EU Future Talks Salzburg

12.10. - 13.10.2023

Results

EU FUTURE TALKS SALZBURG

On the occasion of the European Year of Skills and the upcoming European Parliament elections in 2024, EUROPE DIRECT Land Salzburg initiated the second EU Future Talks at the Chiemseehof in Salzburg with about 60 young participants from 17 different EU Member States. The conference, which was organised together with akzente Salzburg, aimed to formulate the demands of the youth regarding the future of Europe. The final discussion with Members of the European Parliament on the 13th of October 2023 is available on a Livestream www.salzburg.gv.at/europedirect. The proposals of the adolescents aged 17-27 years – list of names stated below – resulted in the enclosed paper and were worked out over the preceding days in four parallel workshops, namely **"Economic growth & climate protection: conflicting interests?", "Freedom, security & solidarity: together as EU fundamental rights", "Global challenges: the role of Europe"** and **"Digital transformation & AI: changing times in Europe"**. It is in their best interest and a top priority that their proposals are to be taken into account and brought into the ongoing discussions.

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LADA, Vivian (GR)
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DEMANDS AND RESULTS FROM THE "DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND AI: CHANGING TIMES IN EUROPE" GROUP

AI AND EDUCATION

The rise of AI technology sparks concerns about its role in education, mainly due to two reasons: Online tools like ChatGPT challenge traditional evaluation methods for tests and essays. Despite young people's exposure to AI, it's not integrated into the education system. The current approach suppresses AI use in education, which is reactive and fails to harness its potential. It also lacks instruction on AI's use and its associated risks. In the late 1990s, computer courses were introduced to prepare for the digital future. Now, it is furthermore essential to update the curriculum to include AI education. Failing to act will create a divide between those who learn AI and those left behind. To level the playing field, we need to provide opportunities for all. AI education should focus on teaching AI tools, understanding their implications, and being critical of their results. Teachers play a crucial role, so they need proper training and support. It is vital that EU institutions create educational materials and courses, ensuring accessibility and avoiding commercial exploitation. These resources can benefit both teachers and the general public.

TRUSTWORTHY AI AND QUALITY DATA

Large companies like Meta and Google currently privatize valuable data for AI development without quality control, resulting in unreliable responses. To address this, the group proposes that the EU initiates the collection of high-quality data to create trustworthy AI models.

1. Democratising Data Access: This initiative aims to provide open access to the data, benefitting not only tech-giants but also independent developers and small companies. This approach fosters diversity in the AI landscape and aligns with the UN's 9th sustainable development goal focused on innovation.

2. Combating AI Bias: High-quality, open data can significantly reduce AI bias, ensuring that AI models provide more inclusive and diverse responses.

3. Enhanced Privacy Protection: EU-based AI tools adhere to the stringent GDPR, offering better privacy protection and reducing dependency on foreign companies.

In summary, while this initiative may require significant funding and effort, the benefits it offers, including open data access, trustworthy AI, and improved privacy protection, outweigh the challenges.

PERMANENT REVISION AND LEGISLATION UPDATES

The AI Act is a huge step forward concerning the development of guidelines and regulations of a field that so far had no oversight. The groups' main concern regarding this topic is that by the time this regulation is implemented (most likely being early 2024) it will already be severely outdated. The panel of high-level AI experts (ALTAI), which was created for the consulting process of this legislation, submitted their work in 2020. To put this into perspective, in that year the possibilities and capabilities of large language models (LLMs) like Chat GPT were only just starting to be noticed by the AI community. We aren't fearmongering on the possibility of an AGI (Artificial General Intelligence) like other tech-giants are, but we are simply highlighting the rapidly evolving nature of technology. Waiting for a moratorium isn't feasible. We need a permanent board of experts and parliamentarians to work on the next regulation iteration before it becomes obsolete. We are risking our free market by enabling the biggest players to get even bigger via an extremely powerful tool that they will only use to widen the gap between them and their competition. Given this context, the groups' demand, even though it may come as a bit vague, is that the legislative process needs to accelerate. There are no two ways about it: it is either the option which recognises the complex and intertwined nature of European institutions and processes and tries to work in said framework as best as possible, or do nothing and in a couple of years be forced anyway to update it in an even more uncertain context than now and lagging behind the rest of the world on the matter. We can either be as prepared and proactive as possible, or wait and panic with each new significant advancement.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A EUROPEAN AI AGENCY

The group has argued in favour of three initiatives or proposals that are completely disjointed from one another. However, the group wants to suggest a solution that could help the advancement of all three initiatives, which may have a profound impact in the long run – the group wishes for the equivalent of the ESA for AI. One of the consequences of the AI Act is the creation of an European office for AI. That office has among its competencies the development of a database of high risk AIs, providing guidance and support to national competent authorities in each Member State and promoting the development of trustworthy AI in the EU. Our main concern regarding this initiative is that it is not ambitious enough. Judging by its wording, it mostly emphasizes the development of trustworthy AI, but with no reference to *who* should be developing it. Our position on this matter is clear: we recognize the need to empower and encourage EU based companies to align with our goals, but we do not think that should be all. If this technology is the future, we should be involved in its development, not just policing its deployment and defining its legal framework.

The times in which we are living right now are extremely turbulent and fast-paced. We have to be bold and ambitious. If we fear that we might be heading off a cliff, we need to take the wheel instead of limiting ourselves to giving instructions to the driver. We need to start building our own technology, like we have done numerous other times in the past. Our main motivation for creating these demands is not the fear or anxiety we may feel towards what AI could do in the wrong hands, but the hope of what we can achieve if we align it with our own goals and values. Given our current predicament, the only way forward that ensures our demands are fulfilled is this AI Agency with capacities beyond the ones of the EU AI office. If we want a better future, we have to start by recognizing that we can build it.

DEMANDS AND RESULTS FROM THE "FREEDOM; SECURITY & SOLIDARITY: TOGETHER AS EU FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS" GROUP

STOP POLARISATION

The group requests the politicians to tackle the problem of polarisation within the member states of the EU. The group wants more fact-based communication and conversations instead of fake news and emotionally overloaded discussions. Thereby, we want to stop the increasing polarization especially within the topic of migration - fight against the demonization of refugees and tackle the constant racism in political discussions. Therefore, we want to invite the people who are often forgotten into political discussions. We need to respect the opinion of everyone that really wants to take part in a constructive discussion. This action would help to fight the everyday polarization and the mind-set of "those politicians in Brussels do whatever they want, without explaining why they do it".

ESTABLISHMENT OF TASKFORCE

The group wants to establish a programme like the "East StratCom Task Force" programme of the EU, whose main goal is to fight against disinformation caused by Russian propaganda, within the borders of the EU itself. We cannot fight for honesty and facts outside of the EU, if we do not embrace these values in our own political discussions.

STOP HARRASSMENT

The group requests for stricter rules within the EU when it comes to harassment. Adding to this request, the group also wants the politicians to establish more programmes aimed at spreading awareness when it comes to this topic.

DEMANDS AND RESULTS FROM THE "Economic growth & climate protection" GROUP

ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EU CLIMATE POLICY AND DECISION MAKING

20% of the population of the EU is 18-35 years old. But in the European Parliament only 6 out of 705 MEPs are under the age of 35. Youth participation, especially when it comes to climate policies, is crucial as the current youth and the future generations will have to live with the climate change and its hugely negative consequences.

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ENSURING THE COMPLETION OF THE "TEN-T" TRANSPORT NETWORK TO THE PLANNED EXTENT WITHIN TIMEFRAME GIVING EUROPEANS GREENER TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Currently in Europe it is usually more convenient to fly instead of taking a train, even on shorter trips due to the lack of a proper transportation network. In the future we want to see a European Union in which trains are the most convenient, cheapest and greenest mode of transport between cities and countries, near or far. The timeline for the completion of the Trans-European Transport Network by 2030 to 2050 is dubious due to the current lack of commitment by the different actors involved.

NEED FOR GREENER CLIMATE POLICIES – THE FUTURE IS DECIDED NOW

We want to express our support for the European Green Deal and we urge the upcoming MEPs and the members of the European Commission after the elections of 2024 to keep on supporting this legislation and to fight for even more ambitious and greener climate policies. The future of the future generations is decided now.

DEMANDS AND RESULTS FROM THE "Global Challenges-The Role of Europe" GROUP

ADDRESSING CONSUMERISM EDUCATION LAW

Introduction:
"As the representatives of the youth, deeply concerned about the detrimental impact of consumerism on both human rights and the environment, we urgently call upon the Members of the European Parliament to take decisive action. Our proposal, the Consumerism Education Law, aims to address the root causes of suffering linked to fast fashion and production. We acknowledge that consumerism contributes to horrific working conditions and advocate for concrete measures to curtail its negative effects."

Cut the Cord with Harmful Practices
"We demand the enactment of legislation that makes it significantly harder for brands associated with unethical and inhumane practices to trade with the European Union. This includes stringent regulations on labour conditions and product quality. By severing ties with companies that do not meet these standards, we emphasise the importance of prioritising ethical and sustainable production within the EU market."

Enhanced Regulations and Oversight

"We call for the establishment of stronger regulations governing labour practices and product quality within the EU. Moreover, we urge the European Parliament to ensure rigorous enforcement of these regulations through inspections and monitoring. It is important that the standards we advocate for are not only set but are actively maintained and upheld to safeguard the well-being of workers and the environment."

Youth Education on Consumerism:

"We recognise the limitations of EU law in controlling education systems and propose the establishment or support of NGOs dedicated to educating EU youth about the problems associated with consumerism. These NGOs, with a mandate to support local representation in each member country, will engage with schools to provide comprehensive education and awareness on global issues related to consumerism. By instilling a strong sense of responsibility and sustainability in the younger generation, we can better prepare for the challenges ahead."

Conclusion

"With these proposed steps, we urge countries outside the EU to take proactive measures, demonstrating a commitment to combating climate-harming and inhumane production practices. This initiative reflects our dedication to creating a future where ethical standards are prioritised and the well-being of both workers and the environment is safeguarded."

DEMANDS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ON EU EVENT ACCESSIBILITY

Introduction:

"We, the youth representatives, call on the European Parliament to address the current disparities in EU event participation. Recognising the need for equal opportunities, we propose concrete demands to ensure that all young Europeans, regardless of their geographic location or social background, can actively engage in EU events."

Accessibility Initiatives:

"As proponents of accessible engagement, we propose initiatives to guarantee meaningful participation in EU events for all youth. This includes the implementation of targeted outreach programs, the establishment of digital platforms for remote participation, and support for local organisations to disseminate information. By prioritising accessibility, we aim to bridge the information gap and empower every young European to be an active participant in shaping the future of the EU."

Conclusion:

"In advocating for these demands, we envision a future where the European Union actively promotes inclusivity and accessibility in its events, ensuring that the diverse voices of the youth are heard and valued. By taking these steps, the European Parliament can truly reflect the democratic principles that underpin the European project."

MORE IMPORTANT ROLE OF EU IN THE GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

There are currently numerous global conflicts between the EU, the US and China. Complete supply chains in the EU are recurringly threatened by a number of disagreements. The EU should occupy a strong position and keep on maintaining a powerful impact on global markets.

CONSIDERATION OF GLOBAL SOUTH

The EU should take into account the real needs and wants of countries in the Global South and should work together on problems they really have and not on problems the EU thinks they have. The EU should also refrain from infantilising and condescending these countries.

The EU should stop its practices of dumping against the Global South and should allow those countries to develop their markets in their own time. Special attention should instead be directed towards providing opportunities and prospects for the local youth to contribute to the advancement of their respective economies.

"Charity" actions on behalf of the EU do harm to the countries in the global south.
The EU should furthermore stop sending unusable waste in the form of clothing.

Policies and agreements in this field are taking too long. A collective commitment to constructive dialogue, procedural streamlining, and cooperative problem-solving is fundamental in aiding the Global South efficiently.

CLAIM FOR MORE EVENTS LIKE THE EU FUTURE TALKS IN SALZBURG