

# Charter of Young Europe

## Preamble

Young people are not interested in politics. Or so people say. This Charter shows that we are the future – and we want to be part of shaping it.

We are young people from Europe and we are interested in politics. We have formulated our visions of Europe online and in workshops. We realise that we do not speak for all of Europe; our hopes and wishes are influenced by how we live in Germany. A Charter written by young people from another European country might be completely different.

We want this Charter to provide concrete yet idealistic inspiration for politicians, business and society in Europe. We believe that we can only build a future worth living in if we act with courage and in concert.

## 1 – We have to make human rights more tangible

Germany's constitution says: "Human dignity shall be inviolable." However, it often remains abstract and ungraspable. We have to change that.

1. The *Agency for Dignity* adopts a communicative, differentiated approach to people in Europe. Its goal is to inform them about their rights and strengthen these rights through the services it provides.
  - a. The Agency sends its staff to public and private institutions. They present the goals of the European Union and analyse their substance in workshops, talks and discussions.
  - b. The Agency promotes associations and projects that advocate for human rights. Voluntary work, in particular, benefits from the promotional schemes on offer.
2. An educational reform will introduce people to human rights as early as possible in their lives.
  - a. We call for a gender-neutral and LGBTQI-friendly language in our schools.
  - b. *Dignity classes* look at social, cultural and religious questions. They promote self-reflection and tolerance.
  - c. External experts and freedom activists are invited to these classes.

One of the fundamental ideals of the European community is to recognise, respect and promote human rights across the world. This calls not just for words, but above all for political action. Human rights must evolve from abstract values into a social reality lived out in practice.

## 2 – Protecting our environment is a top priority

Climate change entails major risks, not only for the Europe of tomorrow, but for the entire world. Without appropriate measures, the challenges we face in the future will be almost impossible to master.

1. Investments in renewable energy sources will help to protect the climate and the environment. They include
  - a. better opportunities to use existing renewables,
  - b. efficient ways to store renewable energies,
  - c. and phasing out nuclear and coal-fired power responsibly in the near future.
2. At the same time, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced in the transport sector. This means
  - a. much lower costs for using public transport,
  - b. state subsidies for cars and trucks that do not run on fossil fuels,
  - c. higher taxes for non-renewable energies
  - d. and more intensive research into climate- and environment-friendly technologies for shipping.
3. There is a direct link between climate change and feeding the world's population, which must be secured without neglecting climate protection. This is achieved through
  - a. making mass livestock farming illegal,
  - b. subsidising sustainable, organic and ethical farming, in particular cattle breeding,
  - c. stopping the destruction of primeval forests to feed animals,
  - d. abolishing monocultures and promoting ecological crop rotation (e.g. permaculture).

We as the European community have a responsibility to counteract climate change Tackling the factors described above is a huge challenge that calls for a fundamental rethink in our consumer society. If we do not start this rethinking immediately, it will have disastrous consequences for us and for future generations.

## 3 – Our diversity strengthens our identity

European identity does not mean having to give up cultural diversity. But it does mean rejecting nationalism. Thinking only of oneself is too short-sighted.

1. We therefore need more cultural and language exchange in addition to existing programmes such as Interrail and Erasmus. These strengthen European bonds.
2. We have to create ways and means to promote a European identity – while strengthening our own. After all, European identity does not mean having to lose one's original identity. On the contrary: Only if we know who we are will we be able to say what we want to be.
3. In times of rising crises and threats, the European Union has to understand itself as a community founded on solidarity, both to preserve the existing peace within the European Union and to mediate for peace in conflicts outside Europe.

We want all cultures and languages in Europe to be preserved and supported. From our diversity we learn more about our common ground. We want a network of friendships to grow in Europe. We say: The best way to face the big challenges of our times is together.

## 4 – Travel enables us to experience the European idea

The European idea is not something you can learn from books or lectures. Europe is more than just an economic community. We believe: European diversity has to be experienced.

1. On top of existing and expanded programmes, we demand additional, well-targeted financial support for European exchange projects. They make the benefits of the European Union more visible and comprehensible.
2. We need a common identity document. This is the only way to turn the feeling of belonging into an official document – a symbol of the shared identification of all Europeans.

Through this European exchange, we can begin again to actively consider what story of Europe we want to tell. We have to create a narrative built on encounters between Europeans – and not merely on imagined assumptions.

## 5 – Education makes us a successful community

A low turnout in the European elections, lack of knowledge about the European Union, a lack of fundamental skills in STEM disciplines: good education is not just key to solving these problems; it is also a human right.

1. Setting up an EU fund for the selective promotion of STEM subjects and language classes at school will promote understanding between people in Europe and enhance our response to digitalisation and climate protection, key topics for the future.
2. It is essential to anchor a diverse (not primarily national) perspective on European themes in the political education curriculum in all EU nations.
3. The expansion of adult education structures will facilitate broader, more affordable learning for all.
4. A lottery based on the model of free Interrail tickets will enable adults to undertake an educational journey.

Education forms the basis for anchoring the idea of the European Union enduringly within society and ensuring that it will be preserved into the future.

## 6 – The economy serves us human beings

We believe the economy is important. However, it has to serve people, not companies. Making your money work for you is not work. Financial capitalism distorts the market economy.

1. We call for cuts in income taxes and bigger allowances to relieve the burden on medium and low incomes.
2. Uniform, progressive taxation of companies across Europe will ensure that each company contributes its fair share to the common good.
3. We want to strengthen lobbying by civil society, ensuring that Europe becomes more citizen-friendly and that all interests are heard in Brussels.

A joint and coherent economic policy is important to us as a European community. It should also narrow the gap in the quality of life between individual member states. No country should see its economic development impaired by national or European interests.

## 7 – Digitalisation is our future

A European digital industry can succeed if we act in concert. This is the only way to ensure that the European community remains competitive in the international arena and create a framework where digitalisation benefits society.

1. To boost the promotion of innovation and competition in the digital sector, investments will be needed in research and standardisation. This can be done through
  - a. greater financial support for research (e.g. Artificial Intelligence, data management), start-ups and the exchange of knowledge,
  - b. standardisation at international level to promote Industry 4.0 (cloud-based technologies, Internet of Things),
  - c. and the expansion of a digital infrastructure that reaches everywhere.
2. People must be able to deal with technological innovation in an informed manner. For this to happen, ordinary citizens and politicians need to have the required skills.
  - a. A Centre of Excellence where experts from numerous disciplines – including the economy, ethics, sociology and law – engage in joint research and debate will create a basis for the exchange of knowledge across different disciplines. It is important to us for the experts not just to discuss the political dimension but also to seek dialogue with people in EU countries.
  - b. The promotion of digital and media skills will help people to handle digital services in a responsible and informed manner and provide answers to the meaningful use and challenges associated with, for example, the social media, Artificial Intelligence and algorithms.

The European community must engage more effectively with digitalisation – at an economic, scientific and social level. It is not enough for politicians to react; they must work together actively to shape the future.