European Commission

YOUrope FOR Youth

#EUnarrative

DEBATING EUROPE FOR 15-18 YEAR OLDS

WHAT IS IT AND WHO IS IT FOR?

This note offers guidance for organising and running debates among 15-18 year olds on topics related to the European Union and its future. The activity is for youngsters who want to start discussions about Europe among their peers, or who have to participate in a class debate in school.

WHY?

Holding a debate allows young people to start discussions on the future of Europe in a structured way. Through debating, youngsters exchange opinions about the EU, learning more about its workings and its potential in the process. Debating develops critical thinking skills as youngsters test their ideas among their peers in a safe, controlled environment, unlike social media. Research shows young people want to contribute their thoughts and opinions about the future of Europe. Debates enable them to have conversations that matter, make their voices heard on an EU level and thus shape the future of Europe itself.

WHAT ABOUT SUBJECTS TO DISCUSS?

Among this age group, the process aims to simulate reflection and critical thinking around more general, introductory questions: what is the EU? What does it do? Why is it important? What relevance does it have for me, my family and my country? Where does its future lie? Why is that important for me? As such, more general questions or topics may be best for your debate, e.g.

> **Europe opens up (doesn't open up) opportunities for all** – Pro arguments could include exchanges under Erasmus+, school twinning, freedom of movement making tourism easier, European Solidarity Corps etc. Counter arguments could include language barriers, difficult access for people in rural communities, institutional jargon that hampers understanding etc.

> **Europe makes (doesn't make) a difference** – Pro arguments include EU action on climate change, abolition of roaming charges, food safety, development aid etc. Con arguments include declining influence in new globalised world, no real impact on the ground affecting people's daily lives, national states make a difference not the EU.

> **What does Europe mean to me?** – Pro side can recount positive emotions/feelings (e.g. freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU, shared values, security, greater world influence) while the other side takes the negative ones (e.g. remote institutions, being ignored, bureaucracy).

If preferred, the debate topic can be more specific. During the first phase of New Narrative for Europe, four areas emerged as being of particular interest to the youngsters questioned, developed into 12 ideas for the future of Europe. Here below are some aspects of key future policy areas that specifically affect 15-18 year olds or are of interest to them, with ideas for debate subjects, to be formulated into a debate question[1].

MOBILITY AND EMPLOYMENT

- How can we make it easier to study, work and volunteer in another European country?
- Should studies/training be focused on areas with potential job vacancies?
- What can be done to help unemployed young people into work?

MIGRATION, FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

- What can the EU do to promote peace and stability outside of the EU?
- How can the EU better support refugees and their integration?
- How can we tackle political extremism?

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- How can youngsters be given more of a voice in the democratic process?
- How can the EU make it easier for youngsters to be involved in EU issues?
- What's the best way to ensure young people know about what the EU is doing and how it works?

ENVIRONMENT

- How can we get young people's voices heard on environmental sustainability issues?
- Should environmental topics be included on EU school curricula?
- How to develop creative and engaging ways to support environmentally friendly projects?

To increase interest and engagement before the debate, you can offer three possible subjects to be discussed and let the class decide (you can always discuss the others in later debates).

1 For more information and background, see the infographics on 12 ideas for the future of Europe, the animated clip on the European story and the backgrounders on the four main topics.

SAMPLE RUNDOWN FOR A TEAM DEBATE LASTING 50 MINUTES

Timing (hh:mm)	Action	Notes
00:00 > 00:05	> Moderator introduction (5')	> Introducing New Narrative for Europe > Introducing this event > Explaining how it works > Housekeeping (e.g. cell phones off) > Introducing the topic > Conducting initial vote
00:05 > 00:17	> Each team has two slots of three minutes to present their arguments (2 x 6') > Moderator introduces speakers and reminds them of their timings	> Team A – Speaker 1 – 3' > Team B – Speaker 1 – 3' > Team A – Speaker 2 – 3' > Team B – Speaker 2 – 3'
00:17 > 00:22	> Moderator does poll/s with audience (5')	> Allows teams to finalise rebuttals
00:22 > 00:30	> Each team has two slots of two minutes to rebut/reply to arguments presented in part one (2 x 4')	> Team A – Speaker 3 – 2' > Team B – Speaker 3 – 2' > Team A – Speaker 4 – 2' > Team B – Speaker 4 – 2'
00:30 > 00:38	> Moderator takes questions from the floor (8')	> Could take three questions at a time to include more interventions > Teams give brief replies
00:38 > 00:40	> Final statements of one minute from each team (2 x 1')	> Team A – Speaker 1, 4 or 5 – 1' > Team B – Speaker 1, 4 or 5 – 1'
00:40 > 00:45	> Moderator conducts final vote and debriefs on changes from initial vote result (5')	> Compare results from first vote and final vote > Why did participants change their minds? What argument made the difference?
00:45 > 00:50	> Moderator concludes and announces what happens next (5')	> Brief summary of debate > Thank speakers/teams, organisers and audience > Announce upcoming initiatives > End with a big round of applause

HOW DO YOU ORGANISE AND RUN A DEBATE?

For 15-18 year olds, a team debate is probably the most suitable format as it enables team members to share the burden of research, preparation and public speaking. The standard format divides the available time into two halves. In the first half, each team has two opportunities to present its main arguments either in favour or against the chosen subject. In the second half, each team has two opportunities to rebut the arguments presented by the other side in the first.

Teams of **four people** (or maximum five) are a suitable size to give enough space for everyone to contribute during the ideal timeframe for this age group, which is 50 minutes. A team leader could be appointed, who would start and close the debate for each team.

LOGISTICS

When fixing the date, avoid school exams or vacation time and make sure there is enough time for participants to prepare content and rehearse. Consider the room, including the furniture and technical equipment required (*e.g. desks and chairs, area for moderator, microphones, water for speakers, lectern, team badges, name badges for desks*). Make contingency plans (*e.g. backups in case a speaker is sick*).

HELPING TEAMS PREPARE

They may require space for discussions, internet access for research, guidance on content, format and approach. There are online resources available[2] to help preparations.

CHOOSING A MODERATOR

You will need someone to chair or moderate the event. Their presence is key, they motivate and inspire the audience, encourage the speakers and manage the debate. They should be fully briefed[3] before the event on the debate format and topic as well as the speakers and so forth, to be expanded with their own research. The moderator usually turns this information into an *event 'script'* of bullet points with timings, the introduction, the list of poll questions, the general conclusions and follow up activities. *Timekeeping* is a key part of moderating, ensuring all speakers keep to time for a smooth-running event.

INVOLVING EVERYONE

To make your debate more interactive, prepare some poll questions in advance to put to the audience, also to give teams time to refer on their rebuttals. Using yes/no questions will simplify voting. A show of hands will do, or you could use more high-tech methods like polling apps. At the start of the debate, the audience could vote on the topic to be discussed, with these results later compared with the final vote as a kind of debrief. Time should be set aside for questions from the audience.

LOOKING BEYOND THE DEBATE

In the preparation phase, consider further activities to run afterwards, building on the momentum created by the debate. Options include:

- Preparing a report on the debate to share among participants and even wider. This could be done by the organisers and by the pupils and the two perspectives could be compared in further discussions.
- Pass on references to appropriate participants and other EU resources for further reading and research[4].
- Encourage youngsters to monitor and get involved in other initiatives on the future of Europe, civic participation and reaching out to their peers.
- Plan the next debate – and why not involve the youngsters in the organisation too?

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2 For more information and background, check out the resources page on New Narrative for Europe website, including the 'Tips and tricks for debaters' PowerPoint.

3 The New Narrative for Europe resource centre contains a PowerPoint of 'Tips and tricks for moderators'.

4 Relevant programs are Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, EURES, Environment initiatives, Youthwiki.

ONLINE EU RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING AND RESEARCH

- *European Youth Portal New Narrative for Europe:* http://europa.eu/youth/nnfe
- *European Youth Flash Eurobarometer 455:* http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/82294
- *Eurobarometer Infographic expressing solidarity:* https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/2018_youth-02_eurobaro_infographic_expressing_solidarity.jpg
- *Eurobarometer Infographic priorities for EU actions:* https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/2018_youth-02_eurobaro_infographic_priorities_for_eu_actions-ok2-05.jpg
- *Eurobarometer Infographic Voluntary Activities:* https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/2018_youth-02_eurobaro_infographic_voluntary_activities-ok2-02.jpg
- *Eurobarometer Ideas for the future of EU:* https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/2018_youth-02_eurobaro_infographic_ideas_for_the_future_eu.jpg
- *Eurobarometer Youth participation:* https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/2018_youth-02_eurobaro_infographic_youth_participation.jpg
- *EU standard barometer June 2018:* http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2180
- *Twelve ideas for the future of Europe:* https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/12_ideas_for_the_future_of_europe.pdf
- *YOUrope for Youth Resource Centre – Tips and tricks for debaters*
- *YOUrope for Youth Resource Centre – Tips and tricks for moderators*
- *Erasmus+ programme:* http://erasmusprogramme.com/
- *European Solidarity Corps:* https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en
- *Eures – The European Job Mobility Portal:* https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/en/homepage
- *Youthwiki – Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies:* https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki
- *European Youth Goals – views of young people from all over Europe:* http://youthgoals.eu
- *Europe 1957-2017: 60 years of peace, democracy, solidarity:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqm9dda23YA
- *The European Story: 60 Years of Shared Progress:* http://ec.europa.eu/assets/epsc/files/the-european-story_epsc_web.pdf
- *Discover the European Union:* https://europa.eu/teachers-corner/quiz