European Commission

12 IDEAS FOR

The Future of Europe

NEW NARRATIVE FOR EUROPE
COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

#EUNARRATIVE

Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to the campaign

In 2013 and 2014, the European Commission implemented the pilot project "New Narrative for Europe" (NNfE), which brought together artists, scientists, intellectuals and European politicians to debate what a new narrative could look like. The participants identified a need for a "new renaissance", a shift in thinking about the direction of Europe. A renewed debate, particularly with young people across Europe, about the issue of the European Union in a globalised world and in the context of growing disengagement with Europe was seen as a priority. The preparatory action therefore made it a key aim to promote dialogue among and with European citizens – particularly younger generations – to learn about their ideas of a future Europe.

What motivates young people to get involved in European debates?

The vast majority of young people (90 % of European Youth 2016 respondents) believed that it was important to learn about the EU and its institutions. On average, 63 % of young people had voted in elections at local, regional, national and EU level in the past three years, which represented an increase compared to previous surveys. However, participation at EU level was much lower at around 31 %. The main reasons for this lack of engagement in elections were disillusionment/lack of belief that their vote had any effect, lack of information and general disinterest in European politics. The biggest motivator to get young people more engaged was the provision of more information. There are also indications from the survey that political actions have become more individualised, localised, ad-hoc and focused on specific issues.

Employment, the environment, education and civic participation were the top policy issues according to the FutureLab Europe 2014 survey, followed by mobility.

Key aims of the New Narrative for Europe campaign

In an effort to facilitate the debate among and with young people about how they could engage more and better in European policy issues and with the European Union itself, a campaign was launched with the aim:

- To create an active and dynamic online space, contributed to by a significant number of young Europeans from across all EU 28 countries;
- To develop a cohesive package of New Narrative activities where national events, ambassadors, debates in classrooms (through the eTwinning network), work of artists and online activities complement each other and contribute to a clear narrative with a vision for the future of Europe; and
- To collect a coherent set of findings about what young people see as important elements of the European narrative through the use of appropriate online channels and structured facilitation.

How did we do this?

From the survey findings above it became apparent that the channels, activities and

#MyEuropeMyFuture Winner
André Granja Costa

topics to engage young people in a debate about the future of Europe had to be carefully chosen. The original brief required a combination of an online webspace for commenting (consultation) and physical events (debates), combined with social media activities to develop a coherent engagement package. It was therefore essential to analyse previous campaigns, as well as events, consultations and social media activities, to distil best practice examples that were successful in engaging young people.

A **social media engagement strategy** was developed which consisted of a five-step circular approach, which was strongly influenced by lean and agile thinking strategies in an effort to reduce resource waste and maximise returns.

Monitoring and evaluation of the campaign were carried out using a suite of standard tools such as Facebook Insights, Twitter and Google Analytics, among others.

A **thematic analysis of the responses and contributions** on the platform and from the social media activities, as well as from a series of 18 thematic events based on a qualitative analysis framework, was carried out to draw out the key points and develop recommendations.

The campaign was flanked by a series of 18 national thematic events across Europe, such as the European Youth Event including an Artistic Wall to creatively express ideas (France), the Roverway (France) and the European Culture Summit Youth Event (Edinburgh), which engaged nearly 2 000 young people. The exhibition "*Imagine Europe. In search of new narratives*", which was held at Bozar, Brussels, attracted around 20 000 visitors.

What did we do?

The campaign consisted of a web platform for the consultation and four social media activities, supplemented by a social media toolkit. Each of these components are reviewed with regard to their aims, content and effectiveness.

New Narrative for Europe Website

One of the core pieces of the campaign was the dedicated "New Narrative For Europe" webspace, which provided an open space for

people to engage in the debate around key topic areas. The aim of the webspace was to provide a central location for young people to engage in the debate around the future of Europe in a structured way. The platform was also used to identify key issues occupying young people's minds, which were later refined to include various sub-questions that provided further insights and more detail. To raise awareness about the website, a social media campaign was run on Twitter and Facebook with the intention of driving traffic to the website. This was run on an ongoing basis with posts linking to the specific sub-questions of the themes or to the NNfE website in general. Collectively, the campaign's social media posts yielded over 13 000 interactions on Facebook and over 2 000 interactions on Twitter. The social media posts brought 19 839 people to the NNfE website, making these the most prolific source of traffic to the site. **Overall, 562 comments were posted on the website, from 40 004 visitors**. The most commented on theme was mobility and employment. Overall, the web platform achieved its aim of providing a central location for young people to engage in discussions around the future of Europe in a structured way. The number of comments made on the individual questions provides a solid amount of data to develop a set of ideas and recommendations about how the dialogue could be structured going forward and how young people could become more engaged.

Photo competition #MyEuropeMyFuture

This competition encouraged young people to submit photos depicting what they loved about Europe and what they wanted to see more of. Each photo was accompanied by a 100-word idea on what they wanted for Europe's future. Woobox was used as a tool for the submission of the contributions. There were initial concerns over the use of a third party tool to manage the competition process, particularly over whether participants would mind the referral to another platform. The competition received **over 140 entries** consisting of photographs and 100-word captions with ideas. The core themes in the photos and descriptions focussed on issues such as mobility, employment, volunteering/civic engagement and human rights. Particularly strong themes were the environment (especially sustainable transport), learning about other cultures, and general appreciation of the natural beauty of Europe and its diversity. While the campaign was successful in driving traffic to the platform, the conversion rate to competition entries was around 3.5 %, which probably reflects an appeal to more creative young people. It is therefore important to include different ways for expression in any campaign, in order to be as inclusive as possible. Underlying all submissions was the celebration of culture, community and diversity, and a desire to explore, experience and share this with friends and family.

Tell us in 12 – Short story competition #TellUsIn12

This was a short story competition for young people to express their thoughts on the future of Europe in 12 words. The entries had to focus on one of the following key themes of the web platform: Youth unemployment; Environment; Freedom of movement and Awareness of the EU. The aim was to find a different means of creative expression to engage young people in the debate. The response was overwhelming, with over 300

entries – of which the majority came through Facebook. Topics were very diverse and in some cases spread beyond the intended four key thematic areas as they addressed more cross-cutting issues. This was one of the most successful activities in terms of numbers of contributions and participation. This is probably due to the lower threshold for engagement when using just 12 words, as well as responses to Tweets and Facebook posts being more immediate and impulsive. The activity led to over 5,500 page views on the platform and there were over 8,000 visits to the voting platform; however, the actual conversion-to-vote rate was low (only around 1 %) which is probably due to young people having to register to vote in the context of some nations being more protective of their personal data online than others.

#EUvision video competition

#EUvision was a short video competition that enabled young people to share their big and bold ideas for the NNfE within the scope of the Treaty of Rome's 60th anniversary celebrations. The use of the selfie/vlog video format meant that a strong response was expected, due to the simplicity of creating the video and the popularity of vlogs. The key aims were to encourage young people to engage with the themes of the online consultation, increase reach and engagement, particularly through the European Youth social media channels, and to once again open up creative engagement with the themes of the campaign. In total, the promotion of this competition gained a reach of 1,084,677 on the official New Narrative social media channels. The competition platform received 28,819 visitors and **a total of 110 entries**. From a thematic perspective, all themes were reflected, but the future of Europe (civic engagement) featured heavily, followed by the environment and youth employment. The activity produced excellent results, as selfie videos/vlogs can be a challenge. However, the limitations of 10-second, unedited video submission made it fairly low-tech and accessible. This strategy should be kept in mind for future competitions.

Toolkit

In an effort to reach out to as wide a youth audience as possible and use the networks of those who are known as individuals who are engaged in the discourse on a new narrative for Europe, a link was established with the Ambassadors for the NNfE and the participants of the initial New Narrative pilot project and their support for the online consultation was requested. To make their engagement as straightforward as possible, a social media toolkit was developed which contained sample tweets and Facebook posts, imagery they could use and suggestions of how they could engage in the discussion.

What did young people say?

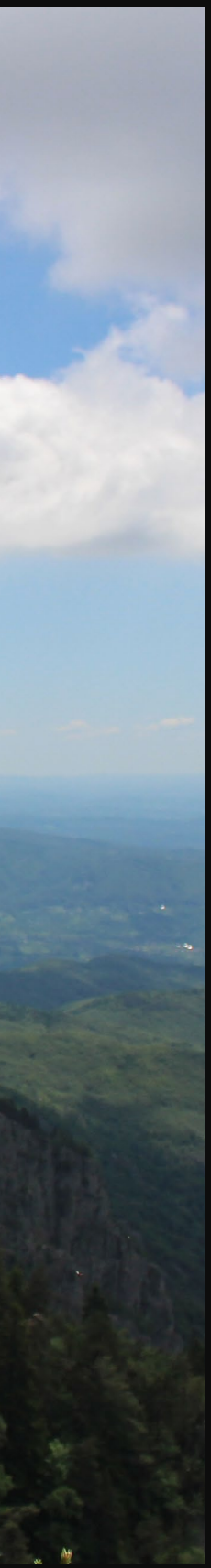
The campaign involved consultation of young people across a range of topic areas that are seen as key future policy areas and that are known to affect young people. The key topic areas and core questions asked on the platform are summarised in the table below. Summaries from thematic events across Europe were also considered during the analysis process. While each set of questions addresses a specific theme, many of the responses cut across several themes (e.g. employment and free movement or employment and the environment). This

highlights the importance of the chosen themes to young people in general, but also their creativity in finding solutions to several issues. It is important to note though that young people are by no means a homogenous group with one voice and one view. Any assumptions in this regard would be simplistic and do a disservice to young people.

Mobility and employment	Civic engagement and belonging
• Unpaid internships: What are the alternatives? • What is the best way to help unemployed young people into work? • How can we make it easier to work in another EU country? • Do you think we should choose our studies and vocational training based on a projected number of job vacancies in that field?	• How can the EU help to mitigate extremist views prevalent in the media? • How can we get young people more of a voice in the democratic process? • How can the EU make it easier for young people to be more involved in EU issues? • Why do large numbers of young people not vote in elections? • What's the best way to ensure young people know about what the EU is doing and how it works? • How can young people learn more about the EU? • What would encourage more people to vote or participate in public life? • What would you do if you were the "President of the European Union"?
Freedom of movement and security	**Environment**
• What can the EU do to promote peace and stability outside of the EU? • How can we help communities deal with the pressures of large scale population movements? • What more can be done to tackle the migration crisis? • What about you: do you feel you belong to Europe and in what ways? • How can we make it easier to study, work or volunteer in another European country? • How can we tackle political extremism?	• What's the best way to promote an ecological lifestyle among young people? • What can be done across the EU to protect the environment? • What is the best way to inform young people about climate change issues? • Should we promote EU wide recycling? • How can we encourage more sustainable transport choices? • How can we get young people's voices heard on climate issues?

#MYEUROPEMYFUTURE COMPETITION ENTRIES

CÁTIA MARTINS



MADDALENA ERCOLES

GERGÅ‘ TAR

GABIJA VYÅ¡NIAUSKAITÄ

KATERINA GEORGIEVA

Mobility and employment

The key issues in the employment debate focused around making career choices, unpaid internships, ways to support young people into work and enabling mobility across member states. Views on the issue of **how young people should choose their future careers** were broadly mixed. On the one hand, there were those who highlighted the importance of playing to someone's strengths, using their talents and interests, rather than being steered by market economies. On the other hand, there were those that highlighted that there was little point in studying something that would not lead to a job and that young people should be pushed to take up studies or training in areas with known skills shortages. A third view that emerged was that close consideration needed to be paid to "what the blind imperative to 'follow the market' would mean for the future of the whole society". Views from young people that were particularly affected by the economic crisis diverged and had a more practical rather than aspirational tone. Supporting careers guidance and careers decision making was a key issue for young people to make informed choices. They also identified an opportunity for **early information about EU programmes to support mobility and study choices** (including studying abroad for a full degree) as there was a perceived lack of widely available information about these opportunities. Structural barriers to labour market entry, such as a lack of local transport or lack of jobs locally were identified, as well as a **lack of relevant practical experience during university studie**s to enhance employability. Therefore, a longer, mandatory period of practical work experience should be included in education and training programmes.

Young people thought they were often not taken seriously, that there was a perception that their behaviour lacked structure and discipline, but equally that there was a lack of opportunity offered by employers in order to prove them otherwise or to develop these types of skills. It was therefore seen as necessary to start supporting a change in the image of young people in the workplace.

Unpaid internships were seen as unethical, exploitative and unnecessary as a concept. There was deep-seated anger over the displacement of workers through unpaid interns who were perceived as cheap and easily replaceable labour. Conversely, a series of internships without the success of a job offer at the end was seen as negatively affecting young people's employment chances. Internships/traineeships should therefore be paid and a minimum wage be introduced to reduce social inequalities.

Mobility and removing barriers were key in the eyes of young people when it came to enabling them to working abroad. Mobility and freedom of movement were widely seen as a strength of the European Union, yet young people felt they were **not very well prepared to even consider moving abroad**, because it was difficult to find information about jobs and how job applications in the relevant country are made. The language barrier was also identified as a key obstacle because language requirements dictate where they could move to. As a result, offering language support was a popular suggestion. There is also a further need to promote the recognition of qualifications and skills to enable mobility.

Civic engagement and belonging

This thematic area covered a broad range of individual topics but focused primarily on ways to get more young people engaged in EU issues, as well as on what could be done to increase their participation in elections. The question of why young people do not participate in elections produced some interesting insights. It brought to light the **feeling of disconnect from a political system and institution that does not care about young people**. There was also disillusionment about what the EU could achieve. Another theme was that of **feeling distant**. The EU was said to be "**far away**" and to not reach out to young people in their member states, especially those in rural areas. Campaigns tend to focus on national capitals and major regional cities, but little offer is made to bring the EU to smaller, more remote communities and engage young people in discussion.

The **promotion of knowledge about the EU and its institutions** was a key issue here. Many young people pointed to a lack of information and education about the EU in the educational systems of their home nations, which was often perpetuated by negative media reporting. While changes to the national education curricula are the responsibility of member states, central **information resources for and with young people** were seen as a necessity to promote knowledge about the EU. Reaching out to young people through media channels that they access (e.g. YouTube, apps) was frequently suggested, in addition to selecting formats that could provide factual information in an engaging and accessible way (e.g. immersive learning experiences).

The concept that shone through from the consultation responses, as well as most of the event reports, was that of **unity in diversity**. Even though some questioned the idea of a European identity, they subscribed to the concepts of shared ideas, a shared wish for peaceful coexistence and prosperity. In their view, it would be a pity if the European identity superseded national identities and cultures, because in a way this would wipe out the cultural diversity within Europe that makes Europe what it is. The European identity tends to be multi-layered.

Freedom of movement and security

While Freedom of movement was seen as one of the core strengths of the European Union, it was possibly also the most politically charged topic in the consultation. There were a few voices who advocated for stronger military engagement of the EU; however, the vast majority of young people felt **that the EU should act in a role model capacity (tolerance, diversity and openness) and promote peace through cooperation**. Cooperation and development support were seen as key tools to promote peace and stability.

Migration and refugees in particular divided opinions. On the one hand, participants called for the EU to stick to its promises of support and its processes and procedures of redistribution and vetting. On the other hand, however – and this view represented the vast majority – young people wanted the EU to **better support refugees and their integration** by offering educational projects, language programmes and cultural projects which would be available to refugees as well as the population of the host countries.

In this context, the themes of **extremism and the rise of nationalism and populism** were often discussed, which young people perceived to be the result of disillusionment with politics and politicians. People felt that their fears and needs were not addressed or considered by policies and parties and that the media played a key role in promoting extremism through publishing highly biased stories, using click-bait headlines to attract readership and consciously fearmongering and playing on stereotypes. Young people highlighted that **dialogue, civic education and the promotion of critical thinking** were the only means to address these issues.

Environment

The **environment and ecological lifestyle** were popular topics that required urgent action in the eyes of young people. This theme produced by far the most drastic responses, which highlights the high level of concern of young people, as well as a willingness to promote change through individual action. A prime example is the promotion of recycling at European level, whereby all respondents said that it should be a priority, but also then expanded into other issues such as reducing waste and reusing materials. **Enabling sustainable transport** was also a key issue among young people. While there was great awareness that, particularly in rural areas, the car was often the only feasible transport option, there was widespread disappointment that more was not being done to enable more sustainable forms of transport and make information about sustainable transport options across borders more easily available.

Overall, it was felt that the EU should take a much stronger stance globally in promoting environmental protection. This could be achieved through the integration of environmental topics in educational curricula more widely (though this is a member state responsibility) as well as by promoting immersive, experiential learning experiences for young people or developing apps that foster behaviour change.

Key actions for the "President of the European Union"

This section collated a series of verbatim suggestions of young people with regard to the key thematic areas discussed previously. The comments also provide insights into what young people see as the areas most urgently requiring action. They were left in their original form to represent young people's voices and ideas in a more authentic way, where a simple aggregated write-up would have drowned out the depth of their thinking and creativity.

What now?

The aims of the NNfE campaign were to open up the debate about the future of Europe to young people and gather their suggestions on key topics that affect them. Key mechanisms to achieve this were:

- an online platform where participants could provide answers to key questions;
- three social media competitions where individuals could share their ideas through images, text and video;
- several youth engagement events across Europe; and

- a social media toolkit containing sample tweets and Facebook posts, imagery and suggestions of how to engage in the discussion on Europe.

The platform and campaigns had promising levels of engagement with, to date, a total of 562 comments and entries to the various activities, with a very small number of duplicate entries. All these contributions provided in-depth insights into how young people perceive their situation in their respective member states with regard to a select number of issues. The extent to which young people outside the "Euro-bubble" could be engaged was debatable, because most of the promotion of the activities happened through official EU channels.

Overall, the campaign activities and the platform were successful in engaging young people and produced an impressive number of contributions. 3.4 million people had the potential to be reached through the online activities, while another 1,800 participated in various thematic events across Europe and more than 20,000 visitors engaged with the new narrative topic through the 2016 exhibition "Imagine Europe. In search of new narratives" at Bozar, Brussels.

The combination of activities worked well. A key learning point from the various activities was that simplicity and low barriers to engagement are key for involving young people, which is partly driven by the short time spans that social media allow for engagement.

Sustainability of the New Narrative

The number of consultation responses and contributions to competitions as well as the ongoing engagement with the web platform, which continued even after its promotion, show that there is an ongoing need among young people to exchange and contribute their thoughts and opinions about the future of Europe. Adopting a new narrative for Europe and getting young people on board will require a lot of effort and very visible communication that is specifically targeted at young people. If possible, young people should be directly engaged in its development and the development of the surrounding activities to increase relevance.

Another option might be to bring together young people to discuss the findings of this consultation and its relevance to their perceived needs. This might also be an opportunity to re-activate the previous ambassadors and engage them in a debate with young people directly. This would help facilitate the dialogue between more policy-immersed individuals and those not so deeply engaged with politics to on the one hand exchange ideas, and on the other hand turn them into policy-relevant proposals and actions.

In an effort to include those who are not necessarily involved in the European debate, reaching out to youth community groups or schools in deprived areas might provide new insights while also providing a platform to bring the EU closer to more disengaged young people. As a result, issues that are relevant to young people on the ground could emerge sooner while the relevance and proximity of the EU as an institution could also be increased.

12 ideas for the future of Europe

1. Easy access to information for young people who want to move and work abroad with a view to encouraging youth employment.
2. Wider opportunities for young people beyond current formats in Erasmus+ or the European Solidarity Corps and make more language support available.
3. Improve the image of young people in the workplace to highlight the contributions they can make to businesses.
4. Organise events or roadshows to bring the EU to rural and remote areas.
5. Make information and news about the EU available through innovative media channels in multiple languages, such as films/series and simulation games.
6. Promote the EU and its values inside and outside through volunteering.
7. Promote critical thinking and research skills to combat fake news and extremism through citizen education.
8. Support the development of creative, experiential, immersive learning experiences and cultural and arts events through which young people can engage with policy issues that affect them and develop solutions.
9. Find a champion and role model for young people who promotes youth rights but also understands how young people mobilise and engage.
10. Support recycling and positive environmental actions more widely.
11. Make information about sustainable transport options across borders more easily accessible.
12. Develop creative and engaging ways to support environmentally friendly behaviour change, through for instance an app or theatre/film productions.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This section provides an introduction to the campaign. It outlines the context within which it was developed. Lastly, the chapter outlines the key aims of the communication campaign and provides a short guide through the rest of the report.

1.1 Background to the campaign

In 2013 and 2014, the European Commission implemented the pilot project "New Narrative for Europe" (NNfE), which brought together artists, scientists, intellectuals and European politicians to debate what a new narrative could look like. The participants identified a need for a "new renaissance", a shift in thinking about the direction of Europe. The output from this initiative has been the declaration "The Mind and Body of Europe", which was published in March 2014. This was followed up with a preparatory action in 2015/16 to extend the scope of the initial debates.

A renewed debate, particularly with young people across Europe, about the issue of the European Union in a globalised world and in the context of growing disengagement with Europe was seen as a priority. The preparatory action therefore made it a key aim to promote dialogue among and with European citizens – particularly younger generations – to learn about their ideas of a future Europe. Young people are not only the ones most concerned with the future, but also the part of the population whose future is most affected by current decisions and events; therefore, their views, as well as those of organisations that represent youth across Europe, were sought to develop a positive narrative and outlook for Europe.

The sections below provide some context regarding young people's motivations to engage in the democratic process and the key issues and topics they are concerned with.

1.2 What motivates young people to get involved in European debates?

The results of a special Eurobarometer survey[1] carried out for the European Parliament in 2016, involving 10 294 Europeans aged 16-30 and reported in European Youth 2016, showed that 90 % of the young people surveyed believed it to be important for young Europeans to learn about how EU institutions work. *FutureLab Europe*[2] reported that "young people were convinced that they would be more interested in the elections if they had learned more about the EU policy-making process in school". This was supported by a survey carried out at the European Youth Event 2016, where participants said they had an average understanding of how the EU and its institutions worked.[3] Just over half (51 %) also felt that voting in European elections

[1] European Parliament (2016) European Youth in 2016
[2] FutureLab (2014) Missing a generation in EU politics
[3] European Parliament (2016) Shaping Europe: 50 ideas for a better future. The EYE Report 2016
[4] European Parliament (2016) European Youth in 2016

was the best way to take part in civic life in the EU.[4]

A Flash Eurobarometer Survey in 2014 involved approximately 13 000 young people aged between 15 and 30. The survey found that, on average, 63 % of the young people had voted in a political election at local, regional, national or EU level in the last three years, which represented a small increase of 4 % compared to previous similar surveys. However, participation at EU level was much lower, with 47 % having voted in elections at a local level compared to only 31 % who had voted at EU level.[5]

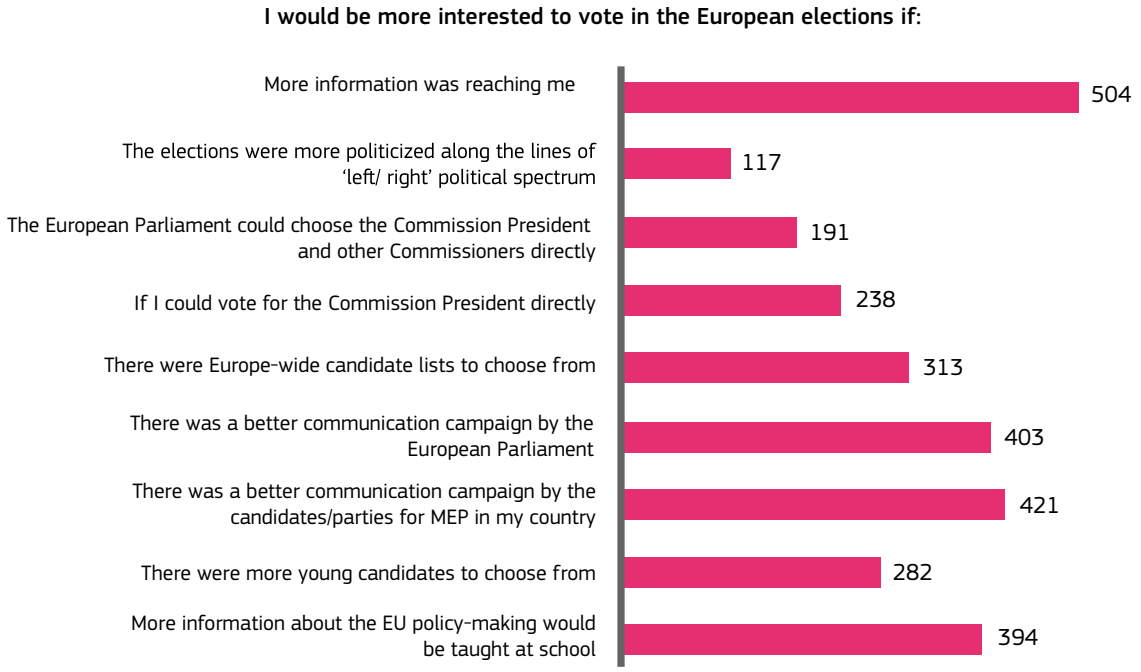
The above findings are in line with a 'Debating Europe' study on how to get young people more involved in politics. The study suggests that in the 2014 European elections only 28 % of young people (aged 18-24) voted, compared to 35 % in the 25-39 category, 49 % in the 40-54 category and 51 % of those aged 55+. The exceptions were countries like France and Poland, where young people were just as likely (or even more likely) than older voters to participate in national elections.[6] The study found that the main reasons why young people did not vote in European elections were because:

- 64 % believed that their vote would not change anything;
- 61 % felt that they were insufficiently informed to vote;
- 56 % believed that it would not influence their daily problems; and
- 54 % were simply not interested in EU politics and elections.

The 2014 *FutureLab Europe* survey[7] provides insights into what might motivate young people to participate in European elections. The online survey asked young Europeans (aged 16-31 years old) about their attitude towards the EU, the European elections and the extent to which they felt informed about the EU. The survey findings showed that young people would be more likely to vote in the European elections if they had more information about Europe, their local Members of the European Parliament and the Parliament in general (Figure 1.1).

[5] European Commission Memo on young people's participation in out-of-school activities
[6] Debating Europe (2015) *How would you get more young people involved in politics?*
[7] FutureLab (2014) Missing a generation in EU politics

Figure 1.1 Why young people take part in European elections



FutureLab Europe survey 2014

FutureLab Europe also reported that young people who got involved in European debates were likely to be more supportive of the EU than of domestic political systems, and were hopeful that the EU could contribute to their lives in different ways. Comments from the survey also suggested that these young people recognised that there was still much to improve in the EU but they wanted to be part of that change-making process.

While there has been a decline in participation through traditional modes of political engagement, such as voting and joining political parties, young people tend to choose alternative forms of political participation (e.g. participation via the internet, demonstrations, protests, signing petitions, boycotts) as they feel that they can influence political decisions more directly and effectively. Political actions have become more individualised, ad-hoc and issue-specific and these changes are linked to new perceptions of citizenship which have been increasingly influenced by globalisation, individualisation, consumption and competition.[8]

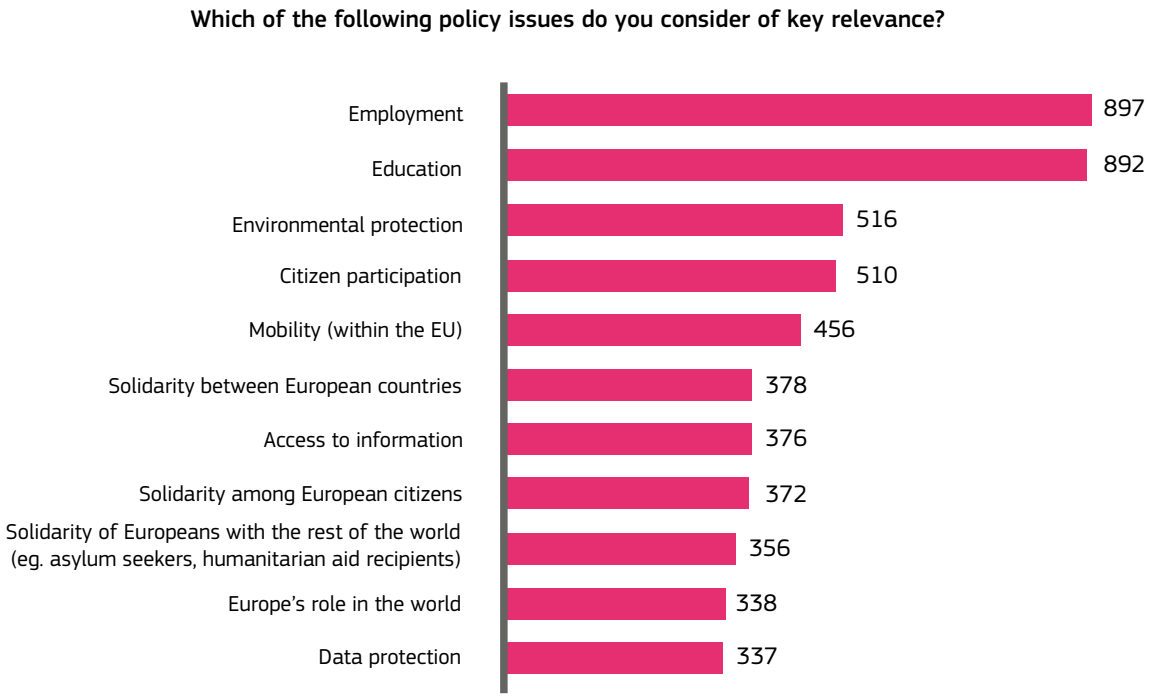
[8] EACEA (2013) Political Participation and EU Citizenship: Perceptions and Behaviours of Young People

European Youth in 2016[9] reported that under half (46 %) of the young people surveyed believed that online social networks represented "progress for democracy" because these networks allowed more people to take part in public debates. The proportion varied across member states and was highest in countries such as Sweden (71 %), Finland (68 %), Italy and the Czech Republic (both 63 %), with countries such as Germany, Belgium and France taking a more cautious view towards the use of social media as a tool to engage in the democratic process.

1.3 Which issues matter most to young people?

The *FutureLab Europe*[10] survey also explored policy issues that mattered to young people. The findings indicate that **employment and education are the two key areas that matter most to them, followed by environmental protection** and citizen participation (see Figure 1.2). These findings suggest that young people are more inclined to participate in politics if debates are focused on these issues.

Figure 1.2 Policy issues relevant to young people



FutureLab Europe survey 2014

[9] European Parliament (2016) European Youth in 2016
[10] FutureLab (2014) Missing a generation in EU politics

The 2014 Flash Eurobarometer survey[11] found that young people were fairly confident about finding a job, although they were less confident about job stability. Of those who were still studying, 74 % felt at least "fairly confident about finding a job". However, levels of confidence varied considerably across different EU member states and ranged from 92 % in the Czech Republic to just 32 % in Greece.

The *European Youth in 2016 survey*[12] also highlighted that:

- Just over half of young Europeans (57 %) felt marginalised and excluded from economic and social life because of the economic crisis. The proportion was much higher in countries which had been worst affected by the crisis and where there was high youth unemployment, such as Greece (93 %), Portugal (86 %) and Cyprus (81 %), compared with Denmark (31 %), Malta (28 %) and Germany (27 %) who were less affected. This was also mirrored in the EYE2016 event survey[13], in which 57 % of participants expressed feelings of marginalisation due to the economic crisis.
- 59 % of respondents in the European Youth in 2016 survey felt that their national education system was well adapted to the current demands of the world of work. However, 84 % of participants at the EYE2016 event wanted to run their own business, but only 30 % on average felt that they were taught sufficient entrepreneurial skills at school. This differed across countries, though, with 75 % of participants from Finland indicating they had an opportunity to explore entrepreneurship at school, while few participants from Spain, for instance, rated their entrepreneurship education.[14]
- About 1 in 6 young people (15 %) were compelled to leave their country to study or take part in training because of the crisis.
- Young Europeans were less likely to travel to study or find work. Only about 1 in 3 (32 %) said they would like to study, train or work in another EU member state.
- Only 12 % have studied, trained or worked abroad in the past or are currently doing so.

Other issues that concerned young people included migration, whereby 76 % of EYE2016 participants felt that the EU had a duty to accept more migrants and the vast majority thought that European societies were preventing the successful integration of migrants, and not the migrants themselves. Nearly three quarters (72.6 %) of respondents also thought that European leaders were not doing enough to prevent climate change.[15]

1.4 Key aims

The NNfE campaign sought to facilitate debate among and with young people across Europe to explore their concerns and challenges in daily life, as well as their ideas about what could be done to address these.

[11] European Commission Memo on young people's participation in out-of-school activities
[12] European Parliament (2016) European Youth in 2016
[13] European Parliament (2016) Shaping Europe: 50 ideas for a better future. The EYE Report 2016
[14] European Parliament (2016) Shaping Europe: 50 ideas for a better future. The EYE Report 2016
[15] European Parliament (2016) Shaping Europe: 50 ideas for a better future. The EYE Report 2016

The key aims of the campaign were:

- To create an active and dynamic online space contributed to by a significant number of young Europeans from across all EU 28 countries;
- To develop a cohesive package of New Narrative activities where national events, the ambassadors, debates in classrooms (through the eTwinning network), work of artists, and online activities, complement each other and contribute to a clear narrative with a vision for the future of Europe; and
- To collect a coherent set of findings about what young people see as important elements of the European narrative through the use of appropriate online channels and structured facilitation.

1.5 Report outline

The remainder of the report provides first an overview of the underlying methodologies applied in the campaign. It gives insight into the initial research carried out to hone in on the key topic areas.

The report will then provide insights into the individual tools and competitions, their key outcomes and performance, as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of the individual activity. Focussing in on the key topic areas around which the campaign was structured, findings from each of the activities are analysed under the relevant theme, providing insights from an analytical perspective as well as using young people's own words. The final chapter summarises the key findings and provides a set of recommendations for each of the key themes.

2.0 WHAT DID YOUNG PEOPLE SAY?

The campaign involved consultation of young people across a range of topic areas that are seen as key future policy areas and that are known to affect young people. This section draws on material from all campaign activities and summarises young people's views. It also draws on summary reports from a series of thematic events across Europe (see Annex I). Contributions to the debate were structured around a set of questions for each activity (see Table 4.1), supplemented by responses to the photo competition (see Section 4.2), the short story competition (see Section 4.3) and the video competition (see Section 4.4). The consultation website was offered in multiple languages and a small number of respondents provided insights in languages other than English. With very few exceptions, the responses were quite extensive and showed in-depth engagement with the question.

While each set of questions addresses a specific theme, many of the responses cut across several themes (e.g. employment

Table 4.1 Overview of key topic areas and specific sub-questions of the consultation

Mobility and employment	Civic engagement and belonging
• Unpaid internships: What are the alternatives? • What is the best way to help unemployed young people into work? • How can we make it easier to work in another EU country? • Do you think we should choose our studies and vocational training based on a projected number of job vacancies in that field?	• How can the EU help to mitigate extremist views prevalent in the media? • How can we get young people more of a voice in the democratic process? • How can the EU make it easier for young people to be more involved in EU issues? • Why do large numbers of young people not vote in elections? • What's the best way to ensure young people know about what the EU is doing and how it works? • How can young people learn more about the EU? • What would encourage more people to vote or participate in public life? • What would you do if you were the "President of the European Union"?
Freedom of movement and security	**Environment**
• What can the EU do to promote peace and stability outside of the EU? • How can we help communities deal with the pressures of large scale population movements? • What more can be done to tackle the migration crisis? • What about you: do you feel you belong to Europe and in what ways? • How can we make it easier to study, work or volunteer in another European country? • How can we tackle political extremism? •	• What's the best way to promote an ecological lifestyle among young people? • What can be done across the EU to protect the environment? • What is the best way to inform young people about climate change issues? • Should we promote EU wide recycling? • How can we encourage more sustainable transport choices? • How can we get young people's voices heard on climate issues?

Source: NNfE website

While each set of questions addresses a specific theme, many of the responses cut across several themes (e.g. employment and free movement or employment and the environment). This highlights the importance of the chosen themes to young people in general, but also their creativity in finding solutions to several issues.

As a caveat, and this was beautifully highlighted in one of the thematic events, it should be noted that young people are not a homogenous group with one view and one voice. Assuming that this was the case would be simplistic and in some cases dangerous. However, the variety of concerns and ideas provided in the following sections provides a snapshot of the ideas of those involved and a springboard for further exploration.

2.1 Mobility and employment

Unsurprisingly, the issue of youth unemployment was a key focus for those contributing to the consultation and in the events. The key issues in the employment debate focused around making career choices, unpaid internships, ways to support young people into work and enabling mobility across member states.

2.1.1 Career choices and accessing the labour market

Views on the issue of how young people should **choose their future careers** were broadly mixed. On the one hand, there were those who highlighted the importance of playing to someone's strengths, using their talents and interests rather than being steered by market economies. On the other hand, there were those that highlighted that there was little point in studying something that would not lead to a job and that young people should be pushed to take up studies or training in areas with known skills shortages. A third view that emerged was that close consideration needed to be paid to "what the blind imperative to 'follow the market' would mean for the future of the whole society". Here, the point was made that, while for some professions absorption into the labour market is slow and thus young people tend to be deterred from taking up those professions, they are vital to secure the survival of the population. An example that was mentioned in this context was that of geologists in Italy, particularly in the light of recent natural disasters.

Comments indicated that, in particular, young people from countries with difficult labour markets for them (e.g. Spain, Italy, Greece) had adapted their attitude from studying/ learning what they enjoyed and had a talent in, to taking a more practical approach and choosing career options that would provide higher employment chances in the end. Equally, some alluded to the resulting brain drain that the lack of employment chances in general had for member states, regardless of what area or sector young people had studied or trained in.

A key thread that developed from these comments, as well as from some of the event reports, focussed on **supporting careers guidance and careers decision making**. Many young people were not aware of the career opportunities in some industries and had only limited or stereotypical knowledge of some professions. Building knowledge about careers, as well as developing career decision-making capacities among young people and the ability

to make career changes later on in life were seen as vital stepping stones, as this comment outlines:

> **"There should be much more awareness among pupils of where the good work perspectives are. This knowledge should be outlined for them while still in an early stage of education, so that they are able to make decisions whether to specialise in science or humanistic studies. [...] For me, before choosing high school, every school should organise a series of meetings with people from various branches of business who would critically assess the work perspectives in their fields and truthfully tell the young people what their opportunities are."**

They also identified an opportunity for **early information about EU programmes to support mobility and study choices** (including studying abroad for a full degree). Several young people pointed out that they found out too late that they could study in other EU countries for their full degree. This was a strong theme at some of the events, where the need for more information about programmes that are accessible to young people was expressed.

While the market could provide useful cues, young people were also aware that the environment was quickly changing and therefore a purely market and forecast based approach was not feasible. If governments pushed certain fields strongly, they might not be prepared if sudden changes occurred and it would take a generation to catch up, by which time a new skills gap might have opened.

Concepts that were mostly associated with comments from those who opposed market-based career choices included vocation, passion, talent, motivation and initiative. These young people believed strongly that if someone studied or trained in an area that they were not really passionate about or had little interest in, they would end up dissatisfied, unmotivated and ultimately unproductive in their chosen careers, as these people outline:

> **"We have to understand that there is always a number of people interested in a specific area and forcing them to change their minds will make them bad employees in a popular branch, when they could have been the best ones in another field."**

> **"No, no, no and no. You must do what excites you, what motivates you to do your best. ... But if one chooses to study something that is not what [they are] really passionate [about] but because 'it is the best choice to study because then you will find a job', eventually he may end up doing it reluctantly, and so the world will eventually be filled with unmotivated people and with little initiative."**

They had a strong sense that all professions had something to offer to society as a whole and people should be free to choose.

A key problem was to **facilitate access to the labour market** in general, whether this was for labour markets in their home nations or in other member states. Comments from participants addressed different barriers for young people, some of which were more structural in nature while others related more to attitudes.

Of the structural issues that were raised, **transport and the physical lack of employment opportunities**, particularly in rural regions, were the most pressing issues. Transport connections into major cities were often poor or expensive, or even non-existent. As a result, young people were forced to move to cities (which were generally more costly) if they wanted to engage in further education or training or enter the labour market. There was a clear sense that this had wide reaching issues for the cohesion of rural communities, with jobs becoming even rarer and communities ageing rapidly. This produced a vicious circle. Equally, the cost of transport could make further education, training and employment unachievable for some and thus have implications for their career development. Rural locations were also associated with a lack of engagement and networking opportunities for young people (and thus their ability to access hidden labour markets). The most popular suggestion again focused on providing a bursary or financial support to young people to either afford transport or access networking events.

Other structural barriers related to the lack of practical experience in university curricula. Several participants suggested to make it a **requirement to have a longer work experience period** as part of any university degree. This could take the form of either an in-company placement or entrepreneurship education including safe, supported test trading.

An attitudinal issue was brought forward on both the employer's side and the side of young people. There was a feeling among commentators that young people were often not taken seriously, their behaviour lacked structure and discipline, but equally young people were not given an opportunity to develop these skills due to these **preconceived stereotypes about the younger generation**.

> **"Giving them opportunities and showing them respect and structure is the key, I think. I've noticed that, sadly, this is often lacking. The problem is: How can you expect the next generation to be hard-working, disciplined and reliable if the people who are in charge of the working environment right now aren't any better? [...] You have to live the values you want to see in other people."**

While youth projects were a good start, they often had limited reach and in some cases were not applied enough, it was said. This was combined with a **culture of failure being unacceptable** which limited innovation and creative thinking to allow young people to develop ideas and skills. This comment sums this up perfectly:

> **"Trust them, believe in their abilities, give them opportunities, responsibilities, challenge them. And allow them to fall and start again. Help and show them. [The] World needs active young people."**

This was also seen as particularly important in the context of promoting entrepreneurship and allowing young people to develop their own business ideas and enterprises. **Financial support for young people to start businesses and entrepreneurship education** were frequently mentioned.

2.1.2 Unpaid internships

Unpaid internships were seen as unethical, exploitative and, as a concept, unnecessary.

Many young people, on the platform and during the events, expressed anger over some companies' practices to displace workers with interns/trainees and have cheap, temporary labour available. Internships and traineeships were not felt to have the same weight as a proper job on people's CVs, and the accumulation of multiple internship periods was often seen as counter-productive in the search for a permanent job because it signified that an individual was unable to find employment, which had implicit quality implications as these comments suggest:

> **"Internships are good to have a first work experience, but collecting four/five traineeships on your CV because you cannot find a normal job could also be counter-productive."**

> **"This is also because traineeships are not considered as a job, and in fact on a CV a traineeship cannot be considered by recruiters as [being as] strong and relevant as a job experience."**

While many respondents understood that there were opportunity costs for employers who took on an intern or trainee, they felt that these individuals did bring some (and in some cases a lot of) expertise, which should not be provided for free. A suggestion to deal with this was to establish a "minimum wage" for internships, which would be based on geographic characteristics to enable interns and trainees to at least cover basic living expenses. Participants recognised that an introduction of a "minimum wage" could have adverse effects, particularly for the willingness of small and medium-sized companies to offer traineeships/internships because they could not afford it. Here, it was suggested to provide a **subsidy for small companies towards the remuneration** or a **financial incentive to hire a trainee** after their traineeship/internship period.

As mentioned above, the introduction of a "**minimum wage for interns/trainees**" was also promoted in the context of **reducing social inequalities** which were inherent in the concept of unpaid internships. A minimum wage would also make internships/traineeships accessible to a more diverse youth population and not just to those who can afford it, thus creating more social cohesion, which would eventually also affect diversity and equality in boardrooms.

Young people also expressed discontent over the perceived traineeship and internship practices of international organisations (such as the EU or the UN), which were often seen as setting a bad example to companies and society as a whole due to offering insufficient or no financial compensation. From their perspective, regulating internship practices for employers had little weight if they were not appropriate internally. **International organisations needed to be role models with regard to paying interns and trainees appropriately** in order to set a positive example. Equally, if regulations around internships are in place, they should be enforced to increase the quality of available internships. Here, for instance, a "naming and shaming" campaign was suggested for companies that provide low-quality internships.

In an effort to support higher quality internships and traineeships, several young people suggested **establishing a traineeship/**

internship programme similar to Erasmus but with companies directly. This way it would be ensured that the participants were not unpaid and had reasonable expenses covered, while companies could advertise their opportunities through a central resource. This would also make it easier for young people to find internships/traineeships abroad and provide assurance that they would have value.

2.1.3 Supporting mobility and removing barriers

Mobility and removing barriers were key in the eyes of young people when it came to enabling them to working abroad. Mobility and freedom of movement were widely seen as a strength of the European Union, yet young people felt they were **not very well prepared to even consider moving abroad**, because it was difficult to find information about jobs and how job applications in the relevant country are made. Barriers applied particularly to administrative systems, which were seen as non-transparent and difficult to understand for those moving from another country. National websites were only available in the national language, which added additional complexity through a language barrier. Moreover, while theoretically social security systems were aligned, in practice there was very little connection. This made it difficult for young people who were mobile to understand where they needed to go to register for unemployment and health insurance in the relevant member state, or what was required to find housing, register as a resident or open bank accounts. It was difficult to find trustworthy information on these topics. One of the young people described the situation as follows:

> **"What I've noticed is that many young people have plans to go abroad to work, volunteer or learn, but it's very difficult to find complex and trustworthy information on this topic. Seeking for volunteering offers, such as EVS, means leaping from site to site and reading more text than in some school lectures, without the certainty of finding what you need."**

One of the key suggestions was therefore to **create a central information hub** that had transparent information for all member states and neighbouring countries that clearly and in non-technical language outlined the administrative processes required and expected living expenses, as well as vital information to get settled. This could potentially also include international job opportunities.

The language barrier was also a key obstacle in this regard. Young people felt limited in their ability to be mobile because of language requirements placed within labour markets. While most of them learned English in school, this did not necessarily provide access to labour markets of non-English speaking countries and therefore limited the target countries that young people could move to. Several young people suggested promoting an international, English speaking labour market in the EU member states to remove the language barrier and make labour markets generally more accessible. Another suggestion to address this problem included to **offer a language learning portal for free** (for instance the Online Linguistic Support available to Erasmus+ participants). Other suggestions included making programmes

available in their original language and not dubbing them, and offering subtitles. Young people cited the examples of the Nordic countries where, in their view, because TV programmes were never dubbed, the level of English language competence was perceived to be much higher compared to other countries.

Costs were a major issue for young people. There were several comments that, while the Erasmus programme was excellent for fostering exchange and understanding, it was non-inclusive, as the bursaries in many cases were insufficient to cover living expenses (rent) abroad. This was a major obstacle for young people from disadvantaged families and regions, who felt excluded from the measure. **Bursaries or an Erasmus+ scheme for young professionals** were suggested to support young people to move abroad, gain professional experience, and boost the often low salaries offered for internships and traineeships (see also the comments below about unpaid internships, which are closely related to this issue). Somewhat related to this was extending the age limit for programmes such as Erasmus+ to include individuals up to 35 years, or to generally open it up to everyone under certain conditions.

EU youth programmes (Erasmus+ and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs or the EVS) were perceived to **lack visibility** and have a **lack of information**, and young people felt they should be promoted more (and especially in more rural areas where there was a perceived lack of EU presence as a whole). Many young people, including at the events, commented that they stumbled upon programmes like the EVS by pure chance through social media. They knew little about them and how they could benefit from them, especially in areas such as vocational education or gaining experience through long-term volunteering placements (although again, aspects of accessibility were highlighted, particularly from a financial perspective). It was perceived that these programmes could become more flexible to also accommodate internships/traineeships, as well as more highly qualified young people, as this comment suggests:

> **"[The] European Union [has] great programmes for youth (Erasmus+, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, Youth Guarantee). These programmes just should be adjusted for more flexibility and promoted more..."**

2.1.4 Normalising mobility in daily life

Several comments pointed towards making it more normal to be mobile and tackling the fear of the unknown from an early age. If encounters with young people from other cultures and countries is part of a person's life from a young age (and not in a holiday context), it takes away the fear of the "other" and promotes learning and understanding of histories, contexts and similarities that exist. This young person outlines their experience:

> **"In my experience the biggest challenge to beat is the fear of moving out of your country and known environment, like your family and friends. For example at the age of 13 I could have participated in an exchange programme to Ireland, but I declined, because I wanted to stay with my friends at home and was afraid to enter a new strange culture with a different language."**

This process should include learning another language from a very young age, possibly in kindergarten (which in many member states is already implemented though not necessarily on a large scale), which would remove the initial language barrier and a hurdle to engage with another culture.

Across member states, the process of normalising mobility also included the issue of **recognition of qualifications and skills**, which was a major obstacle to mobility for young people. Comments included frequent references to academic qualifications not being recognised as equivalent to national qualifications (despite formal agreements). Formal recognition processes in other member states were often costly and there was little information available as to whether formal recognition of qualifications was actually necessary to work in a particular profession in another member state.

2.2 Civic engagement and belonging

This thematic area covered a broad range of individual topics, but focused primarily on ways to get more young people engaged in EU issues, as well as on what could be done to increase their participation in elections. The catch-all question "What would you do if you were President of the EU for a day?" was also offered, which allowed young people to express their most urgent need. This question is analysed in a separate section below to highlight the areas of greatest interest.

2.2.1 Civic engagement

Civic engagement primarily explored the reasons why young people did not vote in elections and what could be done to get them to participate in elections and in public life more widely.

The question of why young people did not participate in elections produced some interesting insights. On the one hand, it brought to light the **feeling of disconnect from a political system and institution that did not care about young people**. The EU was seen as "making politics for baby boomers" and it was thought it did not care about the interests of young people. Several young people expressed deep disenfranchisement with politicians whose policies forced them to take low-paid, insecure jobs or even to move to another member state to find employment at all. They felt unrepresented at national level, as well as at European level, which also came through in some of the event reports.

> **"Finding a party which totally represents you is impossible. Informing about parties takes a lot of effort. Subjects of electoral campaigns barely affect us directly.**
>
> **Frustration follows, either because it feels that nobody cares or because one was let down."**

There was also disillusionment about what the EU could achieve. It was seen as a purely administrative machine, and it was felt there was little point in voting for a politician if their impact was not really tangible.

> **"Why vote for a politician if I think he or she won't make any difference?"**
>
> **"Young people think you tell lies and this is why they ignore you."**
>
> **"They think their vote doesn't make a difference or maybe they don't want to feel like taking part in political wrongdoings."**

> **"They also feel that their voice won't be heard and that the status quo is more likely."**

Some young people expressed concern over the lack of participation in elections, conceding that many of their peers were not entirely clear about the consequences of not voting and therefore allowing the rise of extremism in all its forms. This was connected to a lack of knowledge and to politics not reaching young people through the media channels they consumed (which again was seen as a sign that the EU was mostly concerned with older people). Politicians were perceived as negative, self-interested elites, and politics as something that young people were not interested in.

To break this cycle, there needed to be positive role models for young people, who spoke their language and engaged through their preferred channels. It was felt that there were no youth-orientated movements that focused on political participation and therefore young people viewed the political system as complex and did not participate.

Another track that was followed was that of **feeling distant**. The EU was "**far away**" and did not reach young people in their member states, especially not rural areas. National, regional and local level politics were visible to young people and politicians were also more visible, but there was no such exposure for the European Union. Campaigns tended to focus on national capitals and major regional cities, but little offer was made to bring the EU to smaller, more remote communities and engage young people in discussion. Overall, it was felt that the EU had a **communications problem and an image problem**, as this comment outlines:

> **"The problem is always the same: there's a need to reach out [to] more European citizens, make them feel like the EU is 'sexy' and not something old and boring. Promote what the EU is doing for them, what affects them directly in their daily lives!"**

Figure 4.1 Results from Twitter poll on voting in EU elections

A poll focused on the question of why young people did not vote more in EU elections. This poll received 35 responses on the European Youth Channel, with most respondents saying they "Can't get enough info" (see Figure 4.1). However, more than a quarter of respondents said that European citizens were simply not interested in the EU. This issue will be discussed further in Section 5.

Source: https://twitter.com/EuropeanYouthEU/status/809420500069974016

This links in with some of the topics above, where young people said that it was not easy to find information that pertained to and was relevant for young people.

To address this disengagement, young people offered a number of solutions, which centred mostly around **improving the reach of and information about the European Union**, which is discussed in more detail in section 4.2.2. However, there were also a few other suggestions on how young people could be more engaged in civic life.

One of them focused on creating clearer leadership and having a "President of the European Union" was frequently suggested. Parliamentary elections were seen as less engaging than presidential elections and therefore voting for a President was seen as a way to get more people engaged. While this is not possible under the current treaties, the idea of creating a European Union as a nation state is clearly underlying this idea.

There was also a notion that civic life included more than just casting a vote in elections and that young people should be more directly involved in policy and decision-making. Young people felt that if they were given responsibility for a particular project, its development, organisation and implementation, they would be more engaged and active. However, they were often turned away from these kinds of opportunities.

2.2.2 Promoting knowledge about the EU

Education was a central issue here. Many young people pointed out that within their respective nations' education systems, the **EU did not feature as a topic** and therefore many young people had a negative opinion about the EU. This was perpetuated by media reporting, they felt. This inherent lack of knowledge about the EU and EU politics was also emphasised through resorting to myths (e.g. the length or curvature of bananas) to illustrate unnecessary red tape. Therefore, they felt that it should be mandatory for EU member states to offer an EU-focused curriculum. This was a popular suggestion although impracticable due to the responsibility of member states for their respective education systems and curricula. However, the promotion of an EU-focused curriculum could be possible. Other suggestions that were made with regard to this included to train up workshop facilitators (young people were also suggested for this role, which would then provide an employability boost) in each member state who would then go into schools and run workshops with young people on EU topics and institutions. Youth organisations across Europe were seen as key, untapped organisations to support this.

Equally, visits to EU institutions to make the EU more 'real' to young people and to demonstrate what its work was about were also heavily promoted among respondents.

An issue that related to this was that several young people said that it was **difficult to find information about and for young people** on the European Union websites and that as a result many young people got frustrated and ultimately did not know about the opportunities offered to them. Here, promoting Erasmus exchanges and making them a greater part of general education at all levels was seen as a valuable tool.

Creating more opportunities to meet and engage – on the one hand with EU officials to bring the EU closer to its people (particularly in rural areas) and on the other hand for young people to meet and exchange – were also seen as key to increasing knowledge about the EU and European issues. Section 4.2.1 already covered bringing the EU closer to its people, therefore the focus in this section will be on bringing young people together. Young people highlighted several options that would be educational as well as entertaining, such as the following example:

> **"Create 'Model European Parliament' conferences, similar to Model UN, which will be promoted and funded by the EU. Through such conferences, student delegates can engage in fruitful political discussion and solve real problems that the EU is facing and debating. In the past, committees like the 'EU Council of Ministers' have been introduced in regional MUN conferences, and students have loved them."**

This would also circumvent the problem, addressed by some young people, that a series of lectures, even if interesting, was unlikely to attract young people and generally did not communicate what was happening at the EU institutions very clearly. Through experience and practice, young people would "truly understand what the whole concept is about".

In an effort to reach young people, several contributors suggested media-based solutions, including an app that would deliver information about the EU and its institutions and allow the delivery of personalised news, which would also include relevant EU projects in that specific area and opportunities to get engaged. Alternatively, campaigns should be run to promote youth activities and opportunities more and to make them more visible to young people.

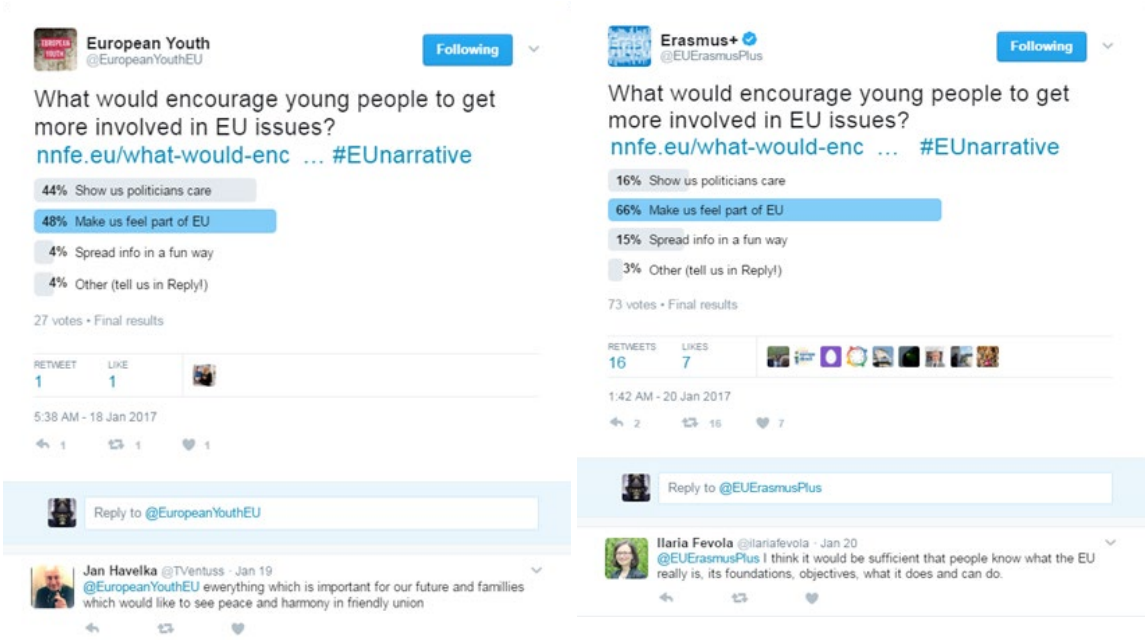
Similarly, a popular suggestion was to produce a TV drama/cartoon about the EU that accurately reflected the workings of the institutions (and was available for free), as well as to create a YouTube channel with youth-focused news in appropriate language, possibly available in several EU languages. Young people felt that the EU was communicating through media channels that were not really accessed by them.

> **"Giving a greater presence to European institutions in cinematic fiction, for example, can make them more interesting to youngsters, simultaneously transmitting useful knowledge and civic virtues.**
>
> **How about developing cross-media outlets that are directed straight at the young people? To reach a certain population, you have to use their medium. There could be a regular programme telling us what is happening at EU level every week/day, and that would look a bit more attractive than existing channels, using social media for example."**

2.2.3 Feeling European – Belonging

Two polls were run with the question "What would encourage young people to get more involved in EU issues?" on the Erasmus+ and European Youth Twitter channels. A total of 100 responses were received and the majority of participants selected the response "Make us feel part of the EU" (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Results from Twitter polls on getting involved



Source: https://twitter.com/EuropeanYouthEU/status/821713411251773441
https://twitter.com/EUErasmusPlus/status/822378704303046657

While this indicated that many young people indeed feel a disconnect between the EU and themselves, there was overwhelming support for the European project.

The concept that shone through from the consultation responses as well as most of the event reports was that of **unity in diversity**. Even though some questioned the idea of a European identity, they subscribed to the concepts of shared ideas, a shared wish for peaceful coexistence and prosperity. In their view, it would be a shame if the European identity superseded national identities and cultures, in the sense that it would wipe out the cultural diversity within Europe that makes it what it is. The European identity tends to be multi-layered, as this quote highlights:

> **"I am European, as well as a world citizen, without forgetting where I come from. This makes me who I am."**

There was an overwhelming sense of achievement in creating the European Union and the opportunities this had afforded individuals (through for instance Erasmus exchanges), and a sense that this was worth protecting and fighting for. However, there was also a realisation that many EU nationals did not fully appreciate the advantages the EU had brought them, simply because they had very little exposure to the EU, and because they lacked knowledge about its origins and original purpose, as this comment highlights:

"We should teach younger generations what the EU is, how it came to be, and everything good that it provides to each and every one of us. I think most of the people that are against it or see it as a negative thing, think so because they don't know what it brings to the table."

Perhaps the most glowing example of what it means to feel and be European came from this comment, which summarised the essence of all the points above:

"I definitely feel 100 % European. I'm a French citizen (with Latvian, Polish and Italian roots). I've moved to Poland for a year for Erasmus, and then to the Netherlands to do my Master's and then to Belgium to follow my Belgian boyfriend. We have been living in Belgium for 6 years now and we are thinking of leaving for another European country. I feel like we could feel at home in virtually any European capital. During my twenties I've travelled to every single EU member state (+ 8 other European countries). In every single one of those trips, I cherished the diversity of our cultures, languages, foods, landscapes, architecture and people. And our similarities. All this is almost at our fingertips, a bus or a train away. I find this an incredible treasure and I feel oh so lucky to be a European."

2.3 Freedom of movement and security

While freedom of movement was seen as one of the core strengths of the European Union, it was possibly also the most politically charged topic in the consultation, particularly in the context of Brexit. This was demonstrated through a small number of submissions that called for the EU to be disbanded and borders to be closed and more heavily guarded, as well as for swifter processing and more effective repatriation of refugees. Posts under this theme also highlighted the astute awareness of social inequalities and the feeling of being left behind and abandoned by young people in more rural regions where large population movements towards cities and countries, where better jobs were on offer, had effectively depopulated the region. It is also worth noting that due to the highly politicised content, there were only very few practicable suggestions for the future of Europe.

On the security question there were two distinct opinions promoted. Some felt the EU should get more involved in conflicts in an effort to really resolve the conflicts, rather than sitting on the fence as it was perceived. Some participants outlined that through not being involved the EU had let conflicts, particularly in Syria, get out of hand. While only few promoted military engagement, more respondents asked that the EU take a more prominent role as a peace broker and defender of human rights, as this comment outlines:

"Si, siempre y cuando no intervenga activamente en el conflicto y ayude al más necesitado o desfavorecido. Es importante que la UE desarrolle planes de paz en otros países, si actúa como un intermediario entre los países partes de un conflicto, asegurando la paz entre ambos y velando por los Derechos del Hombre y del Ciudadano, actuando conforme a principios y valores básicos, como el derecho a la libertad, a la integridad física y la vida... Intentando crear un equilibrio."

[**"Yes, provided they do not actively intervene in the conflict and help the most needy or**

disadvantaged. It is important that the EU develops peace plans in other countries, it acts as an intermediary between the parties to a conflict, ensuring peace between them and ensuring human and citizenship rights, acting in accordance with basic principles and values, such as the right to freedom, physical integrity and life ... Trying to create a balance.]

There were many who felt that the EU should act in a role model capacity (tolerance, diversity and openness) and promote peace through cooperation. Participants outlined points such as:

"I think that the EU should promote peace and stability outside the EU but without being too strong, I mean each country, each continent is different and imposing a model without taking into account the cultural background of the people is not a good thing. The EU should offer its help and support initiative of peace showing to other continents what model we have and let them act."

"Stability is a matter of relation to others. Confidence in our politics, in our future, developing a sense of help and accompanying by being an example to others (and not forcing them to follow us)."

Cooperation and development support were seen as key tools to promote peace and stability. Fair trade agreements from which both parties would benefit were mentioned on the platform and throughout event reports in this context. Many participants felt that support should primarily be provided to countries that supported democracy and human rights.

Support for more volunteering action outside of the EU, on the one hand to promote technical support (education, civil rights) to countries, but also to foster learning and understanding of other cultures, was a frequently mentioned option that could support peace and stability. However, in some of the event reports, there were also cautious voices warning that the EU should not become a neo-colonial power.

Migration and refugees in particular divided opinions. On the one hand, participants called for the EU to stick to its promises to support first entry countries such as Greece and Italy to redistribute refugees across Europe as well as providing resources to carry out proper checks on individuals to bar them from entering if necessary. Swift and immediate repatriation in the event of failed asylum applications was also called for.

On the other hand, however, and this was the vast majority, young people wanted the EU to support refugees and better support their integration by offering educational projects, language programmes and cultural projects which would be available to refugees as well as the population of the host countries. Supporting cultural exchange, learning opportunities and dialogue were measures frequently mentioned in the event reports. This issue also played on themes of racism and homophobia, which should be worked against by offering safe and enjoyable opportunities (e.g. through sports or cultural engagement) for people to meet and get to know each other. These interactions should already start at a very young age (in school) in an effort to prevent racism and homophobia.

Closely related to this theme was that of extremism. There was a great depth of understanding that there were different forms of extremism, which however had a similar origin: the feeling of exclusion and not being listened to.

> **"The political extremism appears every time a social group feels excluded. There are many kinds of exclusion, but the main reason is economic inequality. As long as we treat others like an endless source of cheap workforce, we have to face the problem it causes. People who can't participate in society and have no perspectives for a change start to seek other places to feel appreciated and accepted. Some of them fall into the hands of religious fanatic groups and build their new identity on their lies and hatred. Others feel endangered by the diversity of modern society and join nationalist and populist movements, thinking they're protecting their lifestyle from 'malicious' outlanders."**

One of the question strands brought out some challenging views which highlighted this further. Particularly with regards to political extremism, some young people outlined that **the rise of populism and nationalism** in their view was related to a disillusionment with politics and politicians; the fact that their needs and fears were not addressed through policies and that politicians had forgotten them in favour of established elites and those who they would get sure votes from (wealthy and old people). Parties and ideologies were valued more highly than people and their needs, and politics was simply self-serving and hypocritical. This comment summarises this point succinctly:

> **"When due consideration is not given to this arising awareness in young people, and the implications it raises for education and society, then simplistic solutions, which often present an opportunity to take action, can become attractive."**

Interestingly, this brought about an exchange as close to a debate as the format of the platform would allow. Several young people responded to these messages, outlining the importance of learning from history and engaging with uncomfortable thinking and thoughts even though they may not reflect their own opinion, as a sign of education, as well as the greater potential of tackling issues together rather than individually as nations.

Young people were very aware that it was difficult to create a community that was inclusive of everyone and where everyone could happily coexist. Key approaches to tackling extremism were seen in educating people about the consequences of extremism, tackling social exclusion and economic inequality, promoting dialogue between cultures and building local communities. It required joint action from public administrations, the third sector and civil society.

An interesting, but controversial suggestion to bring about a change in thinking and perception of individuals who had committed a hate crime was to carry out a kind of community service and work with the particular group of people they had committed the crime against. This was to help further their understanding of the different cultures and "realise the similarities and the richness diversity brings to all our lives".

The **role the media played in promoting extremism** was also a topic that attracted a range of comments. A lot of comments reflected a distrust in the media and the news they reported. The media were seen as following their own agendas, distributing untruthful and highly biased stories (fake news) and as a result had lost all credibility. One view was to focus on 'facts and figures' as well as consulting multiple media sources to achieve a more balanced view. However, this required education and engagement in critical thinking, which should be promoted from a young age.

2.4 Environment

The **environment and ecological lifestyle** were popular topics that required urgent action in the eyes of young people. This theme produced by far the most drastic responses, which highlights the high level of concern of young people, as well as a willingness to promote change. Many suggestions under this theme had a very action-orientated and enabling focus, which is possibly because young people believe that they can have an immediate impact in this area through their own behaviour, compared to feeling powerless with regard to employment, regulations around freedom of movement or influencing politics. A prime example is the promotion of recycling at European level, where all respondents said that it should be a priority, but also then expanding into other issues such as reducing waste and reusing materials.

For many recycling was already a part of everyday life, although they admitted that there were generational differences. However, overall it was seen as a simple and very effective way to look after the environment. A key obstacle however was that recycling was regulated at different levels of government and in some cases differed from city to city, which made it difficult when individuals moved house and even more difficult when they moved country. A frequent call was therefore for a **common European recycling system and the promotion of recycling** in all member states.

> **"Yes! Promoting campaigns that highlight the importance of recycling and creating a standard European system, since traveling to other countries can be confusing when it comes to recycling, since their systems are quite different."**

At the same time young people were critical of enforcing a recycling system through fines as they felt that the population needed to fully buy into any system to make it effective and thus countries needed to be able to develop their own systems that worked in their contexts. Some felt the role of the EU should rather be to incentivise countries to adopt recycling (and thus also act as a role model for others) and promote the benefits of recycling to member states and citizens.

> **"Eu acho que é muito importante ajudar a promover reciclagem no continente que estamos a viver." [I think it is very important to help promote recycling on the continent that we are living on.]**

> **"También es importante las campañas publicitarias sobre como reciclar y porqué." [Advertising campaigns about how to recycle and why are also important.]**

However, recycling was only one part of the equation and young people highlighted that a general shift in behaviour to reduce and reuse was also needed to effectively protect the environment. They were very clear that there were issues in promoting this concept as it might affect economic productivity (less production of goods), but in the context of finite resources thought that infinite growth was not practicable in any case. What was needed was a shift also in the economy to **focus more on reducing waste and reusing materials**. Incentives in the form of a recycling deposit (e.g. you receive money back for returning empty bottles) were also cited as effective measures to improve recycling.

Enabling sustainable transport was also a key issue among young people. While there was great awareness that, particularly in rural areas, the car was often the only feasible transport option, there was widespread disappointment that more was not being done to enable more sustainable forms of transport and increase the awareness of people's carbon footprint.

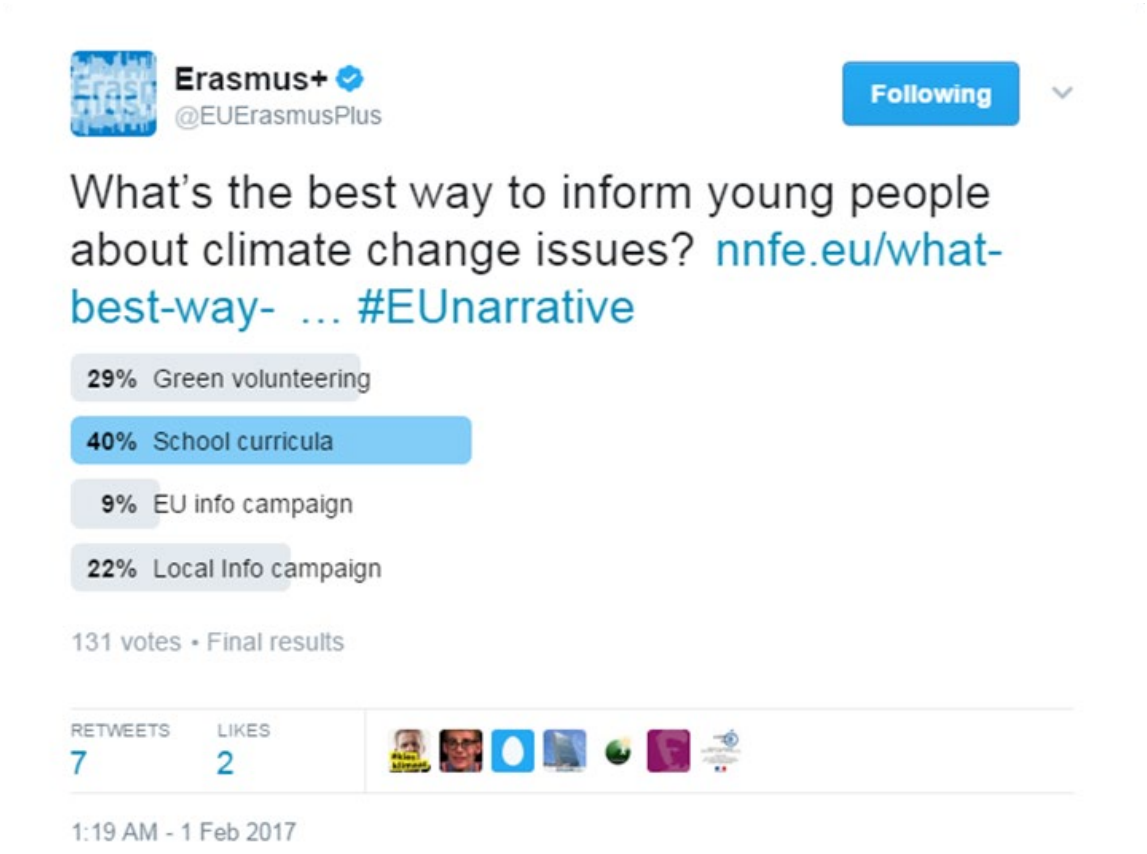
At European level, it was difficult to find out information about local transport when going to other member states, often due to language issues. This led to people not being able to access information when planning trips or benefitting from special offers, so that rather than using sustainable transport options, they resorted to cars and planes. One participant offered this suggestion:

> **"I'm talking about a platform where it will be possible to search for the easiest and cheapest connection between A and B, whether the travel goes across borders or not. The platform could feature for instance train, bus, car sharing, ferries and airline connections, while calculating the price and CO2 footprint for any chosen transportation form."**

Many felt that the local infrastructures did not **incentivise sustainable transport options** or make them easily accessible and attractive. At the core was the realisation that local infrastructures and cost did not make cars unattractive as a means of transport. On the contrary, cost and lack of availability made public transport an unattractive option. The privatisation of public transport and the ensuing rise in cost had made public transport less attractive than using cars. A common suggestion was to raise carbon taxes on petrol and vehicles to make cars more expensive as means of transport. The additional money raised could be used to subsidise public transport systems, improve them and thus make them more attractive and sustainable in the long run.

There was also a need **to integrate environmental issues into education**. One of the polls conducted on the theme of climate change was very popular, with 131 participants. School curricula were seen as the most effective way to inform young people about climate change and environmental issues and particularly to encourage critical reasoning and reflection (see Figure 4.3.). Green volunteering and local information campaigns were also rated highly, suggesting a much broader approach to engaging with this issue may be necessary.

Figure 4.3 Results from Twitter poll on information about climate change



Source: Erasmus+ Twitter Feed

Here, concepts such as self-sufficiency training, general educational campaigns about the environment and its protection, as well as plastic free challenges in schools to promote shopping at markets and local shops were proposed. These would also help to address the problem of disconnect from nature that many young people who have lived in cities all their life have experienced. Young people identified a general problem with lifestyles which promoted consumption and a "here and now" attitude, which generally did not align with environmental goals.

At global level, young people felt the EU needed to take a much stronger stance in protecting the environment through banning trophy hunting and the ivory trade, protecting vital living spaces of endangered species and, as a priority, getting tough on corruption, which was cited as the biggest enabler of environmental crimes. Additionally, there were suggestions around promoting organic farming, reducing packaging materials, promoting and setting quotas for renewable energies, extending the warranty period on electrical products to reduce electronic waste, promoting less meat consumption to decrease greenhouse gas emissions from livestock farming and setting Corporate Environmental Responsibility goals for corporations.

Project suggestions to promote the environment

Create virtual reality educational tools

This suggestion focused on using new technology, such as virtual reality, to take individuals on a "trip" to for instance the rainforest or other eco-sites, so that they could directly "see" and learn at the same time. Virtually being there would make them feel more connected to the problem and thus be more likely to have a lasting effect.

A search engine to generate money for projects

A suggestion included to raise money through a bespoke search engine where a small percentage of the advertising fee for priority placement would be donated to environmental projects Europe-wide. Funds raised could be allocated on the basis of each country's usage of the search engine.

Union Treeways

One suggestion was to highlight the common concern for nature and unity among member states using a natural art installation, where streets/cycle paths crossing borders into other member states could be lined with native trees from each member state of the European Union.

Provide Seed Bombs

To promote and educate people about the environment, towns could make soil and seeds available to their citizens and encourage them to plant and grow the trees in their gardens (or elsewhere). This would engage people from an educational point of view, bring them together as a community and help prevent deforestation.

Use theatre and plays for education

While formal education was seen as a vital avenue to explore, there were several suggestions to engage and deliver educational messages through other, more informal means such as theatrical plays, music, art and dance. These would offer more creative ways of engaging with the issue, but could deliver and promote small changes in lifestyle which eventually could have big effects.

Create an app/game that rewards environmentally friendly behaviour

The app should reward eco-friendly behaviour like walking or engaging in an educational activity (such as a quiz) with points that could eventually be used to get small rewards. This could be used to affect behavioural change over a longer period of time and thus promote a more ecological lifestyle in general.

2.5 Key actions for the "President of the European Union"

The question "What would you do if you were President of the European Union?" was the most popular in terms of number of responses across all of the themes. While initially this question was intended to support the civic engagement theme, it ended up being a "catch-all" for ideas that young people felt were not covered by the other questions. The comments also provide insights into what young people see as most urgently requiring action. The analysis shows that, broadly, the responses fall into the four thematic areas. Therefore, the following sections will be grouped along the four themes, highlighting the most innovative ideas in the participants' own words. This approach was taken in order to represent young people's voices and ideas more authentically, rather than a simple aggregated write up which may have drowned out the depth of their thinking and creativity.

The comments are fountains of ideas, some of which may be practicable, others not, due to member state responsibility in certain policy areas. Some suggestions are highly critical and controversial. They were included to give a voice to these thoughts as well, where they provided constructive criticism. Most comments included here were repeated in similar terms, but there is no ranking in terms of popularity. There is however some thematic grouping. The comments have minor edits (mainly spelling).

2.5.1 Mobility and employment

"I'd like to change the families' situation. Less taxes for parents with two children, free kindergarten and free education. Money shouldn't stop couples from having children."

"Reforming education in order to promote the development of individuals with non-formal education."

"Promote a life-long educational system in order to help people to adapt to the knowledge economy and not letting them behind."

"I would reconstruct the educational system so that no matter where a young person ends their learning, they have an opportunity to go into employment at every level with no delay. In short, focusing on the merger of education and work so that both sides benefit."

"If I were at the head of the EU, I'd harmonise secondary education in all of the EU, which would result in having one European school-leaving certificate. I'd make sure every pupil leaves school being fluent in another language than his by sending language teachers to different countries to teach their language."

"I would end the barriers that are in higher education and would fight to make education something universal. For anyone and everyone who wants to study can study, that education doesn't depend on the financial condition of their parents. So that everyone has access to a public education quality. The countries only gain when more educated citizens, we all win us."

"War on social exclusion and poverty. I would urge companies to voluntarily use an affordable percentage of their profits to create new jobs. Alternatively, I would urge for a Directive that creates fiscal incentives for companies that generate new jobs."

"I'd probably want to standardize taxes in ALL EU member countries, not only the rates would be the same, but also the forms, so everyone can finally understand what they should fill out."

2.5.2 Civic engagement and belonging

"I would make going to vote compulsory – with incentives, not punishments."

"Lower the voting age to 16."

"The most important thing: listen. Especially to the young people. They, WE, are the future, we should have a bigger influence (also a way to make youth interested in politics. Give them a voice and influence!)."

"I'd change the EU to United States of Europe, a federal system (English has to be the second official language, so that everyone can communicate with each other). It should have a President and a Parliament and you should vote for European parties, not for the socialist or conservative parties in your country."

"I would also reform the politics: governments should be representative of populations and all minorities should be present in the governments. People should be chosen randomly for one year to be part of government (paid by taxes) with few people elected to help leading the reflexions."

"The President of the European Commission should be elected directly to increase legitimacy. Parties should also campaign at the union level, rather than at the national level."

"If I were the President of the EU I would like to be elected directly by the European people. I would travel a lot all around the member states, taking part to ceremonies, concerts, life events in order to be the "President of the European people"."

"I would reform education to increase European education, civic education and critical thinking in class. I would reform the EU to be more transparent, more appealing and more democratic. I would concentrate my policy on a better and greater debate with Youth in order to create a modern Europe that listens to its people."

"Homeless people represent an issue across all Europe. I think that we should begin looking at them as useful to the community, instead of passing by and looking away."

"I would ban all lobbyists from Brussels, and ask every staff of the EU, including the MPs, to declare all incomes, holdings and interests. The EU needs to become extremely transparent, if it wants to convince people of its use."

"No more long talks and bureaucracy, we want a simple and flexible political system which the people can understand and identify with. We need accountable, visible faces to blame or give praise to!"

2.5.3 Freedom of movement and security

"Set up a generalized European organization which would take care of refugees by fixing a residence in a country and offering them an integration course (including learning a language, getting to know European culture and rights and support to get a job)."

"I'd fight intensely against all forms of extremism. One of the main goals of my term as president would be to reduce corruption in all nation-states as much as it's possible."

"I would start by reinstating the values of the European Union and propose a European migration solution problem that doesn't rely on Turkey and start creating real social changes for underprivileged people and minorities, in order to have these groups take part more in European society and share the values of the EU."

"Make one passport for the whole of EU, not one for each country."

"Order the creation of the ECIS. (European Centre for Intelligence and Security)."

"Economic migrants have to pass through a different process, they need to demonstrate they are qualified to live and work in the EU. We need qualified and competitive people for the future! And we need a lot of them! So we need to design a system to select the best ones."

"I would make a flexible constitution. It will set the rules for the core countries which want to integrate more and also for the ones who want to maintain themselves on the periphery of the Union."

"Treaty changes would be made to restrict the total free movement of people: citizens would be able to move freely between countries that are in the same tier as their native country, and a points-based system would be made for the movement of people between tiers. Citizens of another EU nation would be forced to return to their home country if they are unable to find work after 6 months, and would not be allowed to use the welfare system of their host country. Provisions would also be made to make it easier for nations to leave the EU, either partially or fully."

2.5.4 Environment

"Lower the taxes for eco-friendly products and raise the taxes of everything that isn't good for the environment and start up a commission to examine all kind of products."

"Give permission for new buildings only if their production process, materials and functions were 100 % green."

"I would also keep on promoting and implementing a very environmentally friendly urban culture, that would encourage use of bicycles and feet instead of cars, also placing an emphasis on green spaces and minimalist, eco-friendly style when it comes to architecture."

"Facilitating recycling through better urban planning and investing in more recycling facilities instead of landfills. City transport should run on renewable energy."

"I would focus on the supply safety, education, environment and security. I think that people should be more responsible with the environment and think about our future generation. If we don't take care of what we have, then who does? We should learn how to take care. We should learn how to share. And most important, we should learn how to help each other."

#MYEUROPEMYFUTURE COMPETITION ENTRIES

MANOEL LUCIANO ALVES DE SOUZA

MARTIBORDI

GROSU CATALIN

3.0 WHAT NOW?

This concluding chapter draws out key findings from the campaign activities and offers 12 suggestions for a new narrative across the cross-cutting themes.

3.1 General conclusions about the campaign

The NNfE consultation started in June 2016 and finished in April 2017, supported by a series of events in countries across Europe (see Annex 1 for a summary of the events). The aims were to open up the debate about the future of Europe to young people and gather their suggestions on key topics that affected them. The key mechanisms to achieve this were:

- an online platform where participants couple provide answers to key questions;
- three social media competitions where individuals could share their ideas through images, text and video;
- several youth engagement events across Europe; and
- a social media toolkit which was made available to ambassadors.

The platform and campaigns had promising levels of engagement with, to date, a total of 562 comments and entries to the various activities, with a very small number of duplicate entries. All these contributions provided in-depth insights into how young people perceive their situation in their respective member states with regard to a select number of issues. It is interesting that the emerging key findings do not vary much across Europe and young people face similar issues across the board. It is also necessary to note though that issues such as youth unemployment do not affect young people equally across Europe and that those countries who submitted the most suggestions tended to be those that were particularly affected by the issue.

A key aim of the campaign was to engage young people who are not necessarily engaged in discussions and debates around politics and youth issues through formal channels and to capture their ideas. The extent to which this has been achieved is debatable because the activities were mainly promoted through EU-affiliated social media channels and it is reasonable to assume that those subscribed to these channels are at least to some extent interested in EU affairs.

Overall, the campaign activities, in combination with the web platform, offered a multitude of engagement activities through creative channels. It was expected that the platform would produce the largest share of ideas and comments. The success of the photo competition (#MyEuropeMyFuture)

was not unexpected as photos are commonly shared. A less expected result was the high level of submissions to the video competition, #EUvision. The key here was to keep the parameters as simple and low-tech as possible in that only 10-second, unedited video selfies were allowed, which made the activity more accessible. This should be kept in mind when designing future activities. The #Tellusin12 concept worked exceptionally well due to its simplicity and immediacy. The barriers to engagement were low. This is a key learning point from the campaign activities: that low-key, simple measures are the most effective.

Reaching new audiences through ambassadors was proposed as a cornerstone to attract views from less engaged young people. The ambassador role and the social media toolkit have produced comparatively low levels of engagement thus far. This is possibly because ambassadors were contacted cold and, other than their previous participation in the initial debate around the future of Europe, there was little connecting them to this particular campaign. Additionally, if the goal is to reach new audiences through ambassadors, the choice of individual is key. The ambassadors who were contacted for this particular campaign are all part of the "Euro-bubble" and as such may not be seen as relatable for young people not currently interested in European issues. There may also be issues around the demographics of ambassadors (e.g. age, ethnicity, gender) which make them more credible with their peer group. If an ambassador network is to be used in future campaigns, this needs to be set up and engaged prior to any visible campaign activity; relationships forged and buy-in secured right from the start.

The results from the youth engagement events (see Annex 1) were interesting in that they very clearly showed the different levels of youth engagement with policy and politics: on the one hand, free flowing brain storming and idea generation, on the other hand, policy focused formulations of experienced lobbyists and campaigners. Both have their merits, and both should be promoted. However, in light of the insights into how young people organise today, both may miss out on reaching a large part of the youth population and only engage those who are already involved and interested in European policy issues relating to youth.

The findings from each of the key themes are summarised below, followed by a set of recommendations. With regard to the recommendations, it is important to keep in mind that some of the actions young people suggested can only be addressed at member state level (e.g. changes in school curricula). However, there may be a role for the EU to for instance promote more coordinated action in those specific areas.

Most importantly though, and this was beautifully summarised in one of the national events, it is extremely important to keep in mind that young people are not a homogenous group with one view and one voice. While the campaign and contributions provide a broad insight into the issues that are most concerning to young people, they are still just a snapshot. To assume that any of the recommendations and solutions suggested would fit for all young people in all European countries would be simplistic and in some cases dangerous.

3.2 Mobility and employment

Employment is a huge concern for young people and the consultation highlighted this in many ways. It was a frequently recurring topic across and in reference to all key thematic areas. Young people suggested approaches to tackle the problem of employment in connection to the environment, with regard to mobility and also to the EU and its administration.

Recommendations: Mobility and employment

1. **Offer easy access to information for young people who want to move and work abroad with a view to encouraging young employment**: Red tape and administrative hurdles were seen as the main obstacles to employment in another EU member state. Young people expressed a lack of knowledge about individual member state requirements as well as resources to facilitate a move (e.g. where to look for accommodation). A frequently made suggestion included a central information hub with key information such as administrative requirements (registration), contact points and insurance requirements, for all member states. This could also include job offers which required English as the main language.

2. **Widen opportunities for young people beyond current formats in Erasmus+ or the European Solidarity Corps and make more language support available**: Young people were very appreciative of existing European youth programmes (such as Erasmus+) that facilitated mobility and cultural exchange, including the Online Language Support (OLS) to provide language training. However, they felt abandoned once they graduated from training/studying, as well as once they were older. A request was made to develop an Erasmus+ mobility programme for university graduates/workers or eliminate the age cap for beneficiaries. In this context, the language barrier (beyond English) was frequently mentioned and it was suggested to make the OLS accessible for those wishing to relocate.

3. **Improve the image of young people in the workplace to highlight the contributions they can make to businesses**: Employers were often perceived as having a negative attitude towards young people, stereotyping them as unreliable and irresponsible. Young people felt that this attitude limited their chances of fully engaging in working life and showing to employers that they can handle responsibility and can fully contribute to a company with creative ideas. Reframing young people's image in the workplace was suggested in a way that would highlight the benefits that young people can bring to organisations and their ability to take on responsibility, contribute and drive business.

3.3 Civic engagement and belonging

Civic engagement was based on several pillars: the reasons why young people did not vote, a perceived lack of information about the European Union and its benefits, as well as how the EU was able to create a feeling of citizenship. The responses showed that there was a strong feeling of disenfranchisement among young people. They felt not represented in politics and "not heard". In equal measure, politics was seen as focussing on old people and therefore being undesirable for young people to engage with. There was a perceived lack of knowledge, as well as a perceived lack of impact of their vote in elections. Solutions focused very much on improving the information and the image of the EU and making it accessible to young people on media platforms they accessed and in their language. Many, particularly those who had participated in Erasmus exchanges, expressed a feeling of "being European", but this did not necessarily replace their national identity. Indeed, it was seen as a positive mark of the EU that there was unity in diversity.

Recommendations:
Civic engagement and belonging

1. **Organise events or roadshows to bring the EU to rural and remote areas**: The EU is perceived as distant and non-transparent by many young people. Many do not know their European representatives or lack information about EU policy making. This was particularly evident in rural areas, where it was seen that the EU reached into cities, but not beyond them. Young people suggested that efforts should be made to bring the EU more into rural areas through roadshows and events.

2. **Find a champion and role model for young people who promotes youth rights but also understands how young people mobilise and engage**: Politics is negatively perceived and seen to focus predominantly on old people. Participants felt there was a lack of inspiring role models, particularly for younger generations. Frequently, they felt that their voice was not respected and as a consequence not listened to, often under the guise of inexperience and lack of knowledge. Young people expressed a wish for a true figurehead for young people, a champion, someone that was there for them, respected their opinions, campaigned for their rights, but was accessible and engaged frequently with young people directly, and understood how young people mobilised and engaged with issues that were important to them.

3. **Make information and news about the EU available through innovative media channels in multiple languages, such as films/series and simulation games**: There was a perceived lack of information about the EU, EU politics, and how the EU worked. As a consequence, young people

felt the EU was frequently used as a scapegoat in the national media and predominantly negative news about the EU were reported. Young people expressed a desire for more information and education about the EU across a wide range of channels that were frequented by young people (i.e. not the traditional media). Innovative ideas included a TV-series that accurately reflected the workings of the EU or a YouTube news channel that brought European news in a way that was accessible to young people and ideally also in multiple languages.

4. **Support the development of creative, experiential, immersive learning experiences and cultural and arts events through which young people can engage with policy issues that affect them and develop solutions.** Young people expressed a need to get more directly involved in EU issues to increase their understanding of how the EU worked. Lectures and information were all great means, but personal experience counted for far more in their eyes. They found new and creative ways through arts and culture to engage in policy making, hackathons and meet-ups, as well as immersive learning experiences which made learning engaging and relevant.

#TELLUSIN12 WINNER
ADRIEN DUBOIS

3.4 Freedom of movement and security

Security and freedom of movement are highly charged topics politically, particularly in the context of Brexit and the aftermath of the refugee crisis. This was noticeable in the comments in that they highlighted discontent with the EU and its handling of engagement with the refugee crisis as well as the conflict in Syria, and an astute awareness of how social inequality and exclusion could promote extremism. Broadly, young people felt that the EU should retain its role as a peacekeeper and act as a role model in developing peaceful cooperation. They hoped the EU could take a stronger stance internationally to defend human rights and civil liberties, without imposing itself.

The media were seen as a key source of the promotion of extremism through fake news and skewed and biased reporting, and there was a call to counter this through educating young people more and better and supporting their critical thinking and reasoning skills.

However, because the opinions of participants on this topic were so highly politicised, there were very few practicable ideas. It is also noteworthy that while the responses were overwhelmingly positive, those with a more critical view had very little to offer to a meaningful debate.

Recommendations:

Freedom of movement and security

1. **Promote the EU and its values inside and outside through volunteering**: The EU was seen as a beacon of peace and stability by young people. It should therefore be a role model to other countries and support the building up of peaceful cooperation. One way of doing this was through more volunteer missions involving education as well as capacity building.

2. **Promote critical thinking and research skills to combat fake news and extremism through citizen education**: The media were blamed by many young people for promoting and inciting extremist views. They were left to distribute fake news and fake facts and figures and transmit skewed images of entire nations. In addition, many people did not know about the benefits and history of the EU, which provided fertile ground for the growth of Euroscepticism and, in the extreme, radical views. Young people thought it was vital to educate people about the history of the EU to reinforce its values and principles, particularly building on dialogue and collaboration. Additionally, there should be critical thinking and research skills to teach young people to question news stories and verify information when making up their mind.

3.5 Environment

The environment was the topic that elicited the most passionate responses among participants. This is possibly because it is the most accessible area to them and one where they feel their own behaviour can have an actual effect and make a difference. The topics raised covered a broad range of aspects, from promoting sustainable transport, to renewable energies and promoting environmental education, as well as lifestyle changes as a whole. Interestingly, this was the only topic that had very little overlap with any of the other themes and the solutions were more self-contained.

Recommendations: Environment

1. **Support recycling and positive environmental actions more widely**: For many young people, recycling was already a part of everyday life. However, they were conscious that recycling systems differed widely between towns and member states. It was therefore important to promote recycling to secure buy in from everyone, but more importantly to also promote the reduction of waste and the re-use of material.

2. **Make information about sustainable transport options across borders more easily accessible**: Young people felt that too little was being done to support public transport as a viable alternative to cars. Therefore, a mapping tool was proposed which would provide viable alternatives to using the car, providing the most cost-effective price as well as the carbon footprint of the journey, alongside subsidies for public transport which could be derived from an increased CO2 tax (to make cars less attractive as a transport option).

3. **Develop creative and engaging ways to support environmentally friendly behaviour change, through for instance an app or theatre/film production**. While many young people were very conscious and tried to live in a way that impacted less on the environment, they felt that people needed more knowledge on how they could change their lives, as well as support during that change process as it could be quite daunting. They suggested apps drawing on behaviour change mechanisms or creative educational engagement to support direct change.

3.6 Sustainability of the New Narrative

The number of consultation responses and contributions to competitions, as well as the ongoing engagement with the web platform, which continued even after its promotion, shows that there is an ongoing need among young people to exchange and contribute their thoughts and opinions about the future of Europe. The platform is just one way to engage with young people in a way that they prefer to access this type of content. It would be desirable to maintain an open space for young people to contribute their ideas, thoughts and concerns.

Adopting a new narrative for Europe and getting young people on board will require a lot of effort and very visible communication that is specifically targeted at young people. If possible, young people should be directly engaged in its development through either youth organisations or youth-focused think tanks, in an effort to maintain relevant language as well as a focus on key emerging topics for youth. While the engagement of the ambassadors from the earlier New Narrative consultation was not very successful in this instance, a targeted campaign involving social media influencers (outside of the Euro-bubble) right from the start might be more successful.

Another possibility would be to bring together young people to discuss the findings of the consultation and its relevance to their perceived needs, potentially offering an opportunity to re-engage the previous ambassadors in a debate with young people directly. This would help facilitate dialogue between more policy-immersed individuals and those not so engaged with politics to exchange ideas and transform them into policy-relevant proposals and actions.

Reaching out to youth community groups or schools in deprived areas would help to include those who are not involved in the European debate and offer new insights, while also providing a platform to bring the EU closer to more disengaged young people. Issues relevant to young people on the ground could emerge sooner as a consequence, while the relevance and proximity of the EU as an institution could also be increased.

Young people move quickly, something which is at odds with the EU's comparatively slow pace. This makes continuous engagement and having an "ear on the pulse" extremely important to keep any measures relevant. The responses from the consultation and the competitions have outlined that there is an opportunity for the EU to rethink how it communicates with young people and the channels it uses. Young people engage in new forms of political activism which are often focused on the local level to tackle specific problems. If the EU can find a way to tap into these activist groups, perhaps with a link to youth-relevant topics such as the environment and entrepreneurship or migrant issues, new ways of engaging young people and making the EU relevant to them could be developed.

ANNEX ONE: ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL THEMATIC EVENT SUMMARY REPORTS

The following analysis is based on event summary reports from 16 events across Europe between March and November 2016. The events were attended by member state representatives of youth organisations, as well as young people engaged in policy making, youth work and scouting in their home countries and in the European Students' Forum (AEGEE). The events had dedicated facilitators and rapporteurs who guided the discussion and provided summary notes of the outcomes (please see the list of facilitators and moderators at the end of this short report).

The workshops were structured around three key questions:

- What are the strengths of the European project?
- What are the main challenges?
- What are the most popular solutions, ideas for change or recommendations for political action responding to the main challenges?

Responses to these three key questions are summarised below:

What are the strengths of the European project?

Europe is seen as an **area of peace and stability** and the European Union has been a major guarantor for the longevity of this situation. This is supported by a guarantee and close monitoring of human rights, and promotes common values such as respect, human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality and the rule of law. The EU was seen as a joint venture where nations tackled societal and political problems together and therefore had a much stronger voice than each country on its own.

Following on from this, the theme of being **united in diversity**, particularly in terms of cultures and languages, emerged strongly from the events. Young people appreciated this diversity and very much cherished the opportunities to learn about and engage with individuals from other cultures in the shared space that is the EU. For those from non-member states, this was highlighted quite strongly as a key attribute they hoped to one day engage with and explore.

All groups highlighted **freedom of movement** (mobility) and the opportunity to live, work, trade, study or volunteer in another member state as a central pillar of the European project. It facilitates cohesion and understanding, promotes dialogue and an opportunity to exchange, and through that stimulates the much-desired "unity in diversity". This was an aspirational quality for young people in non-member states who participated in the events.

The concept of **citizenship** is valued highly and with it the opportunities to engage in a democratic process. Mechanisms to escalate local, regional and national issues to European

level from citizens directly and the opportunity to vote for representatives with the freedom to voice an opinion are key to understanding Europe.

Cooperation between and alignment of policies of member states to address common challenges was also important to workshop participants. It was seen as an opportunity for constant adaptation and renewal for member states, to flexibly address emerging challenges in a coordinated way that supported everyone. There was recognition that this process sometimes took longer than anticipated, but the mere existence of a space to and a willingness to address problems together was appreciated.

Similarly, **joint investment and cooperation in the areas of education and research** was an important theme. Programmes such as Erasmus+, the Marie-Skłodowska-Actions or the Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation were seen as vital to support the idea of Europe, strengthen cooperation between countries and ensure the exchange and growth of knowledge and talent within Europe.

What are the main challenges?

There were two distinct groups of challenges that were identified in the workshops: institutional challenges and policy challenges.

Institutional challenges

First and foremost, participants viewed the **size and number of European institutions** as a challenge. They were large and complex and as a result moved slowly. Decision-making processes were complex and therefore movement was small. A plethora of regulations (red tape) were also seen to slow decision making down and responses in the case of a sudden crisis were sometimes not seen as far reaching and comprehensive enough.

A common theme in all workshops was a **lack of recognition for young people as agenda setters** and equal partners in policy making. This was seen largely as being due to a perceived lack of competence and knowledge on the part of young people. This was a complex issue because of the institutional set-up across the European institutions. It became apparent that those young people who were engaged in youth issues at European level had already become "institutionalised" with regard to the language they used. Many also viewed the **ageing demographic profile** of many member states as an issue which drove a focus on policies relevant to older people rather than young people.

In connection with this, the **lack of creative and inspirational leadership** at political level was highlighted across the groups. The EU and its institutions were seen as being far away and inaccessible to "normal" young people. Some of the groups felt that their MEPs were not accessible to them and that they did not cater to (or were not interested in) young people's opinions. They did not reach (out to) young people.

This was closely connected to a perceived "centralisation" of the "European Spirit", which was seen to be **concentrated in larger cities** while small cities and rural communities were forgotten. Europe did not reach these places and it did not reach young

people living there. This made it difficult to communicate shared European values in these communities, which then in part was seen as being responsible for a rise in Euroscepticism and populist, nationalist tendencies. Most of all, these young people often did not have the knowledge of or the opportunity to benefit from youth mobility programmes and gain a different viewpoint and experience. This made it difficult for them to understand the common EU values.

Policy challenges

The policy challenges identified by the groups aligned with some of the core themes of the campaign: youth unemployment, migration/ immigration and safety, as well as civic engagement.

Participants outlined that their perception was that policies generally focussed on **producing outcomes** (e.g. reducing youth unemployment) **rather than addressing the root causes** of the problem (e.g. lack of education, lack of jobs, employer attitudes).

Migration/immigration and the rise of nationalism were seen as major challenges for Europe as a whole. Participants expressed concern that the EU was not taking a stronger stance on these issues and opposing racism, nationalism and right-wing movements more strongly. Instead, there should be a strong promotion and support of the integration of migrants into their host nation societies to create more community cohesion, while also supporting the understanding of other cultures.

Three challenges were seen as closely connected to each other: **a lack of media literacy, a need for more solidarity to tackle social exclusion and poverty as well as a need to promote more civic engagement.** In the age of social media and fast-spreading news, the participants expressed concern that people did not engage critically with the news presented and distributed via these media, as well as concern over media moguls owning newspapers and dictating the style and content of reporting. This was seen as leading to a promotion of negative news, while positive news and achievements were not celebrated enough. This applied in particular to the EU, which was mainly associated with negative news. People also engaged in a limited way with news reporting and generally did not question the content or try to verify news through different sources, thus leading to an easy spread of inciting news stories.

Social exclusion, poverty and discrimination were seen as partly connected to this as poor people were demonised in the media, while also being perceived to lack the knowledge and capabilities to engage critically with news stories. **Discrimination** of some population groups was also **normalised through the media**, while being viewed as unacceptable. Here, the policy challenge was to further address and tackle inequalities, social exclusion, poverty and discrimination through more solidarity across and between the member states. By making Europe more cohesive and reducing inequality between population groups, people would move closer together.

Part of the perception of disengagement and disenfranchisement with the EU was seen by participants as being caused by a **lack of civic engagement and lack of understanding on**

how individuals can engage in the democratic processes relating to the EU. Particularly with regard to young people, it was noted that they felt they were not very well represented, listened to or cared about. This is a theme that has come up throughout this report.

Other challenges that were mentioned by individual groups included the effects of Brexit on the rest of the EU, TTIP, EU border protection and the situation in Greece.

What are the most popular solutions, ideas for change or recommendations for political action responding to the main challenges?

Possible solutions to institutional challenges included:

Reducing bureaucracy and making processes and procedures more transparent and less complex. The complexity of the EU institutions, as well as a general perception of non-transparency, were key issues that needed resolving. In particular, a reduction of the complexity of the EU was seen as key to fostering more engagement and understanding. Some participants also suggested that key figures should meet more often to discuss issues in order to be more proactive rather than reactive.

Recognition of young people through promoting Youth Rights and a rights-based approach to policy making. This refers very much to the closer engagement and consultation of young people in the policy-making process. Young people should be recognised as an important group and their rights closely defined. The policy making process could then focus on these rights and thus address problems affecting young people more effectively. There was also a suggestion to consult with young people on a mandatory basis, as well as lowering the voting age to 16.

Participants felt that a key solution to engage more young people was to **bring the EU to young people, promote direct meetings with EU policy makers and particularly reach out to more rural areas** of the member states. This would address issues around the EU being perceived as remote through policy makers showing an interest in what young people think and being accessible and approachable, as well as addressing the perceived knowledge deficit about the EU in rural regions.

Improve communication to focus on good news stories, positive achievements and changes and make it accessible in more languages. This is as much about closing the knowledge gap as it is about creating a positive image of the EU and Europe as a whole.

Policy solutions included:

Promote programmes available to young people more. While participants in the events generally seemed to have good knowledge about EU programmes for young people (e.g. Erasmus+, EVS and other actions), there was a realisation that not many young people had enough knowledge about the opportunities available to them and how to access them. Developing this element could help to address several other challenges, such as employability, improvement of knowledge about the EU, etc.

Investment in young people's competences and knowledge to develop future leaders. There was a perception of a distinct lack of positive role models, particularly among the younger generations. While this predominantly focused on the transition into work and getting young people ready for work, there were also references to developing role models in the political sphere: individuals that young people could aspire to and that they felt represented them.

Ensure traineeships and internships are paid. Traineeships support employability; however, young people felt taken advantage of when it came to going through a series of internships and traineeships without a permanent employment outcome. Unpaid traineeships were unfair and excluded less well-off young people from the labour market because they could not afford to take up a traineeship.

Actual engagement of young people in policy making with a youth focus. There should be a consultation mechanism to get young people directly involved in policy making that has immediate effects on them (e.g. youth employment, education, environment, mobility). This links closely to the rights-based approach to policy making which was mentioned above.

Recognition of (informal) skills. This was a key concern throughout, in order to promote young people's transition into work and their progression. Many young people acquired skills informally but there was little by way of recognition of this knowledge, which they felt prevented them from moving into employment. This was particularly exacerbated in cross-border mobility situations, where skills, even though they were formally acquired, were not recognised.

Investment in education and research. Overall, young people thought that investment in research and education, and particularly citizen education, would be beneficial throughout Europe. On the one hand, this would increase knowledge about the EU for those who were not necessarily exposed to the topic in their home environments, while on the other hand it would highlight the value of the EU and embed its values in the thinking of the younger generations.

A key policy focus should also be placed on tackling the migration crisis and racism. Part of this was promoting diversity and highlighting the benefits that migrants brought to European member states. Another key aspect was the homogenisation of policies with regard to achieving citizenship status. All of this required a lot of education of citizens about Europe at a more general level. Additionally, the promotion of dialogue was strongly advocated.

Promote integration and mutual understanding and exchange. Many people at the events highlighted the necessity to promote mutual understanding of cultures, integration and exchange of ideas. This should start from an early age. Here, culture played a big role, in that it should be made more inclusive and accessible to all.

Overview of events included in the analysis

Country	Event name	Event date
Austria	New Narrative for Europe: The next chapter in EU history	26 September 2016
Belgium	European Youth Voice on Youth Policies	25-29 May 2016
Czech Republic	Actual European Challenges according to You: New Narrative for Europe	15 June 2016
Denmark	Rethink democracy and co-create a powerful campaign to reshape Europe	3 September 2016
Finland	Eurooppailta (Europe evening)	9 May 2016
France	EYE2016: Youth unemployment: Down to zero?	20 May 2016
France	EYE2016: Youth unemployment: Down to zero?	20 May 2016
France	EYE2016: Europe – a global player for peace?	20 May 2016
France	EYE2016: Britain and Europe: Breaking up or moving on?	20 May 2016
France	EYE2016: Religious and political extremism: A gentle drift or a tidal wave?	21 May 2016
France	EYE2016: Young migrants: New kids on the block	21 May 2016
France	EYE2016: Migration: Across the Universe	21 May 2016
France	Festival Provox	2 July 2016
France	Rovers' Voice!	10-14 August 2016
Germany	The EU in the World	4 November 2016
Greece	Conflict Management in a Conflicted World, Erasmus Student Network	26-27 March 2016
Lithuania	Opportunities and challenges within Europe: cross-sectoral cooperation	18 May 2016
Moldova	New Narratives for Europe: Perspectives and Prospects	11 October 2016
Poland	New Narratives for Europe: Perspectives and Prospects	7-9 April 2016
Poland	Abstention or political extremism? Is there another way for youth participation in Poland and Europe	2 April 2016
Slovenia	What kind of Europe we want in the future?	24 November 2016
Spain	Political participation of young people	22 July 2016
UK	Culture: Building Resilient Communities	24-26 August 2016

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