



#EngagEU Council

# YOUTH IDEAS FOR EUROPE

Ideas for the Conference on the Future of Europe



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As the world witnesses the rise of an increasing number of autocratic leaders, the values and ideals that are promoted by Western countries are increasingly challenged. The European Union (EU) finds itself in a position where it must decide how and to what extent it wants to shape the global order. Once bold and hopeful, politics have become less ambitious and more reactive: Economic policies are now often formulated to protect the EU from adverse influences, asylum and migration policies have been overtaken by protective national border security ambitions and the once transformative approach of the European Neighbourhood Policy is now focusing on stability rather than reform.

We, as the #EngagEUConference delegation for “Europe in the World”, call upon the European Union to take a stronger stand and strengthen the EUs’ position in and its influence on the world.

## **Strategic Sovereignty**

European strategic sovereignty as a concept refers to the “*ability to act*”, thus to the EU being able to formulate priorities and making its own decisions based on these priorities. While it is still a long way before the EU will achieve strategic sovereignty, the #EngagEUConference delegation for Europe in the World appeals to the EU to focus on protecting the EU’s interests and promoting the EU’s norms, while making use of and maintaining multilateral relations.

## **Qualified Majority Voting (QMV)**

We have identified qualified majority voting as the main tool that would increase the strategic sovereignty of the EU, if used as the sole voting procedure on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) matters. We want to emphasise the ability of QMV to overcome deadlock in CFSP policy decisions and to ensure *swift decision-making* by the EU as a whole and thus to protect and defend its interests internationally.

## **Migration Policy & Global Leadership**

For the EU to play an active part in shaping the world order as an independent and norm-promoting actor, it should strengthen its role as a global leader and develop a comprehensive migration policy. We consider these two larger policy areas and subsequent issues as particularly important. The implementation of QMV would create a shift away from the paralysing nature of divergent national interests and allow the EU to position itself internationally as an independent and norm-promoting actor. On that account, we urge the EU ...

- ... in the area of comprehensive migration policy to
  - implement a rules-based relocation scheme with clear responsibilities for all states,
  - abolish Golden Visas,
  - improve conditions and services related to labour migration,
  - establish a coordinated and solidary asylum policy,
  - integrate asylum-seekers into the labour market;
- ... in the area of global leadership to
  - foster sovereign relations with strategic blocs,
  - advocate human rights on a global scale,
  - strengthen development partnerships,
  - promote rules-based multilateralism.

# EU CLIMATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT



As governments around the world have formally recognized the dangers of climate change, they have committed to actively creating more sustainable societies and economies. The European Union (EU) is aiming to change existing policies and add new steps to reduce emissions.

We, as the #EngagEURconference delegation for “EU Climate and the Environment”, have formulated two specific measures that would help create a united European approach to tackle climate change.

## Green Investment

The financial sector and its markets offer great opportunities to drive the economic transformation towards a sustainable future. Currently, however, there is a high level of insecurity among consumers, investors and companies regarding the labelling of products as “sustainable” or “green”. This fosters opacity and green-washing. Drawing on recent discussions on the EU taxonomy classification system for sustainable activities, we urge the European Commission to create a sound and profound definition of what “green investment” is. This definition should

- be based on the EU’s net zero goals, the European Green Deal as well as independent science,
- be compatible with the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals,
- include a maximum amount of CO<sup>2</sup> compensation that companies are allowed to buy,
- remain adaptable for future corrections.

A clear definition of “green investment” offers two big opportunities: First, banks can be obligated to hold an adequate percentage of “green investments” in their security portfolios, which helps to incentivize other players to invest in seminal green technologies or sustainable start-ups too and to stabilize the emerging green markets. Second, the EU can issue an official label for financial products that fulfil the definition’s criteria and hereby make the financial market more transparent.

## European Recycling Standard (ERS)

Although several systems for recycling waste exist in Europe, data shows that a huge amount of (packaging) waste is either burnt as an energy source or shipped globally, but also dumped polluting the environment. Existing legislation is implemented differently by the European member states and sometimes leads to contradictory systems as well as confusion for consumers. Thus, we urge the European Commission to introduce a European Recycling Standard on grounds of its legislative powers in the field of the Common Market. The standard should entail

- creating an EU-wide recycling system,
- implementing a “Right to Repair” by subsidizing workshops and companies specializing on recycling and repairing goods,
- introduce and increase obligations for companies to recycle resources and use deposit systems.

Grouping various national legislation and introducing a common European approach towards what we call the “Circular EUconomy” will help reduce the environmental impact of many resources and encourage consumers to decide against exclusively buying new products. Thus, market incentives should be applied that reward both companies and consumers for using recycled or repaired products.

The ideas were developed by the participants of the event “#EngagEUConference: Forum for Young Ideas for the Future of Europe”, which took place in Berlin from November 16 – 17, 2021. The event is part of the project series “#EngagEU Council. Youth exchange and youth participation”, implemented by Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) e.V. You can find more information on EngagEU Council on our **WEBSITE**.

The project is funded by Stiftung Mercator, with additional funding for #EngagEUConference from the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, and is supported through the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union.

January 2022

**Institut für Europäische Politik**  
**Bundesallee 23**  
**D-10717 Berlin**

Tel.: +49-30-889134-0

Editors: Funda Tekin, Simone Klee, Antonia Labitzky, York Albrecht.  
Layout: Roman Kindler, Antonia Labitzky.

Project Leadership:

**iep** Institut für  
Europäische Politik

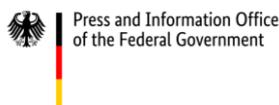
Contact:

Simone Klee  
Email: [Simone.Klee@iep-berlin.de](mailto:Simone.Klee@iep-berlin.de)  
Tel.: +49-30-889134-0

Funded by:

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With the support of the  
Europe for Citizens Programme  
of the European Union

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