



#EngagEUrCouncil

YOUTH IDEAS FOR EUROPE

Setting the Scene for the German EU Council Presidency

Future of Europe #climatechange #YoungExpertsLab
#Berlin #citizensparticipation #PPC #active #Portugal
YoungIdeasPanel #EUinfluencer #Empowerment
youth #CouncilPresidency #Lisboa #EuropeanUnion
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Youth Ideas as innovative remedy against crises

On 1 July 2020, Germany takes over the rotating six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union and, at the same time, is teaming up with Portugal and Slovenia to start a new 18-month Trio Presidency.

Germany, as first in line, takes over in a moment when the Future of Europe is at stake: This year, not only the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, including funding for youth exchange, needs to be adopted. To prevent a “hard Brexit”, future relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union demand successful negotiations, too. Other key challenges are looming, such as climate change, the deadlock in the reform of the Common European Asylum System, shaping digitization and digital economies in a “European way”, and safeguarding the Union’s core values such as rule of law in the member states and solidarity in the Schengen area. In times of declining multilateralism on a global level, the Union also needs “to learn the language of power”.

As if this were not enough, the global Coronavirus pandemic severely affected the Union in the first months of 2020. In addition to the humanitarian and health crisis with thousands of deaths, the pandemic disclosed imperfections of European integration and fostered current challenges to the Future of Europe in many areas, while hampering crucial face-to-face negotiations.

Against this backdrop, the German Presidency will be in charge of managing the current crisis and the recovery from the pandemic as well as building consensus on long-standing problems and deadlocks on European issues. The Presidency is also expected to advance forward-looking ideas for the Future of Europe in line with the Strategic Agenda of the European Council and the Political Priorities of the new President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen such as the European Green Deal and digital sovereignty. In all these crucial EU reform debates, citizens’ participation must be ensured, first and foremost by promoting the Conference on the Future of Europe. Additionally, it is important to engage the younger generation in shaping its future.

At the beginning of 2020, Institut für Europäische Politik took the decision to lend the younger generation an ear and give them a voice regarding the future of Europe. It developed the project “#EngagEURCouncil: youth participation and youth exchange” which provides young citizens from Germany, Portugal and Slovenia with the opportunity to meet and brainstorm on what they would push on the agenda of the German Presidency. The Coronavirus pandemic also affected the format of #EngagEURCouncil, but the fact that young people had to meet and discuss virtually did not diminish their inspiration or motivation. 24 participants became members of the first #EngagEURCouncil Virtual Think Tank seeking the opportunity to develop young ideas for the German Council Presidency through interactive debates and webinars with distinguished experts.

We are delighted to publish the results of these discussions only a few days before the beginning of the German Presidency. The “Youth Ideas” are the result of intense discussions on the youth’s perspective on current challenges in the fields of Asylum and Migration Policy, Foreign Policy, Climate Policy, and the Future of Europe. The ideas focus on urgent challenges such as the promotion of green recovery after the pandemic, e.g. by calling upon the German Presidency to promote discussions during MFF negotiations on the use of funds from Next Generation EU to kick-start green businesses and technologies. Additionally, participants applied a more long-term perspective by developing ideas to be jointly promoted by the 18-month Trio Presidency, e.g. initiating a discussion on the reform of the EU’s Official Development Assistance architecture.

These ideas – 12 in total – are going to be presented to stakeholders of the German Presidency and the public at the occasion of the German Pre-Presidency Conference on 25 and 26 June 2020, hosted by Institut für Europäische Politik e.V. in cooperation with Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA).

But our journey will not end there. We are already waiting in the wings to start the second idea development cycle for the Portuguese Presidency, which will take over from the German government.

We would like to thank the 24 participants and the rapporteurs for contributing to the first youth ideas development edition of #EngagEUrCouncil. Our gratitude also goes to the project team – York Albrecht, Sara Kibler, and Johannes Kohls – for managing the youth ideas development process and to Dimitar Keranov for communicating the project activities through all channels. We would also like to thank the project partners Instituto Português de Relações Internacionais, Lisbon, and Centre of International Relations, Ljubljana, for representing and promoting the project in Portugal and Slovenia.

Last but not least, we would also like to thank Stiftung Mercator for funding the project, as well as the Federal Foreign Office for supporting individual project activities on the German Council Presidency and the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Commission that supports IEP.

We wish you an interesting read of the youth ideas and demands for shaping the future of Europe!

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Asylum & Migration Policy

More than 15,000 humans have died at the European border in the Mediterranean Sea since 2015. Many more experienced violence and exploitation when seeking asylum (e.g. pushback operations or gender-based violence against women) in the European Union (EU). While we are waiting for the New Pact on Migration, the #EngagEUR Council Delegation for Asylum & Migration Policy calls upon the German EU Council Presidency to promote the following proposals to facilitate a common European response to asylum and migration and to ensure that people are treated with dignity and respect.

End humanitarian emergency in the Mediterranean Sea

The situation in the Mediterranean Sea and on the Aegean islands is untenable. To end the dying in the Mediterranean, the return policy to conflict-torn countries like Libya, detentions and inhumane reception conditions, the EU Member States should:

- Make available funding on a European level and redeploy search and rescue missions similar to the former Italian mission Mare Nostrum;
- Ensure relocation of asylum-seekers held in Greek camps which are overfilled with approx. 36,000 persons as well as adequate and safe reception conditions;
- Respect the principle of non-refoulement, implement measures to avoid detention (e.g. providing clear and precise information about rights, duties and consequences of non-compliance to immigration procedures or upholding individualised case management services), and prevent the spread of diseases in overcrowded detention centres.

Stop criminalisation of organisations that support and provide aid to refugees

Numerous NGOs, such as those that provide safe rescue operations and those actively involved in refugee support, are supplementing EU Member States in their task to provide international protection for migrants. These associations should not be criminalised for their significant contribution to humanitarian aid. Rather, a constructive cooperation between NGOs and Member States towards an improvement of the current situation of migrants and refugees should be implemented. NGOs should be supported in their work by integrating their knowledge into EU action and facilitating their oversight of Member States' and Frontex actions by creating contact points and complaint-procedures for refugees within the EU Member States.

Support local and regional coalitions of the willing

Municipalities and regions that take in refugees on a voluntary basis should be supported, also financially. City networks like Solidarity Cities, Eurocities or Cities of Safe Harbours have indicated their political will to receive more refugees. With more than 120 Cities of Safe Harbours in Germany, the German Council Presidency and the European Commission should support such local and regional coalitions of the willing by:

- Reimbursing costs of integration and by providing additional financial support for municipal development;
- Creating opportunities for municipalities and regions that are not taking in refugees to provide flexible solidarity by financial contributions or administrative support.

The EU is founded on human rights and solidarity. The current situation and the deadlock in the EU migration and asylum policy contradict these commitments. Therefore, we call on the EU Member States, the German Council Presidency, the Trio Presidency and the European Commission to end the current tragedy, to protect the most vulnerable and those providing support to them, and to work together towards effective solidarity mechanisms.



The crisis caused by the current Covid-19 pandemic represents a challenge to European economies and societies. However, we cannot afford “recovery first, climate second“. If the EU and its Member States fail to connect the recovery from the crisis to the immediate need for action on climate change, they risk to violate their commitment to younger generations and the international community.

Thus, the #EngagEUR Council Delegation for Climate Policy calls upon the German Council Presidency, together with the European Commission and the European Parliament, to turn the crisis into an opportunity and recover as a greener and more sustainable Union.

Green innovation package – a real Green Deal

The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is the central lever to ensure the European green transition. The current proposal by the European Commission is promising, but we call upon the German Council Presidency to go beyond the current Commission proposal. Therefore, it should ensure that climate transition remains a key focus of the Covid-19 recovery and the MFF by:

- Using the 750 billion Euro funds from “Next Generation EU” for an active common industrial policy with the clear objective to kick-start green businesses and technologies;
- Increasing the share of climate-friendly agriculture funding within the 58 billion Euro (in 2020) allocated to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and ensuring to increase the yearly budget share of sustainable agriculture within the CAP;
- Allocating substantial funds to the further deepening of the Energy Union, with an intensified focus on renewable energy, grid development and the corresponding financial commitment.

European rail system

Transport is a key element of the European Green Deal. Our vision is a sustainably interconnected Europe where international rail travel can compete with aerial travel both in terms of duration and pricing. Therefore:

- National railway infrastructure should be improved, and a proper European railway system with fast connections between capitals and larger cities as well as coordinated scheduling should be implemented, where necessary with the use of subsidies;
- The German Council Presidency should lobby to include this in the economic stimulus package and allocate a larger budget for the Connecting Europe Facility on Transport in the next MFF.

Participatory solutions

The green transformation is not possible without the commitment and ownership of citizens. A focus on more participatory policy-making is needed. To this end, the EU institutions should:

- Build upon the Conference on the Future of Europe framework and establish a bi-annual European Citizens' Assembly with a representative but random selection of EU citizens to discuss and provide input on current policy proposals relating to climate policy;
- Strengthen existing tools for participatory policy-making. The consultation process in the ordinary legislative procedure should be facilitated and featured more prominently. The German Council Presidency should actively raise awareness for these opportunities of citizen participation;
- Furthermore, provide EU funding in an accessible way to local citizens' initiatives with a green focus.

We do not ask “how dare you”; we ask you to dare, to understand crisis as opportunity. We, Europeans, are at a crucial moment of our history, and we must use it to emerge stronger, greener, and more sustainable on the other side of it.



As the world is ravaged by a global health crisis, geopolitical tensions and an accelerated climate crisis, it is more important than ever to clarify Europe's role in the world and to provide the European Union (EU) with a clearer and stronger voice for its priorities on a global level. Thus, the #EngagEURCouncil Delegation for Foreign Policy calls upon the German Council Presidency, the European Council and the Member States to implement measures and to initiate reforms to streamline the EU's Foreign Policy.

Introduce qualified majority voting in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

To ensure effective and timely responses to global developments, the European Council should increase the EU's capacity to act more decisively and avoid decision-making being disrupted by vested interests by activating the "passerelle clause" as laid out in Art. 31 (3) of the Treaty on European Union to extend qualified majority voting to CFSP, e.g. in case of threats to human rights, or to adopt sanction regimes, EU humanitarian assistance, and civilian missions in response to crises abroad.

Promote and protect Europe's values and human rights in the world

The EU institutions and the Member States should actively protect, enforce and advocate the values of rule of law, democracy, and human rights on the global stage. Through the strategic use of its external action tools in its bilateral and multilateral relations, the EU should specifically:

- Implement military and civilian peacekeeping missions in Syria and other conflict zones within its greater neighbourhood;
- Initiate reforms of global governance mechanisms or institutions such as the Geneva Convention on Refugees regarding the definition of "refugees" as well as the role of states and their obligations towards refugees, to better reflect and respond to the complexity of displacement today, and overcome deadlocks in the appellate body of the World Trade Organisation's dispute settlement system;
- Expand and strengthen environmental and climate provisions in free trade and partnership agreements as part of an ambitious climate diplomacy, in full accordance with the propositions of the #EngagEURCouncil Delegation for Climate Policy.

Reform of EU Official Development Assistance (ODA)

With 75.2 billion euro in 2019, the EU and its Member States remain the largest donors of ODA. However, its full potential is hampered by inefficiency and a highly complex institutional landscape. To increase its impact, ease regulatory burdens, and provide more effective and sustainable development assistance to its partners, the Council Presidency should thus aim to streamline the EU's development agenda, through:

- In the short term, initiating the implementation of the "Immediate steps" to establish a strong policy center in the EU as recommended by the High-Level Group of Wise Persons on the European financial architecture for development, with a special focus on the reinforcement of ownership of development policy by the Council of the European Union;
- In the medium term, as part of the Trio Presidency, initiating a discussion on the reform of the EU's ODA architecture as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe, with the aim to further strengthening the EU Consensus on Development in accordance with the EU's Global Strategy.

The proposed policy actions will help the EU to clarify its procedures internally, take decisions more swiftly and decisively, thereby allowing it to speak with a single voice. This not only increases the EU's ability in responding to global developments as well as threats and driving global change, but also to pursue and safeguard European values and interests and foster cooperation within the multilateral order.



Amidst a digital revolution, further accelerated by the current crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and emerging euroscepticism and populism across the EU Member States, citizens must be further empowered to exert an active role in the EU decision-making process. To this end, the #EngagEUR Council Delegation for the Future of Europe calls upon the German Council Presidency to consider proposals to foster European citizenship.

► **Develop a unified Political Science Education Hub**

We acknowledge the existence of individual institutions and events that already promote political education; however, the European Commission and the German Council Presidency should recognise the need of a unified programme and a centralized coordination aiming at including diverse European voices beyond those citizens who already have a keen interest on the topics by:

- Developing a unified Political Science Education Hub, aimed at promoting political education among European citizens by both virtual and face-to-face education;
- Promoting existing tools for information, education, and pan-European debates, and stepping them up by launching additional workshops and lectures on the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange platform, establishing a Political Science Summer School independent from political ideologies, and an online discussion room for European affairs.

► **Create a European citizens' assembly**

The Presidency Trio of the Council of the EU (in cooperation with the European Parliament) should promote proposals that provide the citizens with the opportunity to take a more active role in EU decision-making processes, e.g. by:

- Creating a European citizens' assembly, together with an increased transparency of that process. The assembly should provide the citizens with the opportunity to debate ideas or introduce proposals on a universal suffrage basis that could directly be considered for discussion in the European Parliament and for appreciation by the Council. Within our vision, this assembly should randomly include 1,000 citizens from all Member States (with a quota for each one, based on population numbers), and be based on a rotational timeframe;
- Using both a wide range of digital meeting and communication tools as well as regular face-to-face information events and national discussions to promote the debate initiated in the European citizens' assembly.

► **Create European-wide itinerant cultural events**

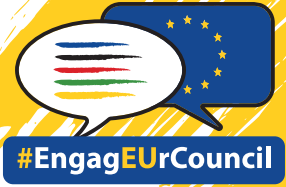
The Trio Presidency of the Council of the EU should aim to create a sense of European identity and thus establish inter-cultural bonds, while sharing Member State's culture and supporting a field that was particularly affected by the current Covid-19 pandemic by creating European-wide itinerant cultural events during their mandate. With a single programme for the whole mandate and in close cooperation with town halls and exhibition institutions, this is an opportunity for the three presidency countries to showcase emerging national artists in fields such as audio-visual and plastic arts. We suggest that this event covers as many cities as possible, through all European countries, with closing events in the European capital(s) of culture.

Our proposals aim to improve the sentiment of European citizenship, while supporting and promoting national culture across borders, and engaging citizens to play a more active role in the decision-making process through the digital transformation.



About #EngagEUrCouncil:

Youth exchange and youth participation in the Trio EU Council Presidency of Germany, Portugal & Slovenia



★ Young agenda-setters for Europe

Protests against climate change and attacks on the freedom of expression in the age of digitization, or the promotion of the EU project countering rising populism and nationalism – young EU citizens increasingly set the agenda with political demands that are relevant to the broad spectrum of society. In the framework of the project, young citizens from Germany, Slovenia, and Portugal are invited to jointly formulate political demands based on knowledge and information they gain during the project. At the occasion of key political events, participants have the unique opportunity to present their ideas to decision-makers of the Trio EU Council Presidency of Germany, Portugal, and Slovenia in 2020 and 2021, and to the public.

★ #EngagEUrCouncil: Youth participation in Virtual Think Tank

Europe-wide discussions in times of contact barriers, border controls and travel warnings? The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have not passed on #EngagEUrCouncil. But the pandemic is just another reason to think about innovative European solutions based on knowledge. In 2020, #EngagEUrCouncil is thus hosting a Virtual Think Tank, in which the young participants already developed ideas for the German Council Presidency and will jointly think about innovative demands for the Portuguese Council Presidency through interactive debates and webinars.

★ Germany, Slovenia, and Portugal – an innovative triangle

The upcoming Trio EU Council Presidency is geographically, historically, and socio-economically highly diverse and is likely to induce multilayered, constructive and critical debates about EU policy. This will lead to the development of new (young) ideas for the Future of Europe in the framework of the #EngagEUrCouncil project to integrate a constructive and sustainable youth dimension into the Trio EU Council Presidency.

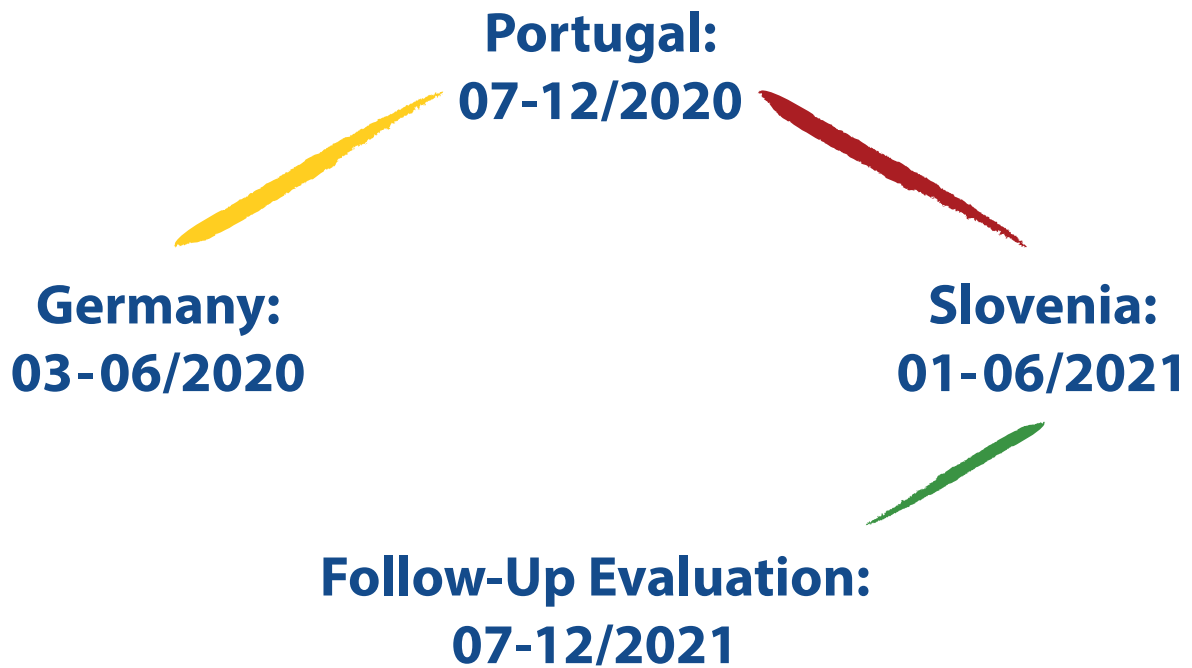
★ Set the agenda with youth demands based on information and knowledge

#EngagEUrCouncil is based on a holistic proven and tested youth participation concept which builds on three interlinked methodological components.

- #YoungCitizensFutureLabs that aim at sharing knowledge on the European Union and at identifying first demands.
- #YoungExpertsLabs that aim at deepening the content of the demands developed.
- #YouthIdeasPanel at TEPSA Pre-Presidency Conferences aimed at presenting the developed youth demands to political decision-makers.

These methodological components altogether establish a 6-month cycle of youth empowerment and agenda-setting. This cycle is implemented for the German, the Portuguese, and the Slovenian Presidency respectively.

★ Timetable of #EngagEU Council:



★ **Project Term:** 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2021

★ **Project Leader:** Dr. Funda Tekin

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The project is implemented by IEP in close cooperation with Instituto Português de Relações Internacionais, Lisbon, and Centre of International Relations, Ljubljana. The project partners also cooperate with the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) in Brussels within the framework of the so-called TEPSA Pre-Presidency Conferences in order to ensure a Europe-wide coverage of the project and its activities.



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