

#YEYS23



YOUR EUROPE

YOUR SAY !

© shutterstock



SUMMARY REPORT

YOUTH EVENT • 23 - 24 March 2023



European Economic
and Social Committee



@youreuropeyoursay



@youreurope



@youreurope

#YEYS2023

Annual Youth Event of the EESC

23 – 24 March 2023

Students from every corner of Europe took part in the 2023 youth summit on active citizenship and participatory democracy organised by the European Economic and Social Committee.

During a two-day event in Brussels, students took part in workshops where they listened, learned and discussed participatory democracy with the aim of drawing up and presenting their recommendations on building communities of sustainable democracy.

Scan to view more here:



Prelude

EESC members, acting as national contact points, **visited the 35 participating schools** from January to March to share information on the role and function of the EESC and get the ball rolling on the Youth Democracy Dialogues.

The visits made a great impact in introducing the students and teachers to the EESC in their native language, giving them an insight into what was expected from the young participants during the event and answering their questions.

When time or circumstances didn't allow, visits took place remotely, as was the case for Türkiye, Ukraine, Finland and Croatia.

Some photo memories of the visits:



Blog

This year's **Your Europe Your Say!** (YEYS) event entitled **"Youth Democracy Dialogues"**, saw the participation of **105 students from 35 schools** (from the 27 EU Member States, the seven EU candidate countries and one of the European schools based in Brussels). The **event was designed to ignite debate, negotiations and discussions between the participants. The YEYS-ers – young citizens – learned the power of finding consensus with their peers on the ways to engage young people in democratic processes and to foster youth activism in different forms.**

This was the first time the EESC event hosted students and teachers from schools in **Ukraine and Moldova**. Delegations from both schools actively engaged with the dynamic students from the other schools.

Following a warm and welcoming opening address on Thursday, students took part in an icebreaker exercise, giving them an opportunity to meet, mingle and share a laugh with their fellow delegates from other countries.

Facilitated by the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS), the workshops on the second day gave students an opportunity to share knowledge, ideas, and work together to draw up recommendations. The first workshop kicked off proceedings by asking students to imagine a dystopian EU and the disruptive impact on the European Parliament elections in 2024, and concluded with the groups brainstorming on democratic solutions to counteract this dark vision.

The afternoon workshop simulated the European Citizens Initiative (ECI) for the groups to learn how to launch an initiative and set the pace to campaign for it. The outcome was insightful.



While the students were busy with this work on Friday, the teachers visited the House of European History (HEH), where a guided tour was organised for them to learn about the educational resources offered by the HEH.

As part of the **teachers' parallel agenda for the day**, representatives from the EU institutions, namely the European Commission, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament, presented their youth initiative programmes and the teaching resources and tools available for teachers.

Before the closing youth plenary, **students drew up a set of concrete policy recommendations.**

Five students were nominated by their peers to be the spokespersons of their respective teams and present their ideas before the panel, which included the European Commission's EU Youth Coordinator, Biliانا Sirakova.

In keeping with the event's theme of democracy, the students voted on the five proposals presented to them, in order to rank them based on the collective preference.

The YEYS students' recommendations

1. EU-Funded Initiatives led by Young People FOR Young People

This proposal seeks more funding from the EU for democratic youth initiatives led by active young people for young people of high school ages throughout the 27 EU Member States.

The short-term objective of this proposal is to encourage more interest and engagement among young people in democratic processes. The long-term objective is to influence future generations and encourage a positive connection between politics and youth.

65 people voted for this proposal.

3. The «E-Youth» application

The «E-Youth» app will be designed to keep young people informed about the EU through accessible messaging around European affairs. The app would include features such as interactive questionnaires, where young people can find the political party that corresponds to their values, along with behind-the-scenes content from Members of the European Parliament. In their presentation, they highlighted that the internet is the place where young people feel most comfortable, so an app such as this one would serve as a bridge between institutions and their younger cohort.

83 people voted for this proposal.



2. The «YDO» – The Youth Democratic Opinion

This proposal focuses on educating young people in the EU through a youth platform, so that young people can share their thoughts and ideas directly with officials. Establishing groups of youth ambassadors in each Member State would facilitate peer to peer learning. Through workshops and interactive online quizzes, young people from across the EU would be able to send recommendations directly to officials at the European Commission. The initiative has the long-term goal of increasing youth engagement in the European Union.

This proposal received a total of 66 votes.





4. The «YouT(h)rust» online platform

YouT(h)rust is an interactive online platform designed to connect young people to their local politicians and MEPs, and inform them of key initiatives and updates from the EU in a transparent, non-biased way. The platform would act as a safe space for young EU citizens to share their thoughts on the issues that impact them most, and is designed to build trust between young people and governments.

This was the second most popular proposal, with 92 votes.

5. «EU Simplified» - An E-You application for citizens

The «EU Simplified» app is aimed at citizens of all ages and will help engage more young people in particular. The app has two aims, the first of which is to make the EU understood, and the second is to make the EU a part of citizens' daily lives. Users can select topics of interest to be updated accordingly through the app and accompanying social media. Users can also share their opinions directly with the community and have their voices heard by EU officials.

With 101 votes, «EU Simplified» was the most popular proposal.



What happens next?

These recommendations reflect the policy proposals of the youth assembly. The EESC has promised that the results and discussions from the YEYS plenary will be shared at a high level with all EU institutions, officially distributed to the EP's Parliamentary Committee on Education and Culture (CULT), and will continue to be highlighted on other occasions in the future.

In the very short-term, the EESC participated in the European Youth Event (EYE), which took place in Strasbourg in June 2023, through a workshop, during which the recommendations of the YEYS were presented and debated with the audience to explore possible ways to implement them.



**Scan for
the youth plenaries recordings**

Quotes from the speakers



Cillian Lohan

EESC Vice-President for Communications
(2020-2023 mandate)

"We face so many crises in our world and one of the best ways to overcome them is by putting our heads together and moving forward. This is what the EU does and we want you to help us find a way to move forward."



Biliana Sirakova
EU Youth Coordinator
at the European Commission

"Without active citizens, there is no functioning democracy. What you did today, this process really exemplifies what democracy is about. It is the power of people coming together to make a change that influences the world we live in. I assure you that I will take your recommendations to the highest level at the European Commission."



Christa Schweng
EESC President
(2020-2023 mandate)

"I am grateful to students and teachers for getting involved in "Your Europe, Your Say!" this year. Our initiative prepares young people to take leading roles in society and strengthen their skills to tackle new challenges. The EU needs to listen to its youth and I look forward to hearing what you expect from the EU."



Ismael Pérez Civico
Board member
of the European Youth Forum

"If you are willing to be active and participate, you can really make a difference. When you are eager to make a change, just go for it, engage with your community and build it up from there."



Neža Repanšek
EESC Member

"You are never too young to make a difference. I truly believe that collectively our voices can effect change for a better Europe and a brighter future."



YEYS-ers had their say!

View the schools involved here



"Democracy is about every single person. It is a place where people can vote and it should be a place where people are heard and understood. I believe the Russian/ Ukrainian war is the greatest challenge facing our European democracy and we need to do all we can to stop it."

Sita - 16, student, Ukraine

"Everyone thinks something for a reason and therefore they should be heard and not judged. We should be able to exchange our opinions and make the best of what everyone thinks. That's what democracy means to me. "

Jonas - 19, student, Denmark

"Democracy for me is when people can express their opinions freely and when others agree with those opinions, they are cemented in the policy of a country."

Christos – 17, student, Greece

"We face many blocks to democracy nowadays like disinformation, or being afraid to express our opinion. The main challenge is to be brave and stand up for what we truly believe in."

Olga, teacher, Estonia

" Voting is the one thing that young people can do to ensure a healthy and vibrant democracy going forward. Social media is one way to encourage this. "

Yassine – 16, student, Belgium

"The foremost thing young people can do is to get involved in their community from an early age, whether that's in local initiatives, local politics or at school level. Being part of something they believe in will enable them to see how their voice makes a difference. This will give them an understanding of how democracy works and hopefully ensure more active participation down the line."

Niam, teacher, Ireland

Theatre Navpaky brought Ukrainian culture to the YEYS stage



This year's YEYS event culminated in a cultural treat for its young audience. The EESC hosted a musical performance by the [Navpaky Theatre](#) during the closing session of the event on Friday 24 March. The show was entitled «**Svit za ochi**» (**There, out of sight**) and was directed by Oksana Terefenko.

The play featured a compilation of nine stage songs in Ukrainian with English subtitles. The songs told stories of young people facing different life experiences in a setting that intentionally mirrored current events in Ukraine.

The idea behind the performance was to look at how emotions are triggered by troubles, showing that people who fight for their freedom are ordinary people, with their own lives, joys and dilemmas. The performance was a unique opportunity for non-Ukrainian viewers to experience Ukrainian culture.

This cultural activity was a joint initiative between the Employers, Workers and Civil Society Organisations' groups of the EESC in connection with the European Year of Youth. The three groups emphasised the importance of listening to young people and empowering them, while also using this cultural spectacle to showcase the struggle of ordinary people in Ukraine, in a relatable way. By hosting this performance, the Committee expressed its continuing solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

More on Theatre Navpaky



Participating institutions

This year, in parallel with the YEYS programme for students, the supervising teachers also followed a programme, to which all EU institutions contributed with information and educational activities.



European Parliament

European Parliament

Directorate-General for
Communication
«Ambassador School
programme»



European
Commission

European Commission

Directorate-General for
Communication
EU Learning Corner



House of European History

European Parliament



Council of the European Union

Directorate Information and
Outreach - Outreach and
Engagement Unit

Webpage & Livestream

Webpage

Total page views
7458

Total visits 3052

YEYS 24 March livestream

Total visits

Unique
viewers

486 people

439 viewers

Average visit duration 15':25"

Press coverage

64 articles published covering the
Members' visits and the main event

10 foreign journalists/bloggers were invited
and participated in the main event

Advertising

- 5 campaigns for a total of 33 paid ads run on YEYS
Twitter, Facebook & Instagram

4.3 million impressions

- Digital banner campaign on EURACTIVE.com
homepage and the Politics and Economy hubs

221 149 total impressions

Social media results

	Reach	Impressions	Engagement
Twitter	552 591	9 383	567
Facebook	13 338	19 493	961
Instagram	12 854	81 812	747
Total	578 783	110 688	2 275

 **697**
Link Clicks

 **+995**
New followers

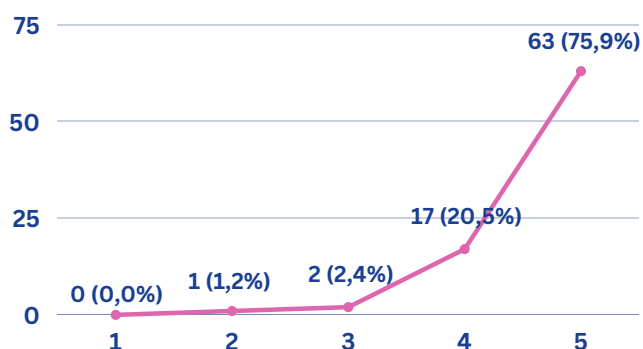
Growth	Engagement rate	Profile activity	Followers
Twitter	7.4%	+231.5%	+30
Facebook	15%	+133%	+95
Instagram	11.5%	+105%	+870

Satisfaction survey results

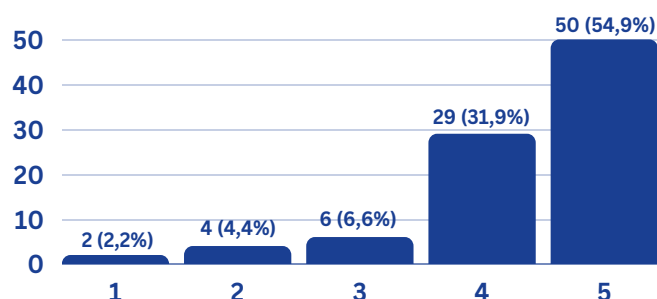
Will you recommend YEYS! to your friends, teachers, school?

98,8% YES 1,2% NO

On the whole, did you find your visit to the EESC rewarding?

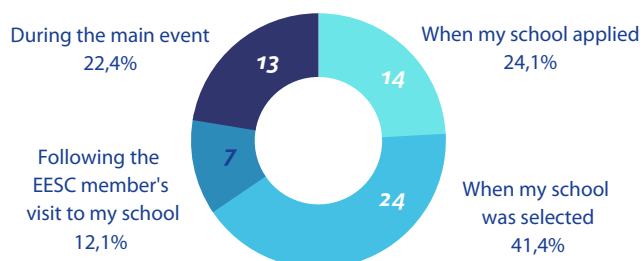


How happy were you with the overall organisation of your visit (travel, accomodation, welcome service)?

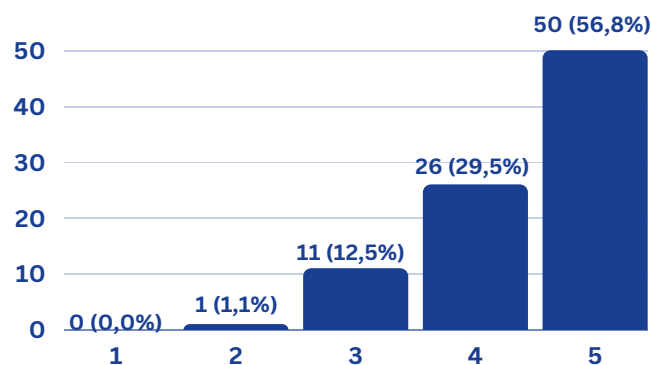


Did you follow YEYS' or EESC's accounts on Social Media? 65,6% YES 34,4% NO

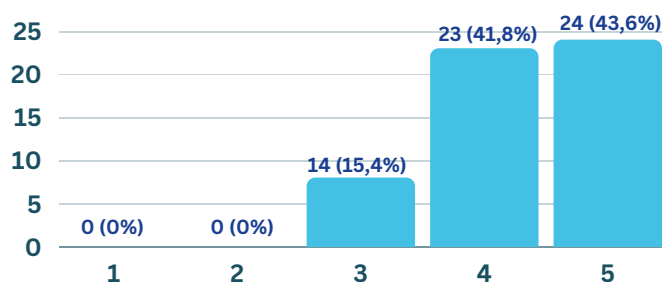
If YES, when did you start following us?



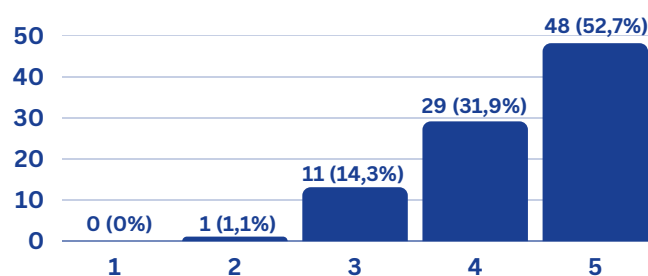
Was the visit by an EESC Member to your school constructive and useful?



Did you find the posts and tweets interesting?



Was the subject of the event "Youth Democracy Dialogues" interesting?



What did you like the most?
69 responses

1. Meet and talk with people from other countries
2. Youth plenary
3. Workshops
4. To have a voice
5. Global atmosphere



**European Economic
and Social Committee**

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99
1040 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Published by: "Visits and Publications" Unit
EESC-2023-45-EN

www.eesc.europa.eu/your-europe-your-say-2023

© European Union, 2023

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

For any use or reproduction of the photos / illustrations, permission must be sought directly
from the copyright holder(s): © Shutterstock



Publications Office
of the European Union



Print:
QE-03-23-192-EN-C
ISBN 978-92-830-6097-0
doi:10.2864/685204

Online:
QE-03-23-192-EN-N
ISBN 978-92-830-6096-3
doi:10.2864/23941

EN