Engaging young people and decision-makers from politics and business to exchange on the future of Europe
Europe’s youth is the European Union’s greatest source of inspiration and opportunity, the very foundations of the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community on 25 March 1957 – 60 years ago. Only by engaging with the visions, concerns and ideas of young people can Europe hope to overcome its challenges and renew confidence and stability.

ERT partners with JA Europe to reach out to young people, inviting their opinions on issues they care about, such as employment, and encouraging them to engage in the political process.

“Why Europe Matters” is a call for action: it asks young people, business people and policy makers to come together in a common effort to demonstrate the positive impact Europe has on everyone’s lives and give the future of Europe a voice.

“By teaming up with the ERT, we aim to contribute to a stronger and more entrepreneurial Europe - one that is making the most of its youngest human capital. We need more entrepreneurs and new growing businesses in Europe and these, in turn, need skilled and enterprising employees. We also need to hear what young people think about Europe and what they want it to become. It’s their ideas that will sustain it in the future.”

Caroline Jenner, CEO at JA Europe.

“It is vital to understand the hopes and expectations of young people to further advance and improve the European project. This joint initiative with JA Europe is an attempt to re-engage young people in a dynamic dialogue on where they think Europe should be heading.”

Brian Ager, Secretary General at ERT.
The ‘Why Europe Matters’ survey explores young Europeans’ views about Europe and the EU, their education and employment, and their hopes and expectations for the future. This web-based survey was conducted by the Eastern Norway Research Institute. It was opened on 1 September 2017 and closed on 31 December 2017.

A SURVEY EXPLORING YOUNG PEOPLES’ VIEWS ABOUT EUROPE

WHAT MAKES THIS SURVEY UNIQUE?

1. The survey was restricted to 16-25 year olds. Over 4,500 young people responded. In fact, three-quarters of the respondents were aged 20 or under.

2. The survey breaks new ground in being representative of youth opinion across Europe. Respondents in 31 countries went online to complete it. They spanned the whole region: from Finland to Malta and from France to Romania.

3. The questions in the survey were focused on the four objectives set out in the Rome Declaration. The 27 member State leaders committing themselves to the Declaration in March 2017 pledged action towards:
   - A safe and secure Europe,
   - A prosperous and sustainable Europe,
   - A stronger Europe on the global scene,
   - A social Europe, notably “…a Union where young people receive the best education and training and can study and find jobs across the continent.”

Survey responses confirmed young people’s awareness of, interest in, and commitment to these objectives.

4. The survey was not a stand-alone exercise. Alongside it, workshops in 9 countries gave over 400 young people the chance to discuss the survey’s key issues. Mentored by representatives of Europe’s leading companies and in the presence of their teachers, participants were challenged to come up with ideas for a better Europe, and they did so. The objective was clear: give young people a voice in shaping their own future and connect them with Europe’s policy-makers – this time not online but face-to-face. Concurrently, young people brainstormed to identify concrete proposals for policy-makers. National workshops selected representatives from each to take part in a final innovation workshop in Brussels, prior to the ‘Youth Speak Up’ event on 21 March.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 74% aged 16-20
- 66% in secondary education and 28% at University
- 55% female
- 44% with experience in entrepreneurship education
- 81% living in urban areas
- 7% study abroad
1. YOUTH PRIORITIES FOR EUROPE

Part of the survey focused on young people’s concerns and expectations for a better Europe. Respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they felt about the most important challenges for national governments and the EU to address.

Quality education (at 88%) came top with security/terrorism (80%) and youth employment (78%) not far behind. Climate change (68%) is in the top 4.

The EU’s priority should be to have well-educated citizens, world-class science education and also the internal and independent production of foodstuffs.

FLORIAN VAMOSI, 17 years old, Hungary.
2. YOUNG PEOPLE’S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EU

The survey also aimed at identifying young people’s attitude to the European Union and their plans or expectations for the future.

It is striking to note that young people want to know more about the EU; they feel their voice is not heard.

Only 18% felt they were heard in EU elections. At the same time, 66% believed that young people need to hear more about the EU from their teachers.

3. WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE THINK THE EU DELIVERS

Exploring now the benefits of the EU, young people were asked what was the most important benefit of the European citizenship.

In terms of geographical differences, we observed that the Euro (common currency) is seen as less important in the Eastern region (45% say it is (very) important), compared to the South (65%), and Northern / Western regions (65%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPORTANCE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE REPORTING &quot;IMPORTANT&quot; AND &quot;VERY IMPORTANT&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE RIGHT TO STUDY ABROAD</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEACE - NO MAJOR CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES IN THE EU</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE RIGHT TO WORK ABROAD</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU SUPPORT FOR POOR REGIONS IN EURO</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE FREEDOM TO TRAVEL WITHOUT VISA OR BORDER CONTROL</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCESS TO PRODUCTS FROM OTHER EU COUNTRIES</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE EURO - A COMMON CURRENCY</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO BUILD A COMMON EUROPEAN IDENTITY</td>
<td>56%</td>
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4. YOUNG PEOPLE’S KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE EU

Young people know about the major benefits of the EU, but to what extent do they feel aware of the European developments?

We note different levels of knowledge/ awareness towards the EU among those who said they had participated in entrepreneurship education and those who had not.

- Young people with entrepreneurship education experiences seem to have a higher level of knowledge about the EU.
- Young people who have participated in entrepreneurship education are also more likely to discuss the EU with their families and friends than others.

5. YOUNG PEOPLE’S FEELING ABOUT THE FUTURE

We note differences of opinion and attitude towards the future among those who said they had participated in entrepreneurship education and those who had not.

Young people with entrepreneurship education experience are more optimistic about the future.

- A majority of young people reported that they would like to start their own business. Still, 65.5% of those with EE experience against 49% without are eager to become entrepreneurs.
- Most respondents agree that it will be harder to find a job in 2030 but young people with EE experience are more positive about an increased quality of life for people in Europe and in their own country.
- Young people with EE also seem to better grasp the advantages of the European integration, as they tend to be more willing to work abroad for instance.
The workshop series is designed to find out ‘why Europe matters’ to young Europeans and, having found out, to engage with decision makers and prompt responses from them.

Young people were asked to explore key trends investigated in the survey together with business mentors. They were also invited to work as a team in order to find innovative solutions to some of the challenges identified.

First of all, we observe that all priorities identified in the survey were raised as key concerns during the workshops. For instance, four of the nine workshops tackled education and employment. In fact the focus of the French workshop was exclusively on employment. Security and terrorism seemed less important.

Secondly, it appears from the workshops that young people lack awareness of existing European tools/initiatives tackling youth employment, sense of European belonging and education. While the national workshops involved JA students who did benefit from an entrepreneurial education experience and are thus more likely to know more about the EU; they did not know about major European initiatives. Several teams were suggesting schemes such as Erasmus + (offering mobility in education and internships), Euronews (the pan-European TV channel) and Droppin’ (an EU platform creating links between companies and young people looking for jobs/internships) without knowing that they actually already exist.

Outcome of the workshops

Let’s focus on employability first of all. Two themes stand out. The first is that education and employability are closely linked. The second is that young people would like to see companies and students work together. The existence of a gap between the demand for particular skills and the actual supply of labour was recognised. The next step was to do something about it.

In Portugal for instance, a team suggested the establishment of European skills centres working closely with businesses and educators. In France, some students came up with the idea to offer career orientation opportunities at a young age, involving internships across Europe in different sectors in the school programmes.

” We are at a crossroads in Europe, where we need new ideas and innovation. 
ROLAND VERSTAPPEN, HEINEKEN, mentor at the occasion of the workshop in the Netherlands.

” How is the long-term unemployment problem trying to be solved? 
DIOGO PEREIRA, 17 years old, Portugal.
Young people were also keen to develop tools offering European citizens better opportunities to connect with ‘Europe’. In Germany, the desire to create student exchange programmes between ‘old’ and ‘new’ European countries was strong as well as effective ways to improve travel experiences between those countries. Teams from Finland were advocates for apps to develop language skills, stimulate cross-border contact and encourage travel.

Another Finnish team wanted a website that helped young people understand different minorities. “We would like to give schools a chance to work with minorities,” they said.

“Europe is my homeland, and I grew up in it. I want to protect it and it matters to me because I love Europe and its multicultural atmosphere. (...) As regards, financing of education, where does the money really go? And is it used properly?”

STEF JANSSENS, 18 years old, Netherlands

In that regard, it appeared from the workshops that students were not focusing on the issue of security as such but would rather show interest in developing innovative ideas regarding the integration of refugees and disabled people. A Hungarian team for example was willing to include some awareness classes on the topic within the curriculum. Three of Spain’s teams put up proposals to improve the social integration of refugees. The Dutch wanted a pan-European organisation placing refugees in the country best suited to their profile, knowledge and career plans. And the Greeks thought that unused Erasmus Plus funds could provide accommodation for refugee students.

Europe Matters

What stands out from the survey and workshops alike is that the European Union does matter for young people. Whether the topic is employment or education - indeed whatever the topic – young people say that more Europe not less is the answer; which could be clearly noted during the workshops. The implication is that young people do not think that national governments can solve these challenges on their own.

“I am a European, whose life is affected in many ways by EU’s decisions and it is very important for me, that every European citizen can have an effect in the decision-making. I also feel, that it is important to be active by the youth, because we will once be leading this ship and what kind of ship we will have, depends in many ways of the decisions made these days.”

JUHO LUMME, 16 years old, Finland

Another thing that matters is action to follow up on the survey and workshop outputs. Why? The 81% of survey respondents saying that young people’s voices were not heard in Europe should prompt a response. That indicates also a willingness to get more involved. It also suggests a threat to Europe’s future stability in case we fail to listen to the young generation. Last year President Juncker said that “now is the time to build a more united, stronger and more democratic Europe for 2025.”

The March ‘Youth Speak Up’ event cannot be a complete response to challenge of engaging young people with Europe’s policy makers but it can be the beginning of what must be a sustained effort to do just that.

“It’s a great opportunity so people of different ages can share what they think on different topics and it’s important for Europe to hear and to listen to the leaders of tomorrow.”

ROLINA GONZÁLEZ, SAP volunteer (Substation Engineer)
EU workshop

On 21 March, 35 young people from across Europe brainstormed on proposals to address these 3 top challenges. Solutions were presented to a panel of politicians and business leaders. The young participants came up with the following ideas, neither knowing if they already exist nor to what extent they are practically feasible or desirable:

Education

- Setup a web-based exchange of good practice between European countries on their education systems, involve teachers and students. Pair countries to learn from one another. Exchange teachers to allow them to experience the practice in another country. (e.g. an Erasmus for teachers)

- Create a European “Mentoring” framework to coach students to choose an appropriate career path and to ensure that students have the right soft skills and social awareness. Involve teachers, employers and students.

Youth employment

- Create a European Foundation to mentor, guide and provide finance to local business and start-ups, and to assist young entrepreneurs.

- Let students work on a final entrepreneurship project in their last year at university. Efforts are recognised by means of a “European entrepreneurship certificate” and students wanting to continue with their project after graduation are supported.

Safer Europe

- Invest in the integration of refugees by bringing them together with volunteers, NGOs and locals to work together on specific issues, which is an opportunity to improve language and intercultural skills.

- The European Union’s Agency for Network and Information Security (Enisa) could raise the general public’s awareness of security threats: e.g. specific programmes for schools, companies, elderly, etc.
About ERT

The European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) is a forum bringing together around 50 Chief Executives and Chairmen of major multinational companies of European parentage covering a wide range of industrial and technological sectors. Companies of ERT Members are widely situated across Europe, with combined revenues exceeding €2,250 billion, sustaining around 6.8 million jobs in the region. They invest more than €50 billion annually in R&D, largely in Europe. ERT strives for a strong, open and competitive Europe, with the EU, including its Single Market, as a driver for inclusive growth and sustainable prosperity.

www.ert.eu

About JA Europe

JA Europe is Europe’s largest provider of education programmes for entrepreneurship, work readiness and financial literacy. In 2017, we equipped 3.5 million students in 40 countries with the knowledge, skills and attitude they require to start a business or get a job. JA works with the education and business communities as well as governments to provide young people from primary school to university with experiences that build the skills and competences they will need to succeed in a global economy. JA Europe is the European Regional Operating Centre for JA Worldwide®.

www.jaeurope.org
ERT consortium partners:

In collaboration with:

This event is under the patronage of the Ministry for the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of European Union 2018.

This event is part of the “Switch on Europe” campaign powered by JA Europe.