informal education and stronger involvement of young people in shaping Europe. It was about exchanges, voluntary activities and making Europe something people experience, not just talk about. At the same time, the EESC clearly supported the importance of programmes like Erasmus and sent a strong signal to the European Commission that such initiatives matter. At a time when not all Member States were fully convinced about continuing and expanding these programmes, this support was crucial. Without this push, Erasmus might not exist in the form we know today, and we certainly would not be talking about more than 15 million students who have benefited from it. Thanks to EESC.

Fast forward to today, and in the recent SOC/842 opinion on Erasmus+, led by Nicoletta Merlo and Katrina Leitāne, we continue this effort. The EESC calls for stronger youth participation, dedicated funding for youth, more inclusive access especially for disadvantaged young people, and a clear role for policy development in empowering young Europeans.

And beyond Brussels, YEYS 2026 also brought me to Podgorica, where I had the great opportunity to discuss with students about their future in Europe. A special thank you to Novak Radulovic from Secondary School of Economics "Minko Vuković" for making this possible.

Finally, thank you to the entire team behind YEYS: Crisna Kokkini, Dimitra Panagiotou, Ana Magalhães and all. For more than 17 years, you have been building something exceptional and it shows in all its corners.

3 THINGS I WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME WHEN I WAS YOUNGER

NO MATTER HOW YOUNG YOU ARE

Paulo López Muñoz • 3rd • Sustainability & Energy | Consultancy & Project Manag...
 3w • Edited • 0

Your Europe, Your Say 2026

On March 19 and 20 I had the chance to participate in Your Europe Your Say 2026 (YEYS), an event for youth representation in the EU member and candidate countries at the European Economic and Social Committee (EEEC).

YEYS gathered more than 40 youth representatives like myself in order to shape the upcoming EU Youth Strategy for 2027. Our participation was divided into workshops and different tables for each topic. At first, our discussions shaped the issues that we wanted to focus on, while on the next day we had to create our own policy proposals and their pitch. Finally, 5 proposals were presented at a closing plenary, with the presence of Séamus Boland, President of EESC.

A tremendous luck to engage with other outstanding peers and I'm proud of our work in the tables for Climate Change and Energy, in the latter I co-hosted the discussions and the design of this and I want to thank all of the participants for their patience and, particularly to my co-host Dajana and the EESC member Marie Neelidamm for their great feedback and help.

It was truly inspirational and it has helped me develop some key ideas that come from a background where 'rigorosity' is key. I can't wait to be able to convey complex messages to all stakeholders in order to shape the agenda and influence policy. At the same time, it allowed me to have a clearer perspective on the kind of proactive role people should have in Sustainability and Climate Finance. In addition, I can make a valuable contribution to my Public Affairs and Career interests in Europe.

Electra Stamataki • 3rd • Undergraduate Student in Rural, Planning and Geoinfo...
 4w • Edited • 0

#yourEuropeyourSay

Grateful to have been part of #YEYS2026 – 'Your Europe, Your Say' at the European Economic and Social Committee, representing Greece.

Over these past days, I had the opportunity to collaborate with inspiring young people from across Europe, exchange ideas, and contribute to meaningful discussions on key challenges shaping our future – from Social Cohesion and Education to Mental Health and Digital Awareness.

Through workshops, brainstorming sessions, and debates, I not only expanded my perspective but also strengthened my belief in the power of youth voice in shaping European policies. Being part of such a diverse and motivated group reminded me that change starts with dialogue, cooperation, and Active Citizenship.

A big thank you to the organizers and everyone involved for creating such an impactful experience. This is definitely not the end – just the beginning of staying engaged, growing through Networking, and contributing to the #FutureOfEurope!



From Galicia, I have tried to share the perspective of the young people we are facing in my region. In order to multiply the impact, I should count on the additional support of Fundación Galicia Europa and the European Commission. I would like to know for this year's edition?

I want to thank my team at EKONE for their support and the European Commission for organizing this event. It was an honor to represent the voice of young people from Galicia and contribute to meaningful discussions about our common future. Giving youth a voice is not just a slogan – it's a responsibility. I strongly encourage young people across Europe to take part in initiatives like this and make their voices heard.

Olha Vashchuk • 3rd • Training & Partnerships Lead @ A-Players | Tutoring Futu...
 2w • Edited • 0

#yourEuropeyourSay2026

I am sitting in a class on international politics. Receiving a notification for a first glance, another post for a youth application. Came from a well, this can actually become my entry point to the two-day event #YEYS2026 at the European Economic and Social Committee. Indeed, it was.

March 2026. Here we go: two active, fulfilling, and very social days shaping priorities for the EU Youth Strategy 2027. Kudos to Andriia Kravchenko being the first person I've met there: <3

43 participants selected from 2300+ individual applications, 100 delegates overall, including high school students and teachers. Diverse cohort: candidates were from the EU Member States, countries, and the UK.

'First of all, I want to thank you for involving participants from all countries. I feel very included right now.' — Honestly, I want to give every comment at the plenary with this statement.

We, Ukrainians, being here, within European democratic institutions, as no one else, how societies mobilize resources, how initiatives emerge, and how innovation comes from urgency shared was 'Repair Together', an initiative to rebuild damaged Eastern regions of Ukraine under techno music vibes :D

At the end of the YEYS debates, I identified 5 key priorities: people: youth political engagement, affordable housing, reducing bureaucracy to launch a business, media literacy, and more.

I'm now looking forward to the EESC's upcoming conclusions and strategies.

Special thanks to our great speakers: Marija Hanzevacki, Boris Gurzhij, Carolin Hochstrat, Miroslav Hajnos, Séamus Boland, Ingrid Belander Todino, Larus Niclas. And overall, organizing team: you've run everything so smoothly, and it was a true pleasure to experience this event!

It's impossible to tag every participant, but please note: I admire your social activism, thought-provoking ideas, the ability to disagree, and the humanity you carry in your hearts. 🙌

Dear readers, firstly, thank you for reaching out. Secondly, let me know: How do you feel about politics today?

Foteini Katsampani • 3rd • MSc Special Education | MA Candidate in Democratic...
 4w • Edited • 0

#YEYS2026 at European Economic and Social Committee

Grateful to have participated in #YEYS2026 at European Economic and Social Committee, hosted by Séamus Boland.

Taking part in Your Europe, Your Say 2026 was an unforgettable experience. Full of ideas, dialogue, and inspiration.

It was an honour to represent the voice of young people from Greece and contribute to meaningful discussions about our common future. Giving youth a voice is not just a slogan – it's a responsibility. I strongly encourage young people across Europe to take part in initiatives like this and make their voices heard.



Le Minh Chau Trung • 3rd • Chair of the Dusseldorf Youth Council & Adviso...
 3w • Edited • 0

Shaping Europe together.

I represented #Germany at this year's youth dialogue of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

Through intensive debates, we developed concrete resolutions, ranging from housing and data protection to democratic participation. Most importantly, these outcomes do not remain on paper but directly feed into the work of the EESC.

#Democratic exchange is at the core of this process: bringing together diverse perspectives, challenging the status quo and finding common ground is essential to building sustainable and inclusive policies for Europe's future.

Ahead of the event, I hosted a discussion at my school with EESC member Christian Moos. We spoke about the importance of the EU for Germany, its future viability as well as key questions of European foreign policy. Many thanks to him for taking the time.

Also, it was an honour to meet the EESC President Séamus Boland.

Thank you to everyone involved for the inspiring exchange in Brussels and the many new perspectives via - Your Europe, Your Say!

Viktoria Simakova, BSc MSc • 3rd • Fashion Tech Founder - Turning Ideas into Impact - AI & Soft...
 3w • Edited • 0

#YEYS2026

"Policy is too far away from me." That thought. That's exactly what keeps it that way.

You would expect EU policy discussions to feel formal. They don't.

They start messy.

~100 young people, chaotic brainstorming and way too many opinions in one room.

2 days that were fast, sometimes contradictory... and exactly what they needed to be.

Idea were thrown around, challenged, regrouped until 17 actual topics emerged.

We questioned everything. Cut ideas down. Made them sharper. Until I made it to the final stage.

And suddenly, those messy conversations turned into official EU decision-makers actually listening.

And it didn't end with applause.

3 of these topics were voted as priorities and are now being turned into official EU advisory reports feeding into the next Youth Strategy.

Housing
Digital Awareness
Youth Involvement

Not every idea makes it out of the room. These did.

And that's the part most people don't see: Those "just youth discussions" — turn into real input — that shapes actual policy.

Policy feels like this distant, complicated thing. Until you sit in the room where it starts.

And maybe next time... you will.

Le Minh Chau Trung • 3rd • Chair of the Dusseldorf Youth Council & Adviso...
 3w • Edited • 0

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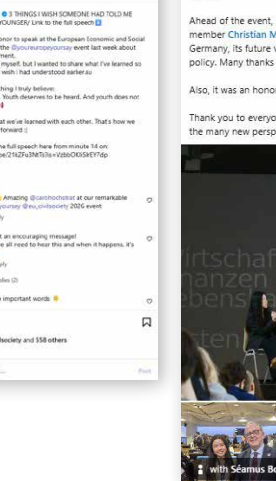
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with Séamus Boland and 1 other

with Séamus Boland and 1 other

Séamus Boland • 2nd • President of the European Economic and Social Commi...
 3w • Edited • 0

It was a pleasure to join the closing plenary of Your Europe, Your Say! 2026, a flagship initiative of the European Economic and Social Committee that brings young people from across Europe into the heart of the democratic conversation.

For 17 years, #YEYS has offered a unique platform for young Europeans to exchange ideas, debate key challenges and contribute their proposals for Europe's future. This year, nearly 100 young participants and 40 teachers engaged in discussions on democracy, social cohesion, climate challenges and the future of our societies. One message came through particularly clearly: access to affordable housing is the top priority for young people across Europe.

Youth participation is a clear priority of my mandate. At the EESC, we strongly believe that young people must play a central role in shaping Europe's future.

I was particularly encouraged by the energy, creativity and seriousness with which participants approached these discussions. Their recommendations do not remain within the walls of the Committee, I will personally present them to Gianni Michalek, European Commissioner for Intergenerational Inequality, Youth, Culture and Sport, at our April plenary session.

A special thank you to the teachers and educators from 37 schools across Europe who support and inspire young people to engage in democratic life. The future of Europe depends on active, informed and empowered young citizens - and initiatives like Your Europe, Your Say! help make that future possible.

Nicola Rytelawska • 3rd • High School Student (3rd year) | Dancer | Discipline + C...
 4w • Edited • 0

#yourEuropeyourSay2026

Out of 3,111 applications, I was one of the 137 participants that were selected to join Your Europe, Your Say! (#YEYS2026) representing Polish youth with my accompanying teacher at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels, a place where we could express our worries about the future and try to come up with ideas to solve important issues.

Being probably the youngest participant there and having the chance to ask questions and talk to the president of EESC Séamus Boland, Carolin Hochstrat, Laure Niclot, Ingrid Belander Todino, Marija Hanzevacki was one of the most inspiring things that I experienced during the event, and I'm most certainly grateful for that.

Talking with them reminded me that change starts now and we don't have to wait for the perfect opportunity to get our voices out there.

It also has been my pleasure to work and collaborate with so many inspiring, open minded and passionate people not only from European countries but also individuals representing Bosnia and Herzegovina or Macedonia will be extremely memorable.

For two days, we debated on topics like education, health, immigration, civic engagement through workshops and brainstorming sessions as contributors not observers.

YEYS not only challenged my own perspectives but also helped me with strengthening my own beliefs in various topics, improving public speaking and social skills.

Finally, I wanted to thank the organizers and everyone involved in creating such an impactful experience. It's our job to contribute to the #FutureOfEurope, so stay engaged but also grow as a person!



İlkin Kaçmaz • 3rd • Chemistry Student @ Boğaziçi | Corporate Relations C...
 3w • Edited • 0

Out of more than 3000 applications, I'm really happy to share that I had the chance to represent Türkiye in Your Europe, Your Say! at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels!

On 19-20 March, I was surrounded by more than 100 young people from all across Europe (and beyond), which already made the experience special on its own. We didn't just sit and listen, we actually worked in groups, discussed, disagreed, and tried to come up with real ideas that could feed into future EU youth policies. Over the two days, we dived into more than 15 current topics, identifying key challenges, developing solutions, and turning them into concrete proposals together.

One thing I'll definitely take away is how different perspectives can completely change the way you think about an issue. Topics like participation, inclusion, democracy, mental health and sustainability weren't just "topics"; they were things people actually cared about and experienced differently.

It really felt like being part of something real using our voices and contributing to real change, not just another event. I look forward to participating in this experience and staying engaged in shaping conversations that actually matter!

Xhesilda Zeqiri • 3rd • Justice
 3w • Edited • 0

#YEYS2026

Grateful to have participated in #YEYS2026 at the European Economic and Social Committee, hosted by Séamus Boland.

Taking part in Your Europe, Your Say! 2026 was truly an inspiring and unforgettable experience filled with meaningful conversations, perspectives, and powerful ideas.

I am proud to have represented Albania and to have shared my young people in discussions about our common European future. Giving youth a voice is not just a phrase it's a responsibility I encourage every young person to take part in initiatives and be part of shaping the future we want to see.

European Commission
#CareerGrowth
#ProfessionalDevelopment
#Brussels



with Séamus Boland and 1 other

with Séamus Boland and 1 other



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and Social Committee**

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#YEYS2026

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