

PPYO Joint Statement for the European Elections in 2019

Supported by: LYMEC, FYEG, YDE, JEF, EDS, IFLRY, EFAy, YEPP, YES, IUSY

DEMOCRACY THAT ENGAGES YOUTH

To engage with informed, responsible and critical citizens, we must have a fully transparent and open democratic system. This requires innovations on both sides, empowering citizens to participate and also further opening up the political system to different types of citizens' engagement. European democracy must be safeguarded and enhanced. Education, transparency and more engagement are the future of democracy.

- We call for the continuation of the **Spitzenkandidaten** (leading candidates) process, ensuring the link between people's votes in the European elections and the appointment of the President of the European Commission. Candidates should be chosen through democratic procedures. Debates with Spitzenkandidaten (leading candidates) should be broadcast in all EU countries.
- To further boost the European debate, we also call for the creation of **transnational lists** allowing citizens to vote for candidates from across the EU, and the creation of legal and financial frameworks to facilitate pan-European campaigns.
- As a first step, there should be clear links between the national parties and their respective European parties in the election campaign.
- **Citizenship education with a European dimension** that facilitates involvement in **Erasmus+** must be available to each young person. **Citizenship education** is most effective when experienced directly, through methods such as **school exchanges, school elections, school councils and interaction with youth organisations**.
- We call on all education providers to establish a "**European Citizens Day**", where students can learn in an interactive way about other countries and cultures. This pan-European day could foster partnerships and projects between schools and civil society organisations in different countries.
- To experience voting while being empowered through non-partisan citizenship education and creating life-long habits of participation, we encourage authorities to examine the potential for **voting at 16 years** in elections, starting at the local level and building up to the European elections.
- Political systems have to youthup, become more accessible to different forms and channels of citizens engagement beyond traditional voting, including opportunities of digitalisation such as **e-governance** and **e-democracy**.

YOUTH AT CENTRE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Young people are the future, but we are also the present. Political parties need to keep up with the realities of young people or they risk becoming irrelevant.

- We call for more **young candidates in electable positions** on national lists. Having young candidates promotes youth turnout, and gives voters new choices with new perspectives and fresh approaches. To ensure the continuous renewal of parties or candidates and to avoid people turning away from established political parties, young candidates must be on every electoral list.
- We also call for a clearer **youth perspectives in campaigns and manifestos**, with youth issues given more prominence and youth friendly campaign tools being used to outreach to young people.
- Once elected, we encourage **more strategic positions in Parliaments for young MEPs**. Appointment to key positions in the European Parliament, for example, should be based on representativeness, instead of longevity.

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR EUROPE

The future of our European continent is dependent upon its sustainability. Achieving sustainable development, reconciling economic, social and environmental development must be at the heart of every decision, action and policy at European level.

All European policies should be framed in light of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, whose focus is on empowering young people to make this transformative change. We call for:

- Comprehensive and ambitious implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- Europe needs to be a leader in combatting climate change in Europe and globally.
- Investment for sustainable development and the energy transition through the EU's funding programme, the Multiannual Financial Framework. This should especially focus on job creation in the new sustainable energy economy.

REAL FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Mobility and free movement is the right of European citizens, however there are still numerous physical and administrative barriers when it comes to accessing this right. Future action needs to focus on the final step to achieve a Europe of freedom and mobility through:

- Multiplying by ten the budget of the **Erasmus+ programme**, giving ALL young people the opportunity to travel, meet, experience diversity and learn across Europe.
- Physical barriers to free movement must be avoided. Protecting, **preserving and extending the Schengen-zone** must be a priority for our citizens and our economy.
- Reducing administrative barriers to the free movement of people by aligning administrative requirements and across the EU.
- In order to overcome the lack of information about mobility opportunities, which is one main obstacle that young people face, we propose the creation of a **one-stop-shops in each country**. They will provide people who are interested in going abroad, as well as those who come

from abroad with information and support about mobility opportunities, language classes, access to healthcare, banking, accommodation etc.

- The free movement of data and stopping **geo-blocking** within the EU for online content.