

The European
**Charlemagne
Youth Prize**
2022



ECYP 2022 NATIONAL WINNERS

PROJECT SUMMARIES



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AUSTRIA - The Young ChangeMaker Challenge

The Young ChangeMaker Challenge (YCM Challenge) is a unique two week online experience for young people around the world. The young participants identify current societal challenges in their communities and come up with new ideas to solve them. It is a program that aims to empower young people to lead social change in their communities, to become active citizens and to build a European and global network of other young changemakers, with whom they can exchange ideas and get support.

Entrepreneurship education is often too complicated, fee-based or place-bound, and as a result mainly young people with existing knowledge, with a good financial background and who live in urban areas attend these programs. The YCM Challenge aims to eliminate or reduce these barriers by making the program on a low-threshold level, free of charge and online. The ultimate goal of this effort is to empower as many young people as possible and enable them to be “changeladers” in their communities

The first prototype of the YCM Challenge was carried out in April 2021 and we had 120 participants from more than 30 countries. We tested different methods and gathered feedback from the participants and partner organisations. Now we want to develop this prototype further through a participatory process. The goal is to have a pedagogical concept and method for accessible and innovative Social Entrepreneurship Education that can be used for future YCM Challenges, as well as by other organisations. We want to make intercultural learning experience possible, strengthen the network of young people and of youth organisations through Europe and therefore foster their European Identity.

The YCM Challenge aims to empower young people to be active citizens and do something on a local level by identifying problems in their own life and turning them into solutions that are feasible to implement in a team.

Website:	https://www.ycmchallenge.org https://www.yep-austria.org
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/YEP.austria/
Instagram:	https://www.instagram.com/yep_austria/ https://www.instagram.com/ycmchallenge/



BELGIUM - Voters Without Borders European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)

The ECIT Foundation (European Citizen's rights, Involvement and Trust) is a Brussels-based, youth-driven think tank that consists of young students and professionals, and has formed a strong coalition of youth-focused organisations. Encouraged by exchange programmes like Erasmus+, the increased accessibility of travel and the breakdown of language barriers, young Europeans are using their right to Freedom of Movement more than previous generations. This creates enormous potential for European collaboration and integration, based on a shared sense of European identity.

The ECIT Foundation is unique and innovative in the world of European think-tanks: it is the only one that focuses solely on European citizenship. **The Foundation aims to foster a new generation of politically engaged EU citizens**, and this process must begin by removing the existing obstacles to voting.

Since its inception, the ECIT Foundation has addressed voting rights through a variety of projects. **Our flagship project is the ECI Voters Without Borders ('VWB')**. Our ECI strives to strengthen European citizenship and to achieve better integration especially of young mobile EU citizens in the democratic decision-making processes across the EU. Our proposals for new rights address the glaring gaps in EU citizens' voting rights: whereas current voting rights cover municipal and EU elections, we call for their extension to national and regional elections and referenda. Furthermore, our ECI proposes holistic reforms to voting rights to improve access to information, the voting process, and the sharing of best practices by Member States and the Commission.

The VWB project is more than an ECI, however. The campaign not only seeks to improve voting rights but to **directly involve young people in democratic processes**. We have organised various events surrounding the ECI. The most significant of these is the 2021 Annual Conference: a hybrid event that brought together students, young professionals, civil society representatives, MEPs and policymakers across different areas of policy and organisational structures to reflect on issues of European citizenship and voting rights. Its reach was significant: in total, **nearly 200 people registered for the conference**. As a conference that was organised by a youth-led organisation and that brought together lots of students and young professionals, the conference sets an example for young people to become involved in democratic processes as active EU citizens. This is a campaign by the youth, for the youth.

Website:	https://voterswithoutborders.eu/
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/VoterWOBorders



BULGARIA - Summer Academy "Perspectives"

Summer Academy Perspectives is organised annually since 2016, for young people in small towns in Bulgaria, with its 6th edition taking place between 1st of June and 30th of August 2021. The project aims to **inform young people living in rural areas** about the opportunities that the EU provides to young people, to develop participants' skills for future inclusion and competences to participate in European projects. Through **non-formal learning methods**, participants develop their language learning skills, communication skills, comprehension and expression of ideas, rhetorical skills for public speaking, skills to work in international teams, social and civic competences for active involvement in public life.

The concept of the Academy is to include young university students, who come for a summer internship to Bulgaria, in the life of a small community. When they arrive to Bulgaria, they participate in special training for cultural and conceptual knowledge. After that, they work with kids for their active inclusion. Our activities are always in small towns and rural areas, in which we see the lack of opportunities for kids. This summer academy programme was designed to deal with several challenges that come with working in marginalised areas of Europe, and more specifically Bulgaria. When making a social integration and activation project, special attention should be given to the risks of marginalisation based on potential sources of discriminations such as ethnic origins, gender, sexual orientation, religion or political positions. Youth struggling with disadvantages are generally less active citizens. Europe cannot afford wasted talent, social exclusion or disengagement among its youth.

One of the main outputs of the project was the **sharing of common European values** through educational activities, which were divided into different topics: social skills, life in a community, peace and tolerance, education, ecology and environment, digitalisation and emotional intelligence. Through using various creative methods, they have experienced activities enhancing their self-esteem and understanding their role in the society as active citizens.

73 young children and teenagers, aged between 6 to 17 years old coming from 3 small towns, took part in the program with a desire to learn and contribute to the society. On a personal level, the 6th Summer Academy generated more curiosity to learn about other cultures in Europe. At the local level, residents of the town become more hopeful and motivated as they see the youth participating in activities and acquiring new competences. Eventually, the residents started identifying more with European culture at a community level.

Website:	http://edu.institute-perspectives.com/
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/InstitutePerspectives
YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvheFUIE8i4&t=89s https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQbVOBhjOyw&t=32s



CROATIA - European coolture+

ESN Split is a non-profit student organisation that helps international students in Split. Our motto is “students helping students”, so all the members are student volunteers, which is why this project is so special. The project took place from March to December 2021, and we plan to do it again in 2022. **Through this project, we involved around 300 young people from European countries**, and we covered many topics, such as culture, education, environmental sustainability, health & well-being, skills and employability, and social inclusion.

The first thing we wanted to do in this project is to **raise awareness about preventing discrimination on all levels through activities** were people from all European countries, of all races and all religions were included. This was a very important project for local young people, because there are not many international people living in Croatia. For them this was a great opportunity to meet other international people and to learn about their country and culture, and now they are aware that all of us are Europeans and that it is important that we help each other. Through the whole project we pointed out that European spirit, democracy, equality and unity are very important.

Some of the activities that we did were: cooking for the homeless, a volleyball tournament, indoor sport activities, cooking classes, trainings, a Croatian culture night, hiking to Mosor, a Christmas workshop, an Art and wine night, a Halloween workshop, sports day, a visit to an animal shelter, and game nights.

After this project, the number of Erasmus students in Split is growing, as well as the number of local young people that want to join our section. Our greatest reward is when the international students become our friends, and the fact that we brought Europe to Split.

Website:	http://esnsplit.com/blog/2022/02/13/europska-cooltura-european-coolture
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/esn.split/
Instagram	https://instagram.com/esnsplit?utm_medium=copy_link



CYPRUS - The 25 Percent Project

This project was created ‘by young people, for young people, and determined to help all of us raise our voices and change the world’. The project originated in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe and is based on the feeling that young people have been left out of decision-making for too long. Against that background, The 25 Percent formulated a clear and ambitious mission: to empower young people and to make their voices heard.

The 25 Percent project aims **to build a movement of young people across Europe**. To that end, it has developed a handbook for activism (a guide to change) and organises different events where young people are invited to discuss ideas about the future of Europe. A first objective of this movement is to get young people in front of decision makers and represent their ideas for a brighter future at the Conference on the Future of Europe

To collect these ideas the European Youth Forum and its 12 partner organisations launched a website (<https://the25percent.eu/>) and organised a series of events to inform young people and to stimulate them to submit their ideas through an online questionnaire. Although the data collection within the framework of The 25 Percent project will continue until May 2022, a preliminary analysis indicates that ideas have been collected from young people living in 30 countries. Through **200 local and 5 national training events with 3,500 participants all over the EU**, and an **online campaign reaching an audience of more than 500,000**, young people have learnt how to advocate for the causes they care about and have been inspired to take action. As a partnership we will collect 15,000 ideas about the future of Europe which will be condensed into clusters and consolidated into a set of 15 proposals by the 150 young participants at the final international event. These proposals will be presented to the Conference on the Future of Europe and other decision makers.

The 25 Percent collaborates with the National Youth Councils from five European countries and five International Youth Organisations.

What is also worth mentioning is that “The 25 Percent Project” participated in this year’s EYE2021 event and collected ideas from young people from all over the EU during the event, promoted the handbook and “The Changemakers Workshop”.

Website:	www.cyc.org.cy
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/cyprusyouth
YouTube:	https://www.youtube.com/user/CyprusYouthCouncil
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/cyprus.youth.council
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/CyprusYouthCou



CZECH REPUBLIC - Politika (nejen) pro mladá

(EN: Politics (Not Only) for the Youth)

Politika (nejen) pro mladá was initially created as an Instagram account by two students in 2018. They are currently active on several platforms - Instagram, Facebook, Discord, and YouTube, - where they organise debates with young politicians from former and current governmental parties, and every Sunday set discussions among the followers. However, they do not only exist in the online space - they have organised a few personal meetings for people interested in politics, and attended a few workshops with young people.

Earlier this year the project was made into an association, with the **aim to help create an informed and active young civil society**. They consider this to be the foundation of a stable and steady liberal democracy and strive to stimulate interest in politics, democracy, and human rights among young people. The objective is always to present a clear, concise, and graphically attractive summary of a current or historical event, to explain an ongoing cause, or to explain how various institutions work, including those in the European Union. They also try to persuade youth to step up into the public sphere by voting, campaigning, and creating their own projects about things they consider to be crucial.

The project currently involves **25 students from Slovakia and the Czech Republic**. Among many others, the interviews were organised with the current President of the Constitutional Court, P. Rychetský, and the current Speaker of the Chamber of Deputy, M. P. Adamová. Before the parliamentary elections of 2021, they cooperated with many influential people such as the Head of Transparency International P. Leyer, or the Director of People in Need Š. Pánek, and Czech MEP Markéta Gregorová.

A book for young people about politics will also be published in the second half of this year.

Up to this date, **they have over 45 000 followers on Instagram**. Half of them are between 18-24, mainly from the Czechia and Slovakia. Two main types of content are created on Instagram: daily summaries and posts. Over 360 posts and over 1000 daily summaries were created, dozens of debates organised, and around 25 politicians interviewed.

Website:	https://linktr.ee/Politikanejenpromlade
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/groups/2245207785775428/
Discord:	https://discord.com/invite/4unvzk7WNA
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/politika_nejen_pro_mlade/
Youtube:	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKIEy154-jk2SliScsl1sXQ/videos



DENMARK - "Board of Nordic National Committees - Nordic Summer Summit 2021"

The Nordic Summer Summit 2021 took place from the 20th to the 22nd of August 2021 online. It is organised by the European Youth Parliament Denmark (EYP Denmark), a branch under the umbrella organisation that has been actively working with Danish youth for more than five years. The goal and aim of the organisation is to teach young people about democracy, the work of the European Parliament, and cultures of different European regions.

The Summer Summit is organised every year by one of the Nordic National Committees (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden). Through teambuilding, cultural programme, debate groups, and a general assembly, the participating young people had the opportunity to get to know each other better, followed by debates of current challenges of Europe. They could also test their own limits when presented with an audience to speak in front of. The entire conference took place with English as the main spoken language to improve the English skills of the participants.

This year's Nordic Summer Summit moved a bit away from the traditional concept and rather focused on educating the volunteers to better take care of their tasks in relation to future board work and conferences. It was for that reason a conference consisted of more training modules and less debates. To maintain the concept, there were still sessions with debates where topics relevant to the participants were discussed. There was still participation from several countries. Usually, the Nordic Summer Summit is open to participants from the Nordic branches of the organisation, however, this time the event was open to participants from several other countries, thanks to the digital format of the event.

The aim of the conference was to link young students from Europe, so that they could gain knowledge about other cultures, norms, and new or other ways of thinking, which in the end create a stronger bond across Europe. The participants were introduced to new working concepts, and ways to cooperate to solve problems. The theme for the conference was "Tying bonds across oceans" to both symbolise the waters between the Nordic countries as well as a more metaphorical symbolism in how the participants find common ground despite different backgrounds. In 2020, the Board of Nordic National Committees (BNNC) was created within the EYP Network. The focus has been on strengthening the Nordic Cooperation and it is exactly this cooperation the conference aimed to strengthen – across the North Sea.

Website:	https://eypdk.org/
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/eypdenmark
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/eypdenmark/?hl=en,
LinkedIn:	https://dk.linkedin.com/company/eyp-denmark



ESTONIA - Creation of an international youth innovation (HUUB) network

Lack of opportunities in the Estonian city of Pärnu made the local youth act, and thanks to the initiative of young people, in 2020 a local youth innovation centre was opened. **The centre focuses on supporting new youth initiatives among people aged 15-30**, and in the day to day acts as a modern youth centre for older youth to meet, to generate new ideas, and to learn. Created together with local city government and local entrepreneurs, it works as a gateway between the city, youth, and its businesses.

Since the opening, the centre has been very popular and has proved that youth-led initiatives can work really well. **We have built a community of around 2000 local young people** that use HUUB as a safe space to meet, relax and learn, and for the city, it mostly works as an environment that helps students learn about work opportunities and gain new skills.

HUUB helps young people move from the school environment to the world of work. The value we bring to the community is the following:

1. We help youth get new contacts, to meet like-minded people from their age group, and to get the necessary contacts from the city or from the entrepreneurs.
2. We create different learning opportunities based on the needs of the community.
3. We then organize, together with the youth, a lot of idea generation events and hackathons to come up with new innovative ideas.
4. Together with local entrepreneurs, we create a mentoring system that supports the youth who want to act upon the ideas and want to start an initiative.

The Estonian Ministry of Education has recognized HUUB as the act of the year in the youth field. More importantly, HUUB has been nominated as one of the most caring environments in Estonia by the youth. After our success in our community, our story spread all over Estonia and abroad, and we collaborated with the young people of the city of Võru, Estonia, to create the second HUUB centre, which will open at the end of 2022.

Last year, Finland showed interest in our model, and since then we have been trying to make contacts with various municipalities to create HUUB centres in other EU countries. That is also the reason why we are applying for the Prize, as the funding and the contacts would help us spread our message and partner up with youth and local governments abroad. There are already a few places of interest and everything we do to advance the HUUB model is on a voluntary basis right now.

Website:	https://parnuhuub.ee/
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/parnuhuub
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/parnuhuub/



FINLAND - Sustainable Venture Creation

Sustainable Venture Creation is a course that was first launched at Hanken School of Economics by Ambitious Africa organisation. **The purpose of the course is to mobilise the most powerful resource on the planet, the next generation, to solve the most pressing issues of today and tomorrow.** This far, dozens of students are taking part in the course, and we have received great feedback from both students and faculty.

The course is a unique collaboration between the student union, the faculty and external partners, such as experts on the SDGs and other mentors. The course was originally planned by students for students. The faculty, in turn, is in charge of the academic and examinational parts of the course and ensure that everything runs smoothly. The student union is in charge of organising the hackathon, accelerator program, and the SDG days. Lastly, the experts and mentors share their knowledge and expertise with the course participants, on how to overcome challenges and obstacles of today.

The course indirectly **promotes both cooperation and understanding across Europe** and internationally based democratic values. Harnessing the youth divide across Europe and the rest of the world is a key step towards achieving the objectives above, and that is the mission of this course. Students and young people who might otherwise feel discouraged and disconnected from society are engaged in the entrepreneurial realm. Through this, we expect spill over effects into things such as voter turnout, as people who are engaged in one part of society are more likely to take part in others.

The students also enhance their cooperation skills in the course. They build the ventures together, and only through open discussion and dialogue as well as respect for each other, do they find the best path forward. By putting their emotions and preconceived notions aside, they immerse themselves in a diverse set of perspectives from other students and experts who might be located in different countries and each of whom have a unique skill set. This course shows the creative and innovative talents of Ambitious Africa, who have helped to shape up this program with the help of Hanken School of Economics.

Website:	hello@ambitiousafrica.org
Facebook:	https://m.facebook.com/africa.ambitious/
Twitter:	https://mobile.twitter.com/AfricaAmbitious
Youtube:	https://youtube.com/channel/UC-Zi758ctpeVrVOE3422YeA
Linkedin:	https://www.linkedin.com/company/ambitiousafrica



FRANCE - Espions à la Commission (Spies in the Commission)

Spies in the Commission is an **educational card game** that explores the workings of the institutions and the methods of European decision-making. The main objective of the game is to invite players to debate European policy and societal issues. At the end of the game, players can put in perspective their game behaviour and compare it to the challenges of European integration. The game also aims to encourage players to debate and contribute to the FutureEU platform.

It is designed to turn the complex mechanisms of the functioning of the EU into a game: drawing up a budget, financing projects, voting on laws. The game also integrates more subtle elements of European politics with its semi-cooperative approach. Each player takes the role of a spy with secret objectives: to pass or reject a law in one of the 7 categories (Democracy, Finance...). In addition, the players must collectively try to advance the European construction by accumulating victory points throughout the game. A low score will lead to the dissolution of the EU and a high score will lead to federalism. Players are faced with the dilemma of pursuing either their personal goals or the collective goal. At the end of the game, the facilitator can invite the participants to compare their experience of the game with the challenges of European integration, where 27 member states with sometimes divergent interests meet.

The original ideas of the game is to make the debates dynamic and encourage players to speak up, especially those who are less used to it. It offers 30 laws to be debated, ranging from abolishing the time difference in the EU to giving up nuclear power or electing the President of the Commission by universal suffrage.

The game lasts 1h30 and can gather 4 to 8 players. It is intended as a tool for secondary schools (accessible to pupils 15 year old and above), and as a tool for public events, such as parties in game bars.

The first prototype was tested in November. Since then, the game has been tested with about 150 players, to refine its mechanics and clarify the rules. The files for the card game will be made freely available on the internet so that they can be easily printed. In addition, the blank model of the "law proposals" cards will also be made freely available on Canva so that facilitators can create new ones, to adapt them to their educational objectives. Finally, the game can also be translated into other languages.

Website:	www.eurocircle.info
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/eurocircle.marseille/?ref=bookmarks
Instagram:	https://www.instagram.com/eurocirclemarseille/
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/eurocircle_eu



GERMANY - Ukrainian Vibes - European Public Sphere

Ukrainian Vibes – European Public Sphere brought the discussion about Europe back into the public space: **172 citizens joined seven virtual dialogues on the topics of Democracy, Sustainable Development and European Integration.** Highlighting the relations between the EU and Ukraine, the digital format brought together citizens from all over the world - 36 countries. Ukrainian Vibes brought Europe closer to the heart of its citizens. The project empowered them to participate in civil society for building a common European future – also beyond the current borders of the EU.

The Ukrainian Vibes project took place from April until October 2021. The project was organised by a young international team of two Ukrainian and two German participants of a 6-month volunteering programme. During the project, our team organised four online workshops and three open discussions. All of them covered topics related to Democracy, Sustainable Development, and European Integration. The first four sessions provided an interactive learning experience for young Europeans. The final three free online discussions gathered people of all ages. In addition to the 172 participants, 37 experts shared insights and concrete projects to spark the discussions. We are proud how much we were able to connect the EU and Ukraine - around 45% of all participants came from Ukraine - but also how Ukrainian Vibes attracted citizens from 35 additional countries around the globe.

Thanks to our wonderful participants and experts, we generated a rich list of ideas for Europe’s future. All ideas were published in the form of an Idea Catalogue, which we sent to more than 40 European decision-makers. Our team also created an interactive story map of the results and four summary videos. To add to the EU’s own aspirations for democratic renewal, we published 36 of the proposals received on the digital citizens’ platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

For our common future of Europe, we need to continue the pan-European dialogue and we should spread the idea of an integrated, democratic, strong, just, peaceful, tolerant, sustainable, and stable Europe - a Europe united in diversity.

Website:	https://www.democracy-international.org/
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/di.DemocracyInternational/
Instagram:	https://www.instagram.com/eu_publicsphere/
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/democracy_intl
Youtube:	https://www.youtube.com/c/EuropeanPublicSphere



GREECE - Greece: Towards a European Civic Service

Ecogenia is a Greek non-profit organisation that is offering civic service as a way to mobilise young people. Our goal is to strengthen the civic space, specifically the notion of civic engagement, in Greece. We consider it a critical tool to guarantee an inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous future for us all.

Our objective is to highlight the value of civic engagement and mobilise young people to enact local change, and create openings for regional exchanges. Our aim is to create a unified experience for young people across Europe. As we continue to lay the foundation for a national program in Greece, we have been building momentum with our target group, 18 to 28 year olds, and engaging strategic advisors and partners from across sectors.

We have conducted five rounds of focus groups: with young people, non-profit organisations, and representatives from municipalities. An important part of building the civic service has been our engagement with national and European partners. We have been working with Unis-Cité, France's national civic service program, since 2018, and they have served as strategic mentors and partners. As members of the European Collective for Civic Service, recipients of the Prix Charlemagne in 2020, we are an active part of the network practicing and promoting a European-wide civic service scheme with national terms and mobility exchanges for youth between countries.

As we continue to develop our program and build momentum at the Greek and European level, we are motivated by the input of the youth we have engaged and hope to reach. Our driving belief is that change starts with an individual, and at the local level, but that we need collaboration and society-wide buy-in to create solidarity, which inspires action.

Our aim is that, with our national and European partners, we will create a movement within the next generation that will foster a renewed sense of civic spirit, create a shared identity, and uplift tangible work towards the core European values.

Website:	ecogenia.org
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/ecogenia.org/
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/ecogenia.gr/?hl=en



HUNGARY - SaveEUstudents

Until January 2020, every student in the EU had the opportunity to study at a world-leading university in the UK such as University of Cambridge or University of Oxford. As a consequence of Brexit, prospective European students are now considered under ‘overseas’ status, facing fees of up to 42,500 EUR per year. Without supplementary help, over 84% of young and ambitious EU students cannot afford to study in the UK. This is, beyond doubt, a highly demotivating and disadvantageous situation for young and bright minds. At the SaveEUStudents team, we believe that financial background should not be a barrier for European talent. Therefore, we have decided to consult students to create a sustainable future for EU students through an EU-wide petition. Our petition (<https://tinyurl.com/wat88fn3>) asks for the creation of a comprehensive **EU-UK student mobility scheme programme to cover students’ tuition fees, travel and living costs**. If successful, the petition would grant students a means-tested opportunity to gain funding for all the costs associated with Brexit, which thus has the potential to fulfil the dreams of over 43,000 European students each year.

The Campaign is run by a small group of project coordinators from two organisations: the Hungarian Youth Association, and the Federation of Polish Societies in the UK. Two of the campaign heads and representatives, Antoni Prus and Bálint Karagich, presented the Petition in front of the European Commission. Our Draft Short Motion for Resolution (2021/2679(RSP)) has already been approved by the Committee on Petitions on its 25th October session with 30 votes in favour, 0 against and 2 abstaining (<https://tinyurl.com/yxhd86ab>). These results showed unanimous support for the cause behind the Petition, which further reaffirmed our efforts to work for finding a common solution to the challenges faced by European students who wish to study in the UK. We have contacted over 60 journals across the EU and the UK and asked them to support our cause by writing an article on it. We believe that the wider publicity of the Campaign could strengthen our cause and bring awareness to the post-Brexit educational issues. Also we have reached out to MEPs from a diverse selection of parties and various EU countries to support the cause of the campaign. We have also contacted the European Student Union and its 27 branches in all EU countries to collaborate with them in achieving our common goal. We have organised two Youth Leaders Forums for which we have invited the European national society leaders from several universities based in the UK.

The Charlemagne Prize could help us organise in-person conferences, workshops and informative events, to increase the campaign’s recognition in the EU. Moreover, the prize could also fund travel and accommodation for the Campaign leaders' prospective visit to the institutions of the European Union. This would let them negotiate with MEPs and other EU officials in person, and potentially attend the voting on the petition by the European Parliament.

Website:	https://www.hungarianyouthassociation.co.uk
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/SaveEUStudents https://www.facebook.com/HungarianYouth



IRELAND - Student Council Charter

Today great swathes of students do not feel represented in our democracies. We decided to work to create a **Student Council Charter that puts students back in the student council**, upholding democracy and free elections alongside proper and enhanced engagement and direct/participatory democracy measures in councils. We want students to be listened to in schools as mature young adults and for students to feel represented by their councils.

The first half of the project consisted in drafting the charter. We formed a core drafting team of students on their student council, ordinary students who were not on their council, and regional and national representatives of students. We then began a broad consultative process to make the document as impactful as possible. We worked with Dr. Laura Lundy, with our Northern Ireland counterpart SSUNI (Second-level Student's Union of Northern Ireland), we consulted with 56 regional and national representatives of students and worked directly with national education management organisations to ensure the document worked from all stakeholders perspectives.

The Charter was adopted by the National Student's Executive of the Irish Second-level Student's Union in 2021. The essential next stage of the project was working with education management organisations to have them officially adopt the policy for their schools to follow. We entered into talks with Limerick/Clare Local Education and Training Board (one of 16 local authority education boards in Ireland) and are currently drawing up an implementation plan & training program to launch with all national stakeholders present with the view to expanding the charter across the Irish education sector.

Once this is implemented in the Limerick Clare ETB it will immediately completely overhaul and reform student representation and student voice for 13000 students. After the launch, we will immediately begin talks with all other education management organisations to implement the charter.

Once complete we will have completely changed how student voice and student representation operates in schools across Ireland for 600,000 students. We will have given students a real seat at the table in decision-making and given students a real and democratic voice. Once successful in Ireland, we will work with our sister unions across Europe via the Organising Bureau of European Second-level Students' Unions to implement similar charters. This could possibly lead to the formation of a European Student Council Charter to create a **European education system that truly listens to students and puts them at the centre of decision-making** as the chief stakeholder that they are.

Website:	https://www.issu.ie/home
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/issu4u
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/issu4u/with_replies
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/issu4u/?hl=en



ITALY - The Giufà Project

Giufà is a character of the oral traditions of the Mediterranean, but his traces are also found in Central and Eastern Europe. He tells the story of those who move by will or necessity and have done so for ages. It has been part of many performances by Laura Fatini (theatre pedagogist, director and writer) and has had various products: performances, workshops, and collaborations in Italy, Portugal, Belgium, UK, Bosnia, Greece, Albania and France.

The ironic and powerful aspect of that is how close the European roots are, as the stories have points in common from Greece to Portugal, from Germany to Sicily. The project in the past did just theatre, but in fact, it created much more. **The methodology of participatory arts and non-formal education with the youth** (plus peer learning) have been the core of the evolution of the Giufà Project. It has been brought to schools, theatres, opera houses, adapting to each reality.

Francesco Pipparelli decided to take it a step further, on an even broader European dimension, seeing in this character a representation of many people and stories. In this period of great migration and movements within the Union, it is especially important to underline the values of freedom, equality, and empowerment through the encounter of diversity. He brought the character and the project in his work with the University as well as in his work as an actor and an ARTivist with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. At the same time, he met Redi, an Albanian young man who studies and lives in Rome and who encountered Giufà in one of his shows. He recognized the character from his childhood tales, and decided to translate it into his native language, thus creating a bridge with a new country.

More than 500 people from more than 16 countries have discovered that every traveller can be an artist and a dancer, everybody has something to offer, but most importantly that they need to "Be careful not to stop people or you will end by stopping stories".

The Giufà Project is a collaboration between artists, young people, and creative organizations across Europe to explore the theme of migration in the context of the mass movements of people taking place across the planet right now, and to deliver new creative work in response. It has been born from The Complete Freedom of Truth (TCFT), a youth program created by Opera Circus, which delivers cultural exchanges, residencies, skills development, and leadership to a growing network of young people across Europe.

Website:	thegiufaproject.com
Facebook:	facebook.com/thegiufaproject
Instagram	instagram.com/thegiufaproject



LATVIA - Advocacy Academy

“Advocacy Academy” is a unique **4-month long course with six theoretical and practical lessons** in which young people aged 15-25 across Latvia develop the skills needed to defend their future by helping to mitigate climate and natural crises. Each lesson consists of two parts:

- a theory of the forms of public participation and opportunities to initiate them, the role of non-governmental organisations and media, environmental issues;
- a practical training, such as participation in civic activities, meetings with politicians, critical thinking, and reasoning skills.

At the end of the training course, participants develop their own civic participation projects - from organising protests, meeting with decision makers, to conducting research and advocating for specific legislative changes. The aim of the project “Advocacy Academy” is **to promote and strengthen the awareness of citizenship in environmental issues and to gain faith in their ability to influence both local and national decisions**. After the first year of the project, participants’ knowledge of democracy and interest in advocacy has increased by an average of 20%. However, after the completion of the course, the biggest changes have taken place in the attitude of their personal opportunities to influence decision-making, where the attitude has increased by 31%.

8 actions implemented by young lawyers last year were:

- A public survey on free drinking water filling points and proposals to Riga City Council for setting them up in a very specific locations;
- A study on public attitudes to the effects of pesticides on the environment and a campaign to collect signatures for European Citizens’ Initiative;
- Sending a letter with recommendations to the authorities responsible for the prevention of uncontrolled stubble fires (incl., innovative approaches);
- Collecting evidence on poor wastewater management practices in Riga and providing proposals and meeting with Riga City Council deputies;
- A survey on the level of public education and the involvement in environmental issues;
- Creation of materials for architecture experts and students on utilization and reuse of building materials;
- A study on municipal planning documents and near-term strategic plans for climate change mitigation in the run-up to the municipal elections;
- Involvement in Kandava City Council regarding recycling containers in the municipality.

This project certainly helps young people to believe in their ability to influence processes in their country and to develop the various skills needed for an active personality.

Website:	https://lv-pdf.panda.org/
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/PasaulesDabasFonds
YouTube:	https://www.youtube.com/user/PasaulesDabasFonds
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/pasaulesdabasfonds/
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/DabasFonds
Linkedin:	https://www.linkedin.com/company/pasaules-dabas-fonds-in-association-with-wwf/?viewAsMember=true



LITHUANIA - YES: Young (Ex-)Offenders' Support

YES: Young (Ex-) Offenders' Support is a strategic partnership project and a collaboration between four partners: Association Active Youth (Lithuania), Rubikon Centrum (Czech Republic), Slawek Foundation (Poland) and Wayback (Norway). **The project is aimed at fostering the employability of young ex-offenders by providing employers, youth/social workers & career specialists with tools to teach, guide & employ this vulnerable group.**

The partnership brings together the previously mentioned groups into a structure that supports young convicts in their career endeavours starting in prison and continuing post-release. Once released, youngsters usually do not have: 1) any support from families or friends in starting over; 2) any financial back up to fulfil their basic needs until they are able to sustain themselves; 3) knowledge of where to seek help. *"I do not have fears, I have lots of questions"*, said one female inmate. Ultimately, many people are entrenched within the correctional system from a very young age. To tackle this problem, during the project we will be creating:

- YES to Employment: methodology to boost employability of (ex-)offenders inside the prison & once released;
- YES to Hiring an (Ex-)offender: a handbook for employers;
- Online support for ex-convicts, specialists and employers regarding employment;
- An ex-offender-friendly network consisting of employers, ex-offenders & specialists;
- Short documentaries with success stories about young ex-offenders and their employers;
- Events for specialists and organisations that are working with ex-offenders integration as well as for the general public.

The project directly involves at least 100 specialists working with (ex-)convicts integration, youth workers, career specialists and social workers; at least 16 employers, businesses, NGOs and other organisations that already are hiring or want to hire young (ex-)offenders; and at least 160 Young (ex)-convicts.

The project is created in a way to leave a long-standing positive effect on project participants, partners, and the public. YES will create, launch and maintain a thorough support system that will help young (ex-)offenders boost their employability opportunities and thus lower the chances of recidivism, which ultimately harms the released youngsters and society at large too.

Website:	https://activeyouth.lt/?lang=en
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/activeyouthlt
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/active.youth/



MALTA - Enterprising Europe

Junior Chamber International (JCI) Malta provides a platform where enterprising young leaders can develop their leadership skills through initiatives, projects, and events. It is JCI's mission to provide development opportunities that empower young people to create positive change. As part of JCI's commitment to encourage other young people in Europe to get involved in our democracy through activism, enterprise, or other forms of leadership in order to change their communities to the better, JCI Malta created the "Enterprising Europe" project.

The aim of the project was to **bring European opportunities closer to young entrepreneurs and active youths**. The project consisted of several sessions throughout 2020 and 2021 with Members of European Parliament (MEPs), e.g. Roberta Metsola and Rosianne Cutajar, and other professional experts on European and commerce subjects who offered practical examples and knowledge exchange of how the European Union influences the way Europeans are living together as a community and how to benefit from it and how to improve it. In 2021, the sessions were edited and made available as an online course.

The sessions and course are especially useful for young entrepreneurs, in particular those facing the specific challenges of starting, developing, and sustaining a business in a small EU Member State. By learning directly from experts and politicians, they gained knowledge how the EU is promoting cooperation and understanding both across Europe and internationally. Apart from offering the participants the possibility to exchange experiences and difficulties, they were trained on how EU laws affect enterprises, directly or indirectly, and how businesses and SMEs can influence policy on a European level. They also got an opportunity to exchange their points of view with Members of European Parliament and to network with each other. As a result, **more than 100 young people and entrepreneurs from more than 10 European countries participated in the Enterprising Europe sessions** directly and more than 500 participants completed the online course. The project also encouraged young participants to create their own social enterprising activities, e.g. the Seedgreen green startup incubator and accelerator for climate-friendly projects and businesses.

Furthermore, the participants were introduced to the measures of support, training and opportunities that the EU offers. The course was spread over a total of 5 modules. The course modules can be found on the online training platform jci.digital.

Website:	https://jci.org.mt
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/jcimalta/
YouTube:	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpYjib6YxdV11xC40uDN8Ug
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/jci_malta/
LinkedIn:	https://www.linkedin.com/company/junior-chamber-international-malta/



THE NETHERLANDS – Maastricht 2021 – 4th International Forum of the European Youth Parliament

From the 15th to the 20th of April 2021, the city of Maastricht - birthplace of the modern European Union and probably the most European city of the Netherlands - was the backdrop for an **online gathering of the European Youth Parliament the Netherlands (EYP NL)**. A fully youth-led project, Maastricht 2021 was initiated by Dutch students Annelou Snippe (23 years old) and Jarne van der Poel (also 23), helped by a team of 35 young volunteers.

For six days, 130 young people between the ages of 15-27 dialled in from 24 countries to discuss their vision for the future of Europe with each other and with policy-makers. Around twenty young organisers were present in Maastricht to set up and host the meeting from notable locations in the city. On the agenda was the **theme of digitalisation**, and topics such as citizens' rights in the digital sphere, online misinformation and harassment, and online education. Young participants discussed these topics and exchanged perspectives. Eventually, they reached across cultural and national boundaries to agree on solutions, simulating the European project on a smaller scale. They then had the opportunity to present their solutions to local and national governments, EU-institutions and companies.

The project has yielded many positive results. Participants indicated that they learned to appreciate cultural differences and made many new friends from other European countries, promoting a shared sense of European identity. They also said the event helped them understand how political decision-making works, and made them now more willing to become democratically engaged. While young people can currently not come together in the way that we would like due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains as important as ever that our voices are heard. This project has provided young Europeans with a platform to exchange perspectives, and engaged them in direct conversation with political decision-makers. It has given young people first-hand experience with **European intercultural cooperation and democratic decision-making**.

The official aims of EYP NL are to:

- Raise awareness of European issues, encourage active European citizenship and motivate young people to get engaged in European politics.
- Promote international understanding, intercultural dialogue and diversity of ideas
- Contribute to the development of personal skills of European youth.

Website:	www.ey.nl
Facebook:	www.facebook.com/eynl
Instagram:	https://www.instagram.com/eyp_the_netherlands/



POLAND - Model European Union Poland & Serbia 2021 (MEUPS 2021)

Model European Union Poland and Serbia took place simultaneously in two European cities, Warsaw and Belgrade, using the online format. The simulation of decision-making in the European Union was opened to all young Europeans (18-30 years old) from all academic fields, featuring a day of workshops, 2 simulation days as well as 2 online social events in the evenings, celebrating the cultures of both Poland and Serbia.

Approximately 60 participants from all over Europe and beyond participated in the event which was organised fully free of charge. A team of over 10 young enthusiasts made the event possible, overseeing the content, logistics and social elements.

The main idea of the Model European Union simulation is to provide young Europeans with the opportunity to learn more about the EU institutions, as well as to experience EU politics in real life. In the eye of the rise of populism and Euroscepticism, it is important to mobilise European youth to stay active and well informed on the importance of the Union and its institutions.

Taking into consideration that the youth today will be the future of tomorrow’s Europe, it is essential that they are already starting to be engaged on local, national, regional and European levels. Young people, who are better informed about politics, are more likely to be willing to contribute to their own societies and educate those around them about the benefits of getting involved in politics, which shape everyone’s lives. Youth engagement in politics being a critical factor that affects the future of the EU, it is important that the European youth population is active on topics such as EU citizenship, EU awareness, and democratic dialogue with stakeholders, all of which are part of the key areas that this project deals with.

Through the participation in such simulations, many youth have gone on to organising similar simulations in their own countries and even cities on a smaller scale. BETA Serbia and BETA Poland are two youth organisations that were inspired to bring Model European Union simulations to their respective countries after attending Model European Union conferences in Strasbourg. As such, the impact of these simulations, on youth, must not be underestimated and should be encouraged.

Website:	http://www.meu-warsaw.pl/
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/betapoland
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/beta_polska/



PORTUGAL - Orquestra Sem Fronteiras / Orchestra Without Borders

Orquestra Sem Fronteiras [Orchestra Without Borders] (OSF) promotes the **talent of young musicians born and residing in inland Portugal and Spain**, the decentralisation of cultural programming, and cross-border cooperation between these two countries. As such, OSF is a central cultural enterprise in the Iberian Raya region. Our mission is to **mitigate social and cultural inequalities through the highest standards of music making**. Our vision is a fairer society where culture is accessible to everyone, regardless of their geographic location.

OSF was founded in 2019 in Idanha-a-Nova, Portugal. Ever since, OSF has performed on more than eighty occasions in locations ranging from small villages in rural areas across to cities such as Rio de Janeiro or Madrid. In addition to its concerts, with the orchestra assuming both symphonic and chamber formats, as well as that of ensembles or chamber music groups, OSF strongly champions the **educational and social potential** of its practice, offering a wide range of pedagogical initiatives, free of charge for all participants. This is achieved through an array of podcasts, educational programmes for music professionals, students and the public at large with the aim of audience building, as well as instrument masterclasses, creative listening workshops, community projects, among other initiatives.

OSF has been granted the status of Cultural Public Utility by the Portuguese Minister of Culture. OSF acts in permanent cooperation with national and local administration, while at the same time bringing in civil society and private funding. As we see it, this is just the way it should go: no better future can disregard proper legislation and infrastructures, but in order for that to happen, societies at large must be involved, down to the last individual.

Being among the winners of European Charlemagne Youth Award 2022 would mean the recognition of culture as an element for social and geographical cohesion, particularly in a territory like that whereupon we act, which is in urgent need of awareness and intervention.

OSF in numbers (Spring 2019 - Winter 2022): 400+ grants conceded to over 250 young musicians with an average age of 19.6 years old, adding to more than 200K€ invested in local talent. 80+ concerts performed in over 60 locations across inland Portugal and Spain, as well as one trip to Brazil. In total, over 10K people have attended these concerts. Dozens of partnerships and countless support, by means of cooperation with academic and music institutions, municipalities, theatres, festivals, public and private organisations, NGO's.

Video presentation	https://youtu.be/4F5p8rJ9GOE
Website:	www.osf.pt
Facebook:	www.facebook.com/orgsf
Instagram:	www.instagram.com/orgsf
Youtube:	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXBQ_e5OkwtSwavj8u5Qyug



ROMANIA - EUROS FAT 2021 - Europe is the Future

For more than ten years, Europuls has brought the European Union to the forefront of the political debate in Romania, informing citizens about the Union's policies through debates, articles, studies and reports. By **organising nine editions of the largest forum on EU affairs in Romania**, Europuls has facilitated an open and direct dialogue between citizens and the main national and European leaders and decision-makers.

The Euros fat Forum is guided by European values and is based on civic involvement and open dialogue. Each of its previous editions welcomed over 700 participants. Every year, the Forum is organised under the High Patronage of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, whilst also in partnership with various international institutions, private companies and representatives from the Romanian and European civil society.

The Euros fat Forum 2021 was held under the auspices of the Conference on the Future of Europe. It provided the framework for a favourable dialogue between Romanian citizens and national and European decision-makers to determine the strategic directions on which the European Union should focus, and how Romania can play a key role in the process of defining the EU priorities. At the same time, some of the main topics of the Conference on the Future of Europe were addressed during various sessions of the Euros fat Forum, thus connecting Romania to the EU agenda regarding: climate change and sustainability, digital transformation, rule of law and democracy, education and youth policies or EU's external relations.

Despite the shock of the pandemic, the year 2021 has brought pleasant surprises and positive developments that continue on an upward trend. In this context, the Euros fat Forum aimed to provide the framework to **debate the role of Romania in shaping Europe's future.** During a whole week, the Euros fat Forum was the national focal point of the EU affairs debates and discussions. EU and national decision-makers, local representatives, civil society, business representatives and journalists gathered in a virtual format to debate about the opportunities and ways for our national recovery and transformation

Website:

<http://www.euros fat.ro>



SLOVAKIA - Youth United Media

Youth United is a media organisation fully founded by high-school students. Based throughout multiple European countries, we have been able to write articles on socio-political issues regarding youth. Initially, we had been writing for other organisations, including small local and school newspapers. However, recently, we have taken the decision to centralise our work and focus our resources on the development of a website and a social media account, where our articles could fight against oppression at a much larger scale than they did previously. Through carefully planned collaborations, we believe to be able to establish a **network of Europeans committed to the principles of progressivism and further European integration.**

We strongly believe in the power of words to heal. Through our various articles, we have been able to shed light on everything from the liquidation of the European Youth Parliament in Belarus to homophobia in Post-Soviet states, or even to gender-based violence in Romanian politics. Despite the fact that the members of our team are all aged only between 16-18, we have not shied away from tackling serious topics, as we believe that only through clear communication-based journalism can we hope to someday achieve true understanding between people.

We plan to start turning our articles into shareable visual-based informative posts on social media, while also promoting charities that support the people and organisations that we have written about. We assure that Youth United manages to create a continuous cycle of support for the development of a dignified activism-based youth community throughout Europe.

Youth United is a beacon of hope and progressiveness, and it has repeatedly shown that it could be **one of the voices campaigning for greater European integration and understanding.** To our core, we are young Europeans who have put their trust in this continent and in this era.

Website:	www.youthunited.eu
Instagram	www.instagram.com/youthunited.eu



SLOVENIA - Ljubljana 2021 - 94th International Session of European Youth Parliament (EYP)

The **International Session Ljubljana 2021** brought together **160 young individuals from 27 countries during a 9-day conference**. The event took place in the summer of 2021 in a hybrid format, combining organisational activities executed by 40 volunteers based in Ljubljana over the duration of the event and 120 participants joining the activities online from their respective countries. The project aimed to engage participants between the ages between 16 and 25 to take part in activities that promoted active citizenship and encouraged intercultural cooperation.

By bringing together peers from different European countries and social backgrounds and by facilitating discussions on current European issues, the conference helped the participants to experience the **meaning of European identity** whilst becoming **active members of a common European community**, possibly for the first time in their life.

The project culminated in a 9-day event during which participants were divided into 12 international working groups. They participated in teambuilding activities and debates about a chosen European issue, such as the future of Europe, refugee policy, green economy, future of work, poverty, safeguarding Europe's waters, prevention of future pandemics, gender pay gap, energy security, and human rights.

In the end, each group presented a coherent list of solutions called resolutions, which did not only emphasise the importance of tackling these issues, but also proposed new solutions. The groups presented their findings at the end of the conference, and the resolutions were later passed on to decision-makers. The conference also included a cultural programme and smaller events, such as panel discussions with decision-makers and other guests, talks with professionals from different fields, and a concert, during which participants were able to showcase their talents.

The feedback from the event given by the participants has been very positive. It shows that they enjoyed their participation at Ljubljana 2021. It also showed that they gained new competences, such as participation skills, knowledge about the EU, its institutions and policies, problem solving, international understanding and intercultural communication, improved knowledge of foreign languages, meeting new friends and becoming more self-aware.

Website:	https://eypslovenia.org/is-ljubljana-2021/
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/isljubljana2021
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/eypslovenia/



SPAIN - Model European Union Spain 2021 - Simulation of the European institutions

Model European Union Spain 2021 (MEU Spain) is a simulation of the European institutions. It was organised between **September 6th and September 10th of 2021**, reproducing the working dynamics of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. MEUs are events with more than ten years of history, which offer participants the chance to play the role of a Minister of a country, a Member of the European Parliament, or a journalist. All together, the event consisted of a series of conferences, debates, workshops, and private reunions to discuss policy design and implementation, as well as of social gatherings.

The core idea is to combine practical education (collaboration, negotiation, leadership and research skills), with social and personal development, trying to intertwine these aims. In order to make the project more accessible to diverse group of participants, and taking into account the current pandemic, MEU Spain offered two modalities: online (for the simulation of the European Parliament) and in-person (for the simulation of the Council of the EU), taking a very strict and responsible protocol in regards to the current pandemic.

It was the first hybrid conference of this type ever, with **33 participants and 20 organisers, of 15 and 9 different nationalities, respectively**. The two main topics of the event were selected to make it as close to the current social and political concerns as possible. On one hand, the EU-US relations, which in 2020 and 2021 faced many challenges, such as, for example, the status of trade agreements, COVID-related policies and restrictions, including vaccine patents and the Afghanistan conflict. On the other hand, sustainable investment and its definition, in relation to the Green New Deal. Besides that, the participants had the opportunity to listen to real-life politicians and European affairs experts, including former and current politicians (for example, current Members and a former President of the European Parliament).

Due to the online participation, the event was more international than previous MEUs: it not only had participants living in Europe, but also other non-EU countries, such as Morocco, Togo, or Egypt. This means that MEU Spain is not only an event devoted to bringing Europeans together, but also to spreading European values beyond EU borders.

Website:	www.betaspain.es
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/meuspain
Linkedin:	https://www.linkedin.com/company/model-european-union-spain
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/meuspain/?hl=es
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/spainbeta



SWEDEN - Bridge The Pond

Bridge the pond is a project involving a number of European countries and the US, which **aims to create friendly ties and give students increased understanding in complex cross-border issues, such as social injustices, discrimination, and the importance of equal education.** It has been an active project since 2020, when The Verona Area High School in Wisconsin and Otaniemi Upper Secondary School in Espoo, Finland, met and discussed different topics such as climate change and distance learning, and how these challenges should be tackled. During the years the project has been active, more schools and students around Europe have met and discussed societal issues with American students, as well as creating understanding, exchanging knowledge, thoughts and fellowship.

In 2021, we had the chance to be part of the **Bridge the Pond project**, together with Tuscola high school in North Carolina. Our goal was to exchange ideas regarding democracy, to discuss how it has been threatened in the last years, and what we, as a young generation, could do to protect it. Some of the topics we discussed were gender, age, origin, every person's right to make their voice heard, and the right to equal education.

The very core of the project is to encourage discussion, to create interest in social and democratic questions, and to find potential solutions to current issues and injustices.

Even though these issues are occurring in both European countries and in the US, they might take a different appearance in different countries. By addressing these issues, as well as talking about our own experiences, we have been gaining new perspectives and a deeper understanding of both each other and our society.