

#NextGeneration

Young Ideas on the
Future of Europe

Junges Manifest - Manifesto dei Giovani

GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium
für Bildung
und Forschung

VillVigoni



Preamble

What motivates us

We, young Europeans who have grown up with the privilege of living in an already liberated and united Europe, founded on the principles of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, feel a responsibility to honour these values and to renew them.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the economic and social inequalities that surround us. Moreover, the catastrophic consequences of Russian aggression against Ukraine have accentuated the weaknesses of the European Union's decision-making processes which are often unable to meet the current challenges. Voter abstention, slow bureaucratic procedures and disillusionment with politics are seriously damaging the very foundations of democracy.

For these reasons,

- ★ Considering the impact of the climate crisis on the next generations, we demand that young people be systematically **involved** in environmental politics.
- ★ Considering the importance of participation in public life, we demand a **reform** of the laws on citizenship and new modes of participatory democracy.
- ★ Considering both the risks and the enormous potential of digital progress, we demand a stronger **development** of information technologies and the digitalisation of voting.
- ★ Considering the diversity of our social fabric to be an asset, we demand a **renewal** of school systems focused on respect for each identity as well as the promotion of equal opportunities in education and employment.
- ★ Considering the rapid and crucial changes in the geopolitical setting, we demand a **revision** of the European treaties to allow an effective response to the current challenges.

Chapter 1

Sustainability and the climate crisis

Climate change is scientifically proven. It affects not only us as young generations in Italy, Germany, and Europe – but all people worldwide. Today, we set the scope of action for tomorrow and in doing so, we bear a responsibility to ensure a future worth living for ourselves and succeeding generations. We consciously consider this in our actions and recognise that we must also adjust our own habits. We are willing to contribute and actively involve ourselves in decision-making processes.

Sustainable mobility and logistics

Air pollution is a serious threat to health and environment. We therefore demand stricter exhaust emission standards for traffic and a reduction of **individual transport** in the long term. We demand substantial expansion and development of a sustainable and socially compatible transportation network. This would include an attractive cycling infrastructure and long-term initiatives promoting sustainable mobility with socially acceptable pricing for public transport. At the same time, we demand the extension of the European rail network with high speed and night trains to intensify transnational exchange. Achieving this requires accelerated, low-threshold planning and authorisation procedures. For the connection of our societies, it is essential to guarantee the mobility of their citizens even in sparsely populated areas: for instance, by providing regional trains, frequent bus connections and **on-demand services**.

Responsible circular economy

We need an intact ecosystem in order to live. The increasing pollution of air, water and soil destroys biodiversity. At the same time, we are over-exploiting our planet's resources with our current economic system. We demand more partnerships at a regional and local level in order to promote specific

projects, for example in the domains of agriculture, construction and waste management and to ensure the responsible management of resources. At the local level, youth ambassadors should promote a sustainable lifestyle. The foundation for sustainability is laid in schools, companies offering apprenticeships and universities: for example, repairs, **refurbishment** and recycling must become a lived reality.

Energy sources of the future

As a result of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, energy prices have massively increased. The existence of many people is threatened. We demand the European Union to become independent from fossil fuels, particularly from authoritarian states, as quickly as possible. For this purpose, we demand the consistent and immediate extension of renewable energy sources, especially wind and solar power. Private households and companies should be actively supported in the transition towards an independent energy supply. We demand that energy be utilised in a more economical and efficient way, and be better stored, and that innovative approaches be fostered with the aim of reaching zero **emissions** by the year 2035. This is the only way to protect and support democratic structures and to preserve the earth as a place to live for future generations.

Chapter 2

Digitalisation and de-bureaucratisation

Europe is not strategically autonomous in important future fields. Inefficient bureaucracy, long waiting times, complicated administrative forms and employees who are not prepared for digital working cause frustration and a lack of trust. These circumstances also discourage investment in job creation, especially for youth. Last but not least, much needed progress with regard to the digitalisation of the state, society and economy is being slowed down.

European autonomy

Europe is neither leading in technologies nor is it a serious competitor against the market leaders USA and China. We cannot change this in the short term and probably not in the medium term either. At the moment it is both difficult, to keep Chinese state-owned enterprises under control and not to be dominated by American **Tech Giants**. We therefore demand the replenishment of the existing monitoring instruments of the European Commission through a European Institute for Democratically Compliant Economy, which, among other things, would analyse the potentially damaging tendencies of these enterprises as a whole and develop **policy proposals**.

We need an improvement in the conditions for European innovation and affecting digital companies. To achieve this, we demand an increased supply of **Venture Capital**, **Regulatory Sandboxes** and public Start-Up Bodies, particularly for young people. The European Union must meet the trend of ever faster innovation and the need for agile regulation. For this purpose, we demand new policy approaches and legislative instruments. Moreover, we ultimately need the **European Digital Single Market**.

We need to become scalable in core fields such as **semiconductor technology**, **3D-printing**, **data infrastructure**, **artificial intelligence/machine learning** and **quantum computing**. Other key sectors are the natural **bottlenecks** in this regard: minerals, especially rare earth minerals, batteries, standardization. For this, we need to found institutes, companies and in general to promote cooperation.

Relations between state and citizens

We must revise our approaches to digitalisation and de-bureaucratisation to enable administrations to meet the needs of their citizens. We demand an *EU citizens' register* and a *Single European Digital Identity* for interaction with authorities. To this end, we support the relevant discussions at the European level. All people should be able to communicate with the public administrations effectively, swiftly and digitally, regardless of their member state. This also enables the reinforcement of the single market. Existing attempts at a digital transformation of administration are inadequate. We demand the full-scale, temporary use of *digital innovation agents* for authorities in order to reassess outmoded processes, to exchange *best practices* and to establish new ones. Furthermore, public offices need to collect data on processing times (e.g. application for ID, relocation, tax return) in order to achieve a citizen-oriented mentality in administration.

Rejuvenating the labour market

To this day, our generations have greater difficulties accessing the labour market than did previous ones. We demand a more simplified and flexible access to work opportunities, especially for young people and working conditions that are more family friendly. Furthermore, we demand investment in the *digital skillset* (e.g. *digital literacy*, online safety, machine learning) with a focus on fields of work that are not intended to be automated in the foreseeable future, in order to turn **Digital Natives** into **Digital Pros**.

The authorities do not represent the diversity of our generations – and thus they barely consider the resulting needs in their work. We demand more diversity in the public sector. We need regular, mandatory staff training that discusses diversity and raises awareness.

We perceive a failure of public employment services, especially with regard to young *NEET* (Not in Education, Employment or Training). For this reason, we demand that the *European Youth Guarantee* be rendered less bureaucratic and more visible. All young people should be actively addressed and coached with a view to furthering their education and training.

Chapter 3

Inclusion and participation

The recent crises have highlighted and aggravated the inequalities within our societies, paralysing social mobility, incentivising mechanisms of exclusion and systematic stereotypes. By "inequalities" we refer to the disparities in the real possibilities available to us young people and their impact on our lives.

Education as the key to inclusion

We observe an alarming level of discrimination against specific groups throughout the European Union. Among other things, this is based on their social, ethnic, cultural or geographical origin, religious affiliation, **gender identity**, sexual orientation or disability. People who are discriminated against on the basis of several aspects simultaneously (**intersectionality**) are particularly affected. Education from nursery to university is crucial for the active and open inclusion of all people in our societies.

In order to enable a common European course of action, we demand that the educational sector become in the medium term a **shared competence** between the European Union and the member states by means of treaty amendments. We therefore demand equal and free access to higher education and attractive training opportunities throughout Europe as an investment in the future. Also, we need adequate social benefits and scholarships to support learners and trainees from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. We demand acknowledgement of the fact that migration has changed our societies and continues to do so. This is why we need sufficient resources for language and cultural mediators as well as a modernisation of curricula. We demand "schools of diversity" that foster respect for and among learners, address diversified needs for support, promote mental health, teach the consensual and safe expression of sexuality and train teachers properly and on a regular basis.

Political participation

The participation of all young people in political life is essential – regardless of their origin. At present, however, we find that our perspectives are barely noticed. Voter turnout among citizens under the age of 30 is lower than it is for older generations. Since many young people do not have the formal status of **(EU) citizenship**, their involvement is not possible. These problems are compounded by the lack of digital as well as of uncomplicated participatory opportunities in political processes. Therefore we demand Europe-wide access to postal or secured online voting and specific information campaigns directed at new voters. We demand alternative possibilities for involvement, and that the results be taken seriously and discussed extensively in a mutual exchange. In addition, we urge that all young people be enabled to benefit from easier procedures for obtaining citizenship and thus political participation in their country of residence. Finally, we request the adoption of a **new, diverse and accessible information tool**, on policy and civic education, in order to stimulate interest and engagement among people of every age and social class, informing them regarding local, national and European questions.

To conclude

Viva l'Europa!

We, young Europeans, are fully aware of the complexity of the current challenges with regard to sustainability, digitalisation, inclusion and more. At the same time, we are ready to confront these problems. We seek to bridge the existing gaps between the generations and give new impetus to the European integration process, even though a revision of the existing treaties. This involves small innovations as well as structural improvements: only with the overall participation of young people in public life will European democracy be able to live and renew itself day by day.

We cannot take these important steps alone, but with our manifesto we seek to promote new proposals for the Europe that is to come. Today, **we young Europeans** want to represent a Europe of peace and unity between peoples. Our European anthem does not speak of glory and conquest, but of joy and common values. Let us work together towards this goal, whatever challenges may lie ahead!

#NextGeneration

On the occasion of the European Year of Youth, a group of young people interested in the German-Italian dialogue discussed and worked online on current topics for several months. The results of the various working groups were presented and further developed in November at Villa Vigoni. In this process, the group jointly drafted a manifesto on the future of Europe in view of current and future challenges.

#Glossary

3D Printing

A new technique for manufacturing products. Conventional production often produces a lot of waste, e.g. when a pot is produced from a metal plate. With 3D printing, on the other hand, a digital model of the desired product is created in advance. Then layers of the previously liquid and then drying material are added step by step until the desired product is finished.

Best practices

Model examples that can be used to solve a problem.

Bottleneck

"Bottleneck", meaning the part of a development that blocks the achievement of the desired effect. If, for example, it is wanted to employ more kindergarten teachers, enough money is available, but there are no more suitable unemployed people, then the lack of staff is the bottleneck.

Emissions

CO₂ emissions mean the release of carbon dioxide. Harmful gases are mainly released through the combustion of fossil substances (such as coal, wood or oil).

Data infrastructures

Refers to abstract and actual infrastructure for collecting, forwarding and processing data. For example cables, wireless routers or standards for how data are to be transmitted.

Digital literacy

Digital literacy is the ability to identify, understand, use and create information using electronic/IT tools.

Digital Natives, Digital Pros

Digital natives are those generations who have grown up with computers, mobile phones, smartphones etc. In contrast, digital pros are those who are able to use digital tools professionally and in a self-managed way.

Digital Innovation Agent

Someone who comes to an institution (e.g. office, department) to revise procedures and processes. The basic idea is that many of these processes can be easier and faster with digital tools, but the people in the institutions do not know enough about these tools to make the change on their own.

Digital Skill-Set

Skills to use digital tools on their own.

Register of EU citizens

It is necessary for the European Union to rethink data protection, setting up a common register for all EU citizens with important master data on birth, place of residence and other aspects. This database can be supplemented with further data points. Citizens should be able to release data in a targeted manner for.

European Youth Guarantee

The European Youth Guarantee was introduced in 2013 and reinforced in 2020. It guarantees young people under 30 an offer of employment, training or work experience within four months after becoming unemployed or completing training. Unfortunately, not all young people are aware of the Youth Guarantee and it reaches them very differently in the member states.

European Digital Single Market

Is the proposal that laws of different member States in the EU about digital should be unified in a certain way. The aim is that a company offering digital products and services (e.g. an app) in one member State can offer them in any other member State without further bureaucracy.

Gender identity

Gender identity refers to how a person identifies his or her or their gender, which does not necessarily coincide with the one assigned at birth (biological sex): we distinguish between binary identities (male, female) and non-binary identities (people who feel not entirely or partly belonging to one of the binary genders or who feel belonging to both).

Shared competences

In the case of shared competences, the EU is entitled to enact laws; if it does not use this entitlement, member states can act on their own. Education is not yet a shared competence, the EU can only support member states in their policies.

Semiconductor technology

Semiconductors are absolutely necessary substances to produce modern digital tools such as computers, smartphones, etc.. They are particularly important for the production of computer chips. Semiconductor technology then refers to the knowledge of how such components can be produced.

Individual Transport

In this context, people use the available private vehicles, e.g. car or motorbike, instead of public transport, which includes e.g. bus, tram, regional or long-distance train.

Intersectionality

With the aim of a more open and inclusive society, the concept of intersectionality aims at visibility. It is about recognising and evaluating different forms of oppression and discrimination, which can differ according to context, social categories and individual characteristics.

Circumstances of oppression and discrimination are amplified when they occur simultaneously in one person or group (e.g. a black woman with a lack of money experiences a higher level of discrimination because she belongs to several marginalised categories).

Circular economy

A renewable economic system whose goal is to use as few resources and energy as possible, to consume fewer raw materials and to produce less waste through long-lasting construction, reuse, repair and recycling.

Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning

The attempt to transfer human learning and thinking to computers. It means comparing similar versions of a suitable mathematical model using test data and selecting the version that gives the most accurate results for that dataset. If there is enough available test data, the model is likely to work well for other data. There is no big actual difference between AI (artificial intelligence) and ML (machine learning) is not very large, but ML usually refers to the attempt to select (to "learn") the appropriate model, whereas AI describes the result (the "intelligent" model that then solves problems).

NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

The abbreviation NEET refers to people who are neither attending school, nor working, nor in professional training, due to a range of different and often structural reasons.

New, diverse and accessible information tool

A pluralistic political app should be developed: based on examples such as the German Federal Agency for Civic Education or the information packages for referendum in Switzerland, it should highlight current political debates from different perspectives and communicate them in a neutral, clear and user-friendly way. Depending on their interests, citizens should be able to select European and national, but also regional and local political focal points and to themselves suggest topics for discussion.

On-demand services

Transport services that do not run according to a timetable or along scheduled routes, but are requested on demand and take people either door-to-door or to pre-determined stops. The journeys are arranged on demand by phone or app.

Policy proposal

It refers to a proposal to regulate something by law. It differs from a law proposal because it does not include direct paragraphs and remains abstract.

Quantum computing

It's a theoretical and alternative way of designing a computer, whose practical implementation is currently subject to intensive research.

The basic unit of conventional computers consists in electrical on/off switches ('bits') that encode '0's and '1's. Combining these bits, it is possible to represent longer numbers or letters and execute complex operations (calculations, e-mail, etc.). Quantum computers would use particles from quantum physics ('qubits') instead of 'bits'. Thanks to the effects of quantum physics, they might be able to execute much more complex operations, e.g. so that qubits can assume more than two states. Quantum computers are working as high-precision devices, they can solve some tasks significantly better than conventional computers, but otherwise have no advantage (as far as we currently know).

Refurbishment

It refers to the process of renovating or refreshing used products (such as second-hand clothes or electronics). The resulting continued use of the items saves resources and avoids waste.

Regulatory sandbox

It refers to a legal setting where some laws do not apply, so that researchers or companies can work more easily. For companies, these exceptions usually apply only quite directly after the company is founded.

Single European Digital Identity

A concept for a European Digital Identity is already being developed and implemented by 14 member states. In our view, however, further steps are needed towards a truly joint solution in conjunction with an EU citizens' register. In this way, it should be possible to identify oneself throughout the entire EU or to prove certain personal information - online and offline - for public and private services.

Tech Giant

Technology Giants refers to very large companies that have a special focus on (digital) technologies. Examples: Amazon, Alphabet (Google), Apple.

EU citizenship

Union citizenship complements, but does not replace, the national citizenships of the member States. It grants additional rights, including the right to move freely throughout the EU as well as diplomatic and consular protection, even at the embassies of other member States, and the right to vote in local elections, regardless of the citizenship in the residence country. It is moreover important that EU citizens are not discriminated against by the national legislation of another EU state..

Venture Capital

Special form of risk capital. In other words, it's a form of financing for young, mostly technology-oriented companies that could develop particularly new ideas or significantly grow.