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EUth: Strengthening Youth and Democracy in Europe

European Youth Bridge

Young Ideas for a Better Europe

Recommendations from Youth to Policymakers



DISINFORMATION

The spreading of fake news undermines public trust and democratic stability. Current educational systems use outdated methods, failing to equip young citizens with the reliable, transparent information needed to make responsible choices in a complex environment characterized by populism and political tensions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Enhance Educational Tools: Invest heavily in education focused on technological literacy, information management, and critical thinking to strengthen democratic values.
2. Reform Civic Education: Introduce more youth initiatives and robust civic education in schools to meet the real needs of students.
3. Provide Necessary Tools: Institutions must do everything possible to provide young citizens with the tools they need to recognize and identify disinformation and propaganda.

EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Intensive academic pressure (stressful schedules, tutoring) causes anxiety, fatigue, and frustration among youth. Furthermore, discrimination and bullying based on appearance, race, or status lead to trauma and mental suffering. There is also a weak link between school education and real life.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Resource Allocation: Invest in school teachers to improve the quality of education and support.
2. Promote Well-being and Inclusion: Ensure the availability of accessible extra-curricular activities. Implement measures promoting inclusion with different groups (e.g., disabled) to combat discrimination and bullying.
3. Modernize Learning: Encourage the use of interactive non-formal education. Incentivize the development of a good rapport between school staff to bridge the gap between educational actors.

HOUSING

Europe faces a housing crisis; for example, Czechia has seen a 122% increase in house prices since 2015, making Prague the second least accessible city for housing in Europe. This housing insecurity causes many young people to delay starting families.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Support Buyers: The European Parliament needs to call for stronger action on affordable housing, including support for first-time buyers.
2. Improve Social Housing: Improve the use of EU funds for social housing. Housing must be formally recognized as a human right and a key element of social stability across the EU.

ENVIRONMENT

Young people experience anxiety about climate change and the future of the planet. They perceive current environmental policies as often symbolic rather than effective (e.g., banning plastic straws while leaving plastic packaging untouched). Fear and confusion surround the effects of implemented solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Enact Systemic Change: Symbolic bans must give way to systemic change. Policies must demonstrate genuine effectiveness rather than mere gestures.
2. Empower, Not Alarm: Policies should be designed to empower young people rather than alarm them.
3. Ensure Clarity: The defined path to sustainability must be understandable and inclusive for all citizens.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth Participation: Young people face social and political barriers (lack of representation, apathy, limited political education, and mistrust in institutions). Economic pressures (financial difficulties, need to work, academic pressure) limit time for involvement, especially for those in low-income or rural areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Enhance Representation: Shift the policy approach "From Consultation to Co-Decision".
2. Address Barriers: Implement Rewarded Volunteering schemes to mitigate financial difficulties. Develop a "Youth Check" mechanism for policy proposals.
3. Counter Stereotypes: Address prejudices and stereotypes that often dismiss young people's views as immature.

MIGRATION AND GEOPOLITICS

Immigrants face severe obstacles, including language barriers, racism, and inability to work in their qualified fields. This results in poor living conditions, exploitation, and abuse (especially of unaccompanied children). This lack of integration feeds anti-immigrant sentiment and hinders integration. Geopolitical crises bring uncertainty, despite youth generally being more open-minded and globally engaged.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Foster Dialogue and Trust (Overarching Solution): Since geopolitical and migration issues lead to tension and polarization, focus must be placed on the power of dialogue in strengthening democracy.
2. Support Integration and Resilience: Support is needed for Intercultural youth exchanges, Inclusive discussion forums, and Educational programs that empower young voices.
3. Promote Resilience: Engaging youth in respectful dialogue fosters resilience to division and radicalization, laying the foundation for a more united future.

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