

Europe Needs Us—We Need Europe

For us young people, Europe is no longer a project, but a reality of life. We have a common currency, we may travel and work freely, we meet and make friends. Therefore, we need Europe to stay strong, democratic and social. We owe a great deal to European integration, we have high expectations of a common future, and we thus stand together for Europe.

It is high time to take a loud pro-European stand for:

- a democratic Europe
- a youth-friendly Europe
- an investing Europe
- a social and just Europe
- a sustainably developed Europe
- an open and mobile Europe
- a Europe open to the world and based on solidarity
- a Europe united in diversity

The European Union is currently being put to the test: European integration, which has been steadily deepening for 60 years, is being called into question. The demands for isolation and the nation state are exacerbating. In the United Kingdom, the Brexit referendum initiated the process of withdrawing from the Union. In some other countries, such as Poland, Hungary, Italy and Austria, nationalist, xenophobic and racist parties are involved in governments and increasingly often express their positions openly in the midst of society. They contribute to the normalisation of anti-democratic attitudes in Europe.

European cooperation was and is the peaceful response to two World Wars: some states decided to never let wars arise again. What has emerged from economic cooperation in the fields of coal, steel and nuclear energy was to become a project of solidarity for society as a whole. While the EU acquired more and more competences since, especially in economic and monetary policy, the political union was slower to progress. At the same time, new challenges have emerged: Climate change and globalisation are good examples of tasks that cannot be solved on the national level. Europe must be the answer to these challenges, too.

The foundations of the EU are wavering; integration has fallen into disarray. However, supranational policy makes sense and is particularly necessary in the current difficult situation. Free travel with open borders, a European currency, a common market and a European labour market have already been achieved. What is missing from a functioning Europe is further integration in areas that are important not only for young people and youth organisations: Democracy, solidarity, justice, freedom, diversity and sustainability. Overall, social Europe must be strengthened.

The European continent and the European Union will face growing challenges. Both national and EU politicians and institutions must once again begin to take responsibility for their behaviour beyond individual interests, they must again work towards solutions and across party lines so that the EU can continue to exist. Europe must emerge stronger from the crises.

Conditions for a further development of the EU and for progress in European policy are good: A clear majority of young EU citizens identify with Europe and consider themselves primarily European.¹ More than two thirds of EU citizens and three quarters of Germans believe that their country benefits from EU membership.² For young people, Europe is a reality of life in which they want to move freely, come together and work every day.

A Democratic Europe

The EU must guarantee democracy and the rule of law in Europe. It must play a pioneering role in safeguarding and developing democratic values. Some national governments, e.g. in Hungary and Poland, have recently moved away from this principle and are threatening the rule of law from within. The fundamental European values enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty must once again come to the fore: “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”³ In order to reinstate their implementation in the Member States, the EU has initiated a formal investigation into whether Poland has seriously violated EU values.⁴ The European Parliament has also called for a rule of law procedure against Hungary.⁵ A broad alliance for fundamental values in Europe is needed. In addition, the EU must create an incentive system for the rule of law through its support programmes. This incentive system must provide additional support to states making particular progress. Sanctions for non-compliance with the rule of law are short-sighted. The cuts in funding would primarily affect civil society structures for which there is a particular need in this situation.

Joint decisions imply joint responsibility. It has happened too often that national politicians took decisions in European bodies and - as soon as they were back in their respective capitals - made “Brussels” responsible for the consequences. Neither Brussels as a synonym nor the EU as an institution should be the scapegoat for democratic decisions. It is simply wrong to blame the EU if decision-makers do not pursue sustainable nor good policies.

To prevent this from happening in the future, we are committed to ensuring that the legislative process is made transparent and comprehensible in all phases. Currently, many EU laws are negotiated with all EU institutions earlier than institutionally provided for in so-called trilogues. Although this will speed up the legislative process, it will have a detrimental effect on transparency, and it blurs executive and legislative powers. We therefore call for the trilogue procedure to be applied only to particularly urgent EU legislation as well as for more overall transparency in the process.

This includes opportunities for experts from civil society, associations and business to contribute their knowledge to politics in a transparent and equal way. However, considerable inequalities can be observed here: big companies have a stronger influence on political developments in the EU. Only four civil society organisations can be found among the 15 companies and associations with the highest number of lobby talks.⁶ It must therefore be clear who meets whom how often and what impact this has on European legislation. Under the current regulations, nobody without an entry in the transparency register will get access to the European Parliament, but representation of interests does not only take place in the Parliament building.⁷ As German Federal Youth Council,

¹ Source: <https://bit.ly/2Ns9RAq>

² Source: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/eurobarometer-europa-bei-den-buergern-so-beliebt-wie-nie/22592096.html>

³ Art. 2 of the Lisbon Treaty: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012M/TXT>

⁴ For more information see: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20180222STO98434/rule-of-law-concerns-how-the-eu-can-act-infographic>

⁵ For more information see: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180906IPR12104/rule-of-law-in-hungary-parliament-calls-on-the-eu-to-actf>

⁶ Source: <https://www.lobbycontrol.de/2018/02/konzernlobbyisten-dominieren-bruessel/>

⁷ For more information see: https://lobbypedia.de/wiki/Lobbyregister_EU

we therefore advocate a compulsory lobby register for all EU institutions. Since the European Parliament has recently come out in favour of introducing a mandatory register, it is now up to the European Commission to submit a legislative proposal.

In contrast to other parliaments, the European Parliament has not yet been allowed to initiate EU legislation. This remains the privilege of the EU Commission and gives the Commission a clear institutional power advantage over parliament. The European Parliament as the representative body directly elected by EU citizens must acquire this competence. Moreover, like any other parliament, it needs full legislative powers, not only in budgetary matters.

A European Convention should be called in the near future in order to solve these and other institutional democratic challenges facing the EU. This requires a broad social debate on the future of Europe that can be shaped by civil society.

As the DBJR, we are actively committed to strengthening democracy in Europe. The European values are fundamental for a functioning cooperation in Europe. As youth organisations and youth councils, our daily work stands for political and democratic education involving everyone in decision-making processes. We are workshops of democracy, and we engage as much with children and young people as we are committed to the interest of young people for a strong democracy. This has not yet been sufficiently taken into account: citizenship education in Europe must be strengthened and promoted, especially in non-formal education, as it is considered the foundation for more participation and stands for a social, just and democratic society. Citizenship education enables young people to exercise their rights and, at European level, to think and live social discourse in accordance with European values. Within the Erasmus programme structure, support for non-formal political education must be extended.

To be included in decision-making processes, young people need to be involved early in elections as a central participation process in our democratic society. We demand that young people in Europe should vote from the age of 14. To be allowed to vote in Europe should not depend on the acquisition of European citizenship, but solely on the place of residence of the people living in Europe.

In order to increase turnout, the elections to the European Parliament must be politicised and made more European. Currently, national issues and national lists dominate the election campaign. To better identify the practical consequences of European politics, parties must in future present European campaigns in competition for the best European content. This requires the introduction of transnational lists, in which constituencies cross national borders, and the continuation of the top candidate system, in which the party families each agree on a single presidential candidate. To improve gender parity, we, together with the European Movement Germany, are calling on the parties to nominate a woman as the top candidate for the European Commission.

A Youth-Friendly Europe

Not least in the manipulative campaign of nationalist parties for the Brexit referendum, it became clear how the youth is increasingly alienated from party politics. Neither in terms of content nor structure are parties youth-friendly, and they hardly allow young people to participate. It is particularly difficult for young women to advance within the parties. Only 0.5 percent of MEPs are under the age of 30. In addition, very few parties call for improvements in youth policy. Both things must change. Parties are foundations of democracy. For this to happen, however, democracy within the party needs to be generationally equitable: youth policy needs to be conceived structurally and cross-sectorally, and organised proactively.

Young people in particular want to help shape the future of Europe. We expect European politicians and European parties to assume their responsibility by creating appropriate opportunities for participation. Young people are experts in their own lives, they are therefore decisive for the future of Europe. People under the age of 30 belong to the first generation to have grown up with the EU. This has an impact on the way in which young people, unlike

older generations, look at the EU. European policy is a policy for the future, which is why it affects young people particularly strongly.

As a strategic framework, the EU Youth Strategy must strengthen youth policy structurally and cross-sectorally.⁸ Its aim, in conjunction with the support programmes, must be to improve the living conditions of young people. Participation, commitment and good monitoring are important factors for the success of the Youth Strategy. As an instrument for the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy, the EU Youth Dialogue (following the Structured Dialogue) needs to be effective: The EU Youth Goals are a unique opportunity to integrate the work of and dialogue with young people into EU policy. A constant and strong dialogue between young people and decision-makers is required, not a general consultation of opinions.

Europe can only succeed if as many people as possible take part in building it and participate in the European debate. Civil society actors such as youth organisations and youth councils are contributing their share. The Federal Government must make serious offers to help shape the future of Europe. The Citizens' Dialogues initiated by the European Commission and the Federal Government, as well as the Structured Dialogue within the EU Youth Strategy have been good first steps. However, it must be transparent for people, especially young people, what changes result from their input. Based on our experience with the Structured Dialogue, we have worked on the Criteria for the Citizens' Dialogues issued by the European Movement Germany⁹: Regional balance, clear objectives and feedback on the results are particularly important.

Youth organisations bring young people together, they are places of living democracy. Thus, they are pre-destined to help shape society and Europe. Joint decision-making structures at European and national level are needed, for example in European youth policy and funding: the possibilities of co-management in developing and monitoring cooperation in the field of youth policy at EU level and in the allocation of funding should shortly be tested at European level. Further measures are needed to make European policy more suitable for young people: We advocate a youth check at European level, which would be mandatory and applied cross-sectorally.¹⁰

An Investing Europe

Europe needs a financial reorientation: enforced in response to the financial and economic crisis, austerity policies have had catastrophic consequences, particularly in the southern countries and among young people. They have paid for the mistakes made by banks and politicians. Our Europe - as we describe it here - guarantees all people a life in dignity without poverty and social exclusion; it respects human rights and the rule of law. This requires EU investment instead of budget cuts in fields as important as education, culture, social affairs and youth policy. That is why we are in favour of an EU investment fund, e.g. for education and research, that is controlled democratically under the rule of law.

The European elections and the current negotiations on the new multiannual financial framework are perhaps the last chance for a reorientation. The multiannual financial framework caps EU spending for seven years. Member States pay into the EU budget annually and on a case-by-case basis and expect rapid repayment if money is not used. This structure is one of the reasons why countries like Greece have not yet been able to combat youth unemployment effectively. Youth organisations and youth councils in particular know the importance of a structural and long-term support policy excluding pre- and co-financing. We are therefore committed to European own

⁸ DBJR Opinion on the New EU Youth Strategy: <https://www.dbjr.de/artikel/opinion-on-the-commission-proposal-on-the-eu-youth-strategy/>

⁹ Within the European Movement Germany, the DBJR in cooperation with other associations has drawn up requirement criteria for citizens' dialogues: <https://www.netzwerk-ebd.de/nachrichten/buergerdialoge-zur-zukunft-europas-wenn-dann-richtig-ebd-vorstand-und-spitzen-verbaende-nehmen-stellung/>

¹⁰ The Youth Check is an instrument for assessing the impact of legislation. Regulatory projects of the EU Commission, in particular draft laws, are examined for possible effects on the lives of young people between the ages of 12 and 27 using a standardised methodology. This makes intended effects and unintended side effects of the projects visible. The Youth Check acts as a testing and awareness tool to raise political attention to the circumstances and concerns of young people. For further information see: www.jugend-check.de/der-jugend-check/idee-ziele/

resources independent of the Member States in order to adapt the budget to the constantly growing EU competences and ambitions.¹¹ We need a transparent and sustainable EU budget that is adapted to the EU's political priorities. The structure of national rebates, through which individual countries have negotiated financial benefits, must be abolished.

Proposals such as the appointment of an EU Finance Minister should be supported. For the common economic policy, common minimum corporate tax limits should be considered. A harmonisation of taxes at European level should be sought in order to combat tax evasion and reduce tax competition between Member States.

A Social and Just Europe

A common market and a common currency entail social consequences. Even before the economic and financial crisis, Europe suffered an imbalance between economic and social integration. (Youth) unemployment and the number of precariously employed young people have risen rapidly. Even today, the social effects of the crisis can still be felt: Almost one in four people in Europe continued to be affected or threatened by poverty in 2016.¹² The southern countries in particular, which were forced to carry out so-called “structural reforms” in order to borrow money, have suffered socially and economically. Currently, there is a competition for the least expensive social system, while workers move freely in a European labour market. All EU citizens can move to another country and work—there are no more foreigners within the EU.

In the European Union, state social benefits are traditionally regulated differently, and there are no uniform standards for health, pension or unemployment insurance. For an effective sign of unity in diversity, a Europe-wide overall standard should be developed from the abundance of national regulations, enabling a secure standard of living at all ages. To this end, competition between the Member States must be stopped. The European labour market needs common rules for good cross-border social systems.

Increasing social injustice and cuts in education and pensions have a political and an economic impact at individual and social level. We are committed to a future-oriented structural and investment policy in Europe. The EU can only be successful if economic integration is accompanied by the creation of common minimum standards in social policy. This is the only way to strengthen social cohesion and equal opportunities in Europe. Solidarity, between the people as well as between the Member States, must be a European priority. Last but not least, it is crucial for the EU's legitimacy that the Union and the Member States are jointly in a position to ensure social security and economic progress.

In November 2017, EU heads of states and governments took a first step in the right direction by proclaiming the European Pillar of Social Rights. The pillar contains twenty principles and rights divided into three categories: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection, and social inclusion. The Pillar reflects existing European social policy legislation and describes how Europe can become more social. It is a joint obligation of the EU and the Member States to implement these principles and rights in practical terms. This requires adequate financial resources, clearly defined rules on competences and an ambitious plan for the Member States.

As the German Federal Youth Council, we are committed to the EU Member States adopting common and binding social and employment policy measures as the next step, with targets including common standards for working conditions such as wages and minimum wages, unemployment insurance and minimum incomes. The measures should be explicitly organised as minimum standards so as not to undermine national standards. They should provide an incentive for the Member States to adopt a common and better social policy.

¹¹ For further information on the position of the DBJR board on the MFF see: <https://www.dbjr.de/artikel/mehrjaehriger-finanzrahmen-der-eu/>

¹² Newest data from 2016, source: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_peps02&lang=en

Opportunities and access to good formal and non-formal education must be equal for everyone. The European Pillar of Social Rights mentions the right to education. Non-formal education must be taken into account in the current efforts to create a European Education Area in the EU by 2025. The focus on formal education limits the effect of education as an elementary prerequisite for participation and a just society. This requires higher investment in education, especially in political education, to break down prejudices and to fight against rampant racism and xenophobia.

The EU must also continue to play a leading role in anti-discrimination and equality policies and in the protection of minorities. The EU Commission's most recent proposals do not go beyond the issues of equal pay and compatibility: a comprehensive EU gender equality strategy needs to be reintroduced. In addition, existing EU legislation must effectively be implemented by all Member States. In particular, protection against discrimination must be extended within Europe.

A Sustainably Developed Europe

Global challenges such as climate change, species extinction, global displacement and migration, social inequality, the unjust distribution of resources and peace-keeping do not stop at national borders. These issues have long since had to be dealt with in a supranational context. With the adoption of the Paris Climate Agreement and the Agenda 2030 containing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), international guidelines for a sustainable policy were created.

As the DBJR, we are committed to ensuring that these guidelines form the basis of a European policy, and that they are consistently implemented together with the younger generation. In the coming years, the EU must initiate and promote ecological, social and economic change in the sense of generational sustainability, linking social justice with the protection of natural resources. In essence, this will succeed mainly if all EU institutions include the SDGs in the structure of all their decision-making processes, and if they create an implementation strategy with a timetable, objectives and practical measures to comply with the Agenda 2030 in all policy areas and thus set uniform standards for all member states.

In addition, the EU needs a long-term climate protection strategy that aims to ensure climate neutrality by 2050. This is the only way to reach the goal of the Paris Agreement of well below two degrees of global warming. To achieve this, greenhouse gas emissions in the EU must be reduced by more than half by 2030, and support must be given to reducing energy consumption, increasing energy efficiency and expanding renewable energies. The European economy's dependence on fossil fuels must be reduced in a structurally and socially acceptable way until an independent, climate-neutral economy is established. The supposed solution for a climate-friendly energy supply must not be sought in nuclear energy. The EURATOM Treaty, which continues to promote this technology, must be abolished.

Sustainable mobility must be promoted structurally. The European CO₂ limits for passenger cars and light commercial vehicles should be tightened. In addition, public transport, especially in rural areas, must be expanded and rebuilt. Last but not least, freight transport must be shifted from road to rail and waterways.

The fundamental objective of a European agricultural policy should be to make agriculture more environmentally and animal-friendly and to create value chains that are as local as possible and agricultural landscapes that are as structurally diverse as possible. This also includes high standards of animal welfare and environmental protection, which must be defined uniformly at EU level and implemented without any national solo attempts, as well as the validity of air pollution control and climate legislation and the targeted use of plant protection products. These ecological measures by farmers must be supported by the common agricultural policy of the European Union.

With regard to nature conservation, the EU needs a strategy to preserve biodiversity.

Infinite growth based on resource consumption is impossible in the long run. The EU must implement this in its sustainability policy: Alternative growth concepts going beyond pure economic growth and including, for example, social justice, education or health as benchmarks for development, should therefore be used at European level. Technological approaches and research on energy, transport and agricultural change must be promoted, as must ideas and measures for recycling.

However, these efforts are not sufficient. On the contrary, society, and especially the economy, must massively limit their consumption of raw materials, such as plastics, in Europe and worldwide. The EU must create appropriate incentives, such as a tax on raw materials and on environmentally harmful sectors of the economy and consumption. A fair-trade policy with non-European countries, especially in the global South, must enable sustainable development in these countries as well. A further step must be the abolition of environmentally and climate-damaging subsidies.

An Open and Mobile Europe

The reality of young people's lives is a democratic Europe in which they may travel and work freely. Today's generation—especially in Western Europe—has grown up with open borders and free movement of workers. This freedom is central to young people's personal and professional development and their European identity. Border controls have been resumed some time ago. That must not happen. On the contrary, Europe must become more open and offer young people more opportunities to meet and exchange ideas. The Schengen Agreement must therefore be extended to all EU countries for everyone in Europe to benefit from it. For young people without an EU passport, visa regulations must be revised and other remaining obstacles to mobility must be removed.

Moreover, the EU must vigorously pursue the integration process, especially in the Western Balkans. In addition to the participation of civil society in the accession process, there is a need to strengthen democratic forces and provide structural support for civil society, especially youth council structures. As the guarantor of peace, the EU must also advocate for effective protection of minorities by the respective governments in the Western Balkans. Young people must be given a future in the region, and the brain drain must be countered by effectively combating youth unemployment. Youth exchanges with and within the region should generally be intensified, and targeted funding be made available for this purpose.

Open borders are not enough. Young people's freedom of movement must be supported in a consistent, targeted and socially equitable manner. To improve exchanges between young people, the Erasmus+ education and youth promotion programme and the European Solidarity Corps (formerly the European Voluntary Service) must be equipped to meet needs, and they must be structurally expanded. A strong and visible youth programme is essential for young people. Youth organisations having grown democratically and in structure should be financially supported; they play an important role to organise learning components of youth exchanges. Currently, up to half of all applications in the Erasmus programme youth chapter are rejected. Due to the high demand, youth organisations are increasingly competing with private and commercial organisations. In order to prevent this in future, access to the programmes must be simplified and diversified so that not only young academics may benefit from youth exchanges. In this context, initiatives such as "Discover EU" must be assessed particularly critically.

A democratic, open Europe is also decisively shaped by democratic youth organisations and youth councils as the supporting pillars of Europe-wide youth work, education and youth participation. These structures are the pillars of practical democratic education, they ensure a high degree of European participation. When subsidies are allocated from public budgets, there should thus be a bonus for democratically constituted organisations in young civil society.

To implement Erasmus+, National Agencies were set up as advisory bodies on behalf of the Federal Government. They are governmental, not civil society stakeholders. Especially in the youth field, the National Agency, which was set up by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, is increasingly working

as a political stakeholder. It competes with non-governmental (youth) organisations and attracts public attention. Therefore, national and European commitments are needed in order to establish structures for the participation of youth organisations, and binding monitoring bodies involving civil society.

For a diverse and democratic Europe, it is relevant that media policy creates good rules for independent media and independent journalism. We call on the EU to promote public media. At the same time, it must create the framework for innovation in the media sector and, above all, support young media professionals. This is also in line with the cultural diversity Europe stands for.

Even though economic development is too much the focus of efforts to create a single digital market, Europe sets important standards in digital policy, for example in the protection of personal data. With the General Data Protection Regulation, the EU has succeeded in establishing an international standard, strengthening the rights of users and creating binding rules. The EU should strive for this in other areas of media and digital policy as well.

One promising approach is the agreement to strengthen “digital youth work” (Smart Youth Work). The Federal Government and the EU must promote the potential of digital youth work. This will build digital media literacy and qualify skilled workers. In addition, digital tools for youth work must be developed for and with young people. We see digital youth work as an extension, not as a replacement for (international) youth work. We have taken appropriate steps and demand support from the EU and the Federal Government. To achieve this, all young people must be able to participate. The various dimensions of technical and material, social, legal and political access conditions must be taken into account.

A Europe Open to the World and Based on Solidarity

Europe must change radically, not just internally: What happens at Europe’s external borders is difficult to put into words. Every day, refugees die in the Mediterranean. Refugees on simple lifeboats are denied the right to moor at European ports. Camps are set up in Europe, and in order to externalise the European right to asylum, agreements are signed with third countries on asylum procedures. Europe closes its borders and shuts itself off. The extension of European border policy to the African continent not only destroys the lives of many people, but also endangers internal migration of regional importance as well as regional integration. This misguided European and national policy is moving further and further away from human rights, human dignity and common European values.

Because the southern countries in particular have been left alone for years with asylum applications¹³, the European Parliament agreed as early as 2017 on a reform in which the Member States jointly assume their responsibility. In order to start negotiations on the Dublin reform, Parliament is waiting for an agreement in the EU Home Affairs Council. 180 national parties are organised in the six parliamentary groups of the European Parliament supporting this solution - and 27 EU Home Affairs Ministers cannot reach an agreement. At the same time, this blockade in the Council helps anti-democratic politicians to instrumentalise the debate at national level and to point to the EU’s supposed inability to act. It is partly up to the same ministers to negotiate a European solution.

Shutting Europe off is not a political option. We reaffirm our call for an open and humane European refugee, asylum and migration policy. We condemn what is happening at Europe’s external borders and the inhumane refugee policy in the Mediterranean regions. We need a common solution and a new start for a European asylum policy based on human rights. We stand for safe ways in and to Europe for all people who want to live in Europe. As young people, we want an open and tolerant Europe with a European, humanitarian admission programme, and not a hostile isolationist policy. We call for legal ways of migration for refugees, and we are counting on saving lives at Europe’s external borders. Sea rescue is a humanitarian duty to save human lives, and not a crime

¹³ The Dublin Regulation stipulates that the EU Member State in which a refugee first arrives is responsible for reviewing the asylum application and managing the procedure.

that can be exploited for political debate. Non-governmental organisations trying to compensate for state failure with their operations in the Mediterranean must not be criminalised or obstructed. A humane asylum and migration policy is the task of all Member States. The existing narrow definition of asylum must not be used to sort people who flee from an unworthy life situation into different categories.

A European immigration policy including fair and solidary distribution must be established by means of a European asylum authority. This is our humanitarian duty—the admission of refugees requires no financial compensation—, and it includes promoting a social climate that shows unreserved solidarity with people fleeing. This applies in particular to children and teenagers and to young people who come to Europe and need appropriate protection. Inclusion measures must be promoted in the Member States; the participation of (young) refugees in social life, for example in the labour market and in extracurricular activities, must be fully supported. European policy must also help to ensure that the causes of migration, whatever their nature, are prevented in the long term.

In this context, non-violent, civil crisis prevention and supportive economic cooperation with countries of the Global South play a major role.¹⁴ The EU should in particular promote democratic and welfare state models. Further armament of the individual EU countries is not a solution. Instead, binding disarmament efforts (especially for nuclear weapons) should be more strongly introduced and supported through UN processes. Also, no more weapons shall be sold to dictatorial regimes suppressing human rights. The European Union can and should remain a peace project, both internally and externally.

Europe must live up to its global responsibility. It must prevent social, political and economic aberrations in which the EU is to some extent actively involved out of its own interest, such as the destruction of regional integration processes on the African continent through bilateral free trade agreements. National egoism and isolationism must not be transferred from the domestic level to the European level. The EU can and must live solidarity not only internally, but also externally.

A Europe United in Diversity

To prevent Europe from breaking apart, we want and must be courageous and loud in expressing our vision of Europe. Even if individual European and national politicians do not do a good job, the existence and achievements of the EU must not be called into question. We must stand up for Europe even if we do not always agree with the actual policy. It is our social responsibility to participate in the European elections, and to elect politicians who further develop Europe in the spirit of youth.

But voting alone is not enough: we form alliances between politics, civil society and culture in order to make use of the pro-European majority for a future-oriented policy across national and party borders. We are committed to ensuring that young people are particularly aware of European politics, get involved, vote and engage together across borders. We need courage to think in a forward-looking way and to further develop the European Union. Without us, the Union will not function sustainably and in the long term. Europe is no longer a project. Europe is part of our lives.

Adopted unanimously by the DBJR AGM on 26/27 October 2018 in Dresden

¹⁴ DBJR Position: <https://www.dbjr.de/artikel/frieden-ist-fuer-uns-mehr-als-die-abwesenheit-von-krieg/>