



YOUROPE DECLARATION

“YOUROPE: Joining paths to build a better perception of Europe” represents a network of towns funded by the “Europe for Citizens” program (Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014). YOUROPE participants are from eight European countries, namely, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovenia. The project is focused on the role that the youth of today has on the present and future development of Europe. The primary goal of the network is to contribute to the fight against Euroscepticism and to promote a sincere dialogue to develop a pro-European viewpoint at the local level.

Within the framework of this project, there is a need to produce a statement that reflects this discussion in favour of a better Europe, visualizing its fundamental challenges as well as potential lines of work for the future of Europe.

YOUROPE believes in and supports the European Union (EU) and its values.

Today we believe that the European Union faces five main challenges that need to be addressed:

- 1. The rise of extremism and populism.** This is a current reality in the EU that can be observed in countries such as United Kingdom, Poland, Italy or Hungary. For many European citizens, Europe represents an unfulfilled promise that has failed to cope with significant problems like the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and its dispute of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Cyprus: the economic development of Central and Eastern European countries since joining the EU; the lack of support for problems like youth unemployment in Southern Europe caused by the economic and financial crises. The abundance of fake news on the Internet, exacerbated by social and traditional media, which influences the opinion of European citizens on the previous issues.
- 2. Democratic transparency.** The image of democratic institutions and political parties has deteriorated from approximately the 1990s to the present day. This deterioration has been due, in particular, to cases of corruption that have occurred in various countries, by detrimental campaigns sponsored by various entities aimed at the image of the EU and to the process of democratic cultural transition in Europe. This has led to disaffection and disappointment on the part of the generation that has lived and participated in the process of building the EU.
- 3. Migration into the EU.** At this point in time we refer to mass, uncontrolled and unpredictable migration as a result of conflicts occurring in other regions of the world, mainly in the Middle East and Africa combined with the urgent humanitarian need to welcome refugees to our countries. However, Europe is also faced with a demographic challenge linked to emigration between European countries; from less developed regions to more developed ones or from rural areas to urbanised areas and larger cities. On one hand, migration presents a formidable challenge from the point of view of responding to humanitarian crisis,



but also on the other, for the need to achieve social and economic equality between countries and citizens of the EU.

4. **Political and economic imbalance between regions of the EU.** This affects citizens of the EU in that some feel they are considered second-class citizens when they see lower quality consumer goods at excessive prices or few goods related to their purchasing power. In addition, they consider themselves undervalued or poorly taken into account of from the point of view of the implementation of European policies in their geographic area. However, many citizens are also unaware of the opportunities offered by the EU and fail to take advantage of them with the result that many have minimal or no impact or benefit.
5. **Global environmental crisis and how the EU deals with it.** We refer to climate change due to global warming and the consequences that this is having on our ecosystems and the role that the EU plays in this process.

Faced with these challenges, and in relation to the global framework of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, we believe communities and young European citizens must work to:

1. Place value on high-quality journalism and encourage a more transparent use of mass media, journals and social networks.
2. Promote critical thinking and the ability to gather quality information to combat fake news and propaganda.
3. Support political decisions against fake news as they contribute to foster hate speeches.
4. Value historical fact to fight nationalism and extremism.
5. Suggest and support the inclusion of democracy and EU values in elementary school lessons.
6. Boost informative lessons at schools and universities.
7. Foster local initiatives to demonstrate to young people the benefit of being part of the EU.
8. Promote transparency and honesty from local decision makers to contribute to a more democratic culture.
9. Find universal values and commitments among EU countries.
10. Contribute at the local level to develop standard, socially inclusive policies in Europe.
11. Defend established rights and obligations for all EU citizens following EU values.
12. Promote and support a united European Union.
13. Encourage less developed EU regions to be more actively interested in European funded projects.
14. Promote better socio-economical relations between EU regions and citizens.
15. Demand higher ethical and moral standards and regulations for all EU countries.
16. Demand a stronger harmonisation of tax, banking, wage and salary systems, designed to ensure homogeneous and inclusive living standards for all EU citizens as well as a better future for the youth of today.



17. Promote green and environmental values and the environmental heritage of EU.
18. Encourage volunteering, solidarity and respect based on EU values like social inclusion, peace and sustainability.

For all the above, the Europe we want is a Europe that not only inspires its citizens, but one that also inspires the population of our world to seek peace, solidarity and sustainability. An integrated Europe which preserves human dignity throughout the world, a Europe that promotes justice and violence-free societies throughout the world, a prosperous Europe that leaves no one behind, a Europe that appreciates and takes care of the environment, which cooperates with development and shares the values of solidarity and democracy within all communities. An EU that brings together and respects all European people whose values of dignity, peace and respect represent an unequivocal symbol of our collective European identity.

In line with the YOUROPE Network, this declaration is presented with the triple aim of:

- mobilising young Europeans, who by their daily actions, acknowledge the importance of modest steps for a better EU;
- understanding that young people are aware that the EU supports sustainable development, and,
- realising the indispensable participation of young people in building a better Europe.