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A letter to the European Union, love your youngest voters

Muska Nur

As I write this article, European citizens across the continent are getting ready to vote for the European Parliament's elections. For many of my generation, this is the first time they can vote in these elections. With our world rapidly changing and a storm of different crises to resolve, this generation of young adults has a lot of hopes and fears for Europe's future. Whereas our parents and grandparents have witnessed a very different Europe, most of us cannot remember or even imagine a time when our countries had closed borders. What is the norm for us, was the dream for past generations.

Europe's new trajectory will be significantly shaped by the influx of youth votes and their pressing concerns. I was very interested in how other people of my age viewed these elections and what they considered when making their voting decisions. I interviewed numerous young adults from different member states and saw how similar their answers were. These interviews show how politicized and engaged this generation is.

One of the most important issues discussed was fighting the climate crisis. The youth are disappointed with how slow their national climate plans are and want to see more radical measures on a European scale. Climate change is a determining factor for many when choosing a party to vote for, and they hope the EU politicians will take it more seriously, considering how little time we have left to

combat it. When asked 'what are the most important issues for you in this election, and why,' one person answered: 'Climate change, since us young people will be bearing the consequences of what we decide now.' Many urged stricter measures to achieve the climate goals in time, advocating for 'not only a green Europe but also a sustainably growing Europe.'

On the other hand, I received some pragmatic perspectives as well. One respondent stated, 'I also understand that a lot of people currently have other concerns, taking not only international violence into account but also growing inequality in most nations.' Another source indicated, 'There may be other issues that are very immediate to a person; for example, in France and other EU countries, many people live from paycheck to paycheck. Purchasing power is a very important issue and threatens people's well-being right this instant, so some would rather focus on this instead of climate change. When you have that purchasing power issue, I think that is more of an immediate threat than climate change seems to be.' Someone else mentioned, 'With so many bad things happening in the world, climate change has been put on the back burner.' These responses showcase how young adults have multiple urgent concerns to consider before prioritising placing climate change on top of the list.

A more pressing issue for many in these elections is combating the rise of the right. In an age of un-

certainty, rising prices, growing inequalities, and a lack of social security, we see a surge of votes for the far-right in national elections. This young generation feels especially inclined to vote due to the rise in right-wing populist parties. They are apprehensive about this shift, particularly what it could mean for the EU. One individual expressed, 'the most important issue for me currently is trying to limit the number of votes that go to extreme right-wing parties, by emphasizing to others how important it is to vote for European elections because I'm scared of what our future will look like under the rule of those parties.' Not letting the right-wing parties gain a majority is a priority for many.

"As the generations that experienced nationalism and fascism in Europe slowly pass away, it seems we are forgetting or somewhat neglecting the cruciality of democracy, the rule of law, and our fundamental rights."

A contemporary European system may seem self-evident within our era, yet previous generations recall an era marred by chaos, warfare, dictatorships, and authoritarianism. They worked hard to establish the democratic foundations that define our present reality. Anxieties about returning to that insecure time are fueled by the numerous right-wing politici-

ans across Europe advocating for leaving the EU. 'It seems that people are forgetting why the EU was created and are taking their fundamental rights for granted,' expressed one individual. The interviewed young adults articulated pro-EU sentiments and, therefore, worry about the revival of nationalism. They hope to see a Europe with more economic and social equality and partly aim to achieve this by steering away from populist rhetoric. For example, one person said, 'Discrimination and conservatism pose a threat to minorities and POCs. The EU must take the right steps to guarantee a safer collective community.' The aspirations of the youth across various political domains are vast. Yet, the prospect of a far-right majority in the European Parliament appears to pose a significant obstacle to their realization. 'We can forget about saving the planet when the extreme right-wing parties win these elections,' one person stated.

Evidently, we cannot talk about the far-right without mentioning migration. This is another crucial matter for young adults to consider when voting. 'I find ethical migration very important, since migration and asylum are big topics on the tongue of various political parties.' Another person added, 'the new pact on migration and asylum which the powerful right/center right has already caused so many problems with does not work efficiently, and breaches numerous human rights.' 'The world is in a complete mess and I feel like Europe forgets a lot of the time that they historically caused a lot of this.' 'We need to ensure that everyone is able to get a fair and equal chance through seeking asylum.' With all the conflicts around the world, this young generation recognizes Europe's role in International Relations and its

responsibility to take in refugees as a reaction to their foreign policies. The interviewees acknowledged the need for a better migration system where member states share the responsibilities and do not dehumanize the migrants.

Another current urgent issue is Palestine. The way that politicians in the 27-nation bloc are responding to Israel's war on Gaza, the violence in the occupied West Bank, and the future of Palestine has emerged as a significant theme influencing political discourse and voter decisions. With the official death count at nearly 37,000 Palestinians but estimates suggesting a far higher number, European citizens are furious about the EU's stance towards Palestine and Israel. Ursula von der Leyen and other EU politicians expressed their support for Israel, speaking on behalf of the entire European Union. However, many Europeans disapprove of this viewpoint and do not feel represented by the EU's external poitics.

The European Parliament has demanded that Israel open all borders into Gaza for humanitarian aid and called for 'an unconditional ceasefire.' Millions of people in the EU and worldwide have been calling for a ceasefire for several months. Even EU staff members and diplomats have taken to the streets in Brussels.

"This shows that many Europeans want to be on the right side of history when casting their ballots this year."

This is what the people had to say on this topic: 'It is important for me that the EU provides aid to conflicts around the world and prevents multiple genocides

going on.' 'I want to see a drastic change in foreign affairs, and for the EU to advocate for a ceasefire and finally hold Israel accountable for their genocidal actions.' 'A very important issue for me this election is the war on Gaza, so I mostly looked at parties' viewpoints on that to determine my choice.' 'Conflict resolution concerns me most and I would like to see the EU not support the oppressors anymore.'

When asked 'How do you feel about your country's membership in the EU? What benefits and challenges do you see?' All the young adults had positive responses. Open borders are essential to this generation; most are not used to anything else. This is a generation with family and friends across the continent, and they greatly appreciate the possibility to freely move, work, and study in the different member states and the opportunities that come with it. The youth observe the substantial economic benefits their countries have enjoyed since joining the EU. However, the current high level of Euroscepticism poses a significant threat to the EU. Certain parties advocate for abandoning the EU, leaving it to fend for itself. In contrast, those interviewed recognize the importance of remaining within the EU. 'I think we should tackle big issues as a strong entity instead of by ourselves.' 'The only challenge I can think of is working with governments that are very different from our own, but the benefits outweigh the challenges.' 'I have never known a time when my country was not a member of the EU, many things that we see as natural can be taken away and only then we see the consequences of not being a member of the EU.'

Just as the eye of a storm provides a respite from the surrounding

chaos, the EU and its European Parliament can be seen as a stabilizing force amidst the political, economic, and social upheavals across Europe. It represents a place where order and reason prevail despite external pressures. Voters have the chance to shape this space through the European Parliament elections, guiding the Union towards a bright future. 'We young people inherit problems from generation to generation and it seems it will be our responsibility to fix these issues. Therefore it is important for us to be politically active.'





Why is it important to vote (left)?

Twan Hover

With the European elections just having passed, one must realise the great importance of voting, and the amount of merit it has on society and the day-to-day world we live in. Europe has seen the rise of radical right-wing movements popping up in various places throughout the continent, from Great Britain all the way to Russia. These political movements have one common motive: eliminating international cooperation and emphasising national sovereignty.

Many (extreme) right politicians argue that this approach will improve the country's economic situation, decrease unemployment, and solve various issues, such as the housing crisis in the Netherlands. However, these movements often achieve the opposite, as limiting the influx of immigrants or temporary labour can negatively impact the economy. In 2020, the majority of European parliaments consisted of left-winged ones. On the contrary, in 2024 the majority of parliaments consist of right winged ones. This is a huge change in such a short amount of time.

There are a plethora of reasons why it is beneficial to vote for the right instead of the left. Left-wing policies have led to significant social and economic benefits, as seen in the Nordic countries' comprehensive social welfare systems, the UK's National Health Service, and the US Affordable Care Act, which have improved public health and reduced inequality. Environmental initiatives like Germany's Renewable Energy Act and Costa Rica's conservation efforts highlight their commitment

to sustainability. Human rights advancements, including the legalization of same-sex marriage in various countries, and educational reforms in Finland, demonstrate the inclusive and progressive nature of left-wing governance. Additionally, robust labour protections in France and Germany's worker participation laws underscore their focus on fair labour practices, collectively showcasing the positive impact of voting for left-wing parties.

The right-winged parties are commonly known to be in favour of self-governance and sovereignty, therefore they are against political unions. This means that a right-winged bloc will lead to a decrease of international cooperation, such as the EU. Either way this will lead to economic instability. Many people are not aware of the fact that their countries will not be able to function without foreign trade or aid. Additionally, many of the essential jobs, factory work, work out on the fields, are done by foreigners. These foreigners are able to do this job because of the EU's regulations. Furthermore, these foreigners add a crucial part to the national economy. So, in case if the right wing parties get what they want, the result will be a shortage of staff and labour shortage. Worst of all, economic inequality will increase immensely. theory, there will be a lot less social security and well-being. But this does not only concern humans, for it also negatively impacts the planet and its environment. Another unforgettable factor, is the factor that these right winged parties are commonly known to be anti-cultu-

re, and the spread of knowledge. By doing so they keep the people dumb. For the Netherlands, what the right wing parties do is that they increase the taxes by 21% to pay for books. They reduce or stop the financing of cultural institutes and broadcasting.

"Overall, the right wing parties are bad for democracy, bad for the EU, bad for human rights, bad for culture, bad for the environment and the list goes on..."

Extreme right politicians argue that this approach will improve the country's economic situation, decrease unemployment, and solve various issues, such as the housing crisis in the Netherlands. However, these movements often achieve the opposite, as limiting the influx of immigrants or temporary labour can negatively impact the economy. Additionally, in the Netherlands, right-wing policies that limit immigration have exacerbated labour shortages, impacting various sectors such as agriculture and healthcare. Moreover, Right-wing parties often push for tax cuts for large corporations, leading to increased economic inequality. Data shows that such policies disproportionately benefit the wealthy, leaving lower-income groups struggling. Instead, the issue lies within the Dutch housing market and the influence of capitalist policies that must be addressed.

On the other hand, left-wing par-

ties champion environmental sustainability and the fight against climate change, crucial issues that their right-wing counterparts often downplay or ignore. Addressing these environmental challenges is essential for the long-term health of our planet and society. Left-wing parties also advocate for robust social welfare programs, such as healthcare, education, and social security, which are vital for reducing inequality and improving the quality of life for all citizens. This is in stark contrast to right-wing policies that may prioritise austerity and cutbacks on social services.

Furthermore, left-wing parties advocate for human rights, inclusion, and diversity, promoting policies that protect minority groups, immigrants, and marginalised communities. This fosters a more inclusive and equitable society. Left-wing parties advocate for comprehensive climate policies. For instance, the Green New Deal proposed by left-leaning groups aims to reduce carbon emissions significantly, a goal crucial for mitigating climate change. They also propose progressive taxation and policies to reduce the wealth gap, leading to a more balanced and fair economy. Left-wing parties promote policies that protect minority groups and immigrants. For example, their support for anti-discrimination laws ensures that all citizens are treated equally, fostering a more inclusive society.

In the post-Brexit era, EU citizens have realised the disadvantages of leaving the European Union. However, some right-wing factions now seek to undermine the EU from within. By gaining more seats in the European Parliament, they aim to shift the balance of power towards nationalism, potentially leading to less cooperation and a

weaker EU. Post-Brexit, many EU citizens have experienced economic disruptions and reduced freedoms. Left-wing parties aim to prevent similar disintegration by promoting cooperation and unity within the EU. Such a shift threatens to unravel the efforts made since World War II to secure peace and stability across Europe.

Left-wing parties champion environmental sustainability and the fight against climate change, crucial issues often downplayed by right-wing counterparts. Addressing these challenges is essential for the long-term health of our planet and society. They advocate for robust social welfare programs, such as healthcare, education, and social security, which are vital for reducing inequality and improving the quality of life for all citizens. Furthermore, left-wing parties promote human rights, inclusion, and diversity, fostering policies that protect minority groups, immigrants, and marginalized communities. Progressive taxation and measures to reduce the wealth gap lead to a more balanced and fair economy. Left-wing parties support cooperation and unity within the EU, crucial for maintaining peace and stability.

Thus, voting for left-wing parties in the EU elections is crucial for promoting social justice, environmental protection, and workers' rights. These parties prioritise reducing economic inequality through progressive taxation, higher minimum wages, and stronger social safety nets. They advocate for comprehensive climate policies, renewable energy, and natural resource protection. Left-wing parties also champion universal access to healthcare and education, human rights, inclusivity, and stronger labour protections. They support the regulation of financial markets

for economic stability, democratic governance, international solidarity, and cultural progress. Additionally, voting left helps counter right-wing extremism and nationalism, fostering a more cohesive, tolerant, and equitable society.

In conclusion, voting is essential, and supporting parties that align with progressive values is crucial, especially in the face of rising radical right-wing movements. Voting left is vital to counteract these movements and support a fairer, more sustainable future. By doing so, we protect democracy, equality, the economy, the environment, and much more.



Letter from the stormy
bike-packing room
in Schiphol airport

Annelie Ní Dhálaigh



The Dutch are often praised for their efficiency. Centuries of fighting the literal ocean made them so. They create elaborate systems of protection that require consistent maintenance. At night they take down the arms of the old windmills and wrap them up as if putting them to bed. But here in Holland, when it rains, it pours.

As remarked upon by another Irish friend living here with me in Amsterdam, "In Ireland, everything is so disorganised, it's actually somehow more efficient. There are 10 different backdoors you can try and someone will always give you a hand. Whereas here it's too streamlined. It's just 'computer says no', or 'that ish impossible', and off with you".

When I first moved to the city three years ago to study, it took me a while to understand that "impossible", when said by customer service workers meant something more akin to, 'quite difficult for me'. In fact, after learning Dutch, I realised that the translation is actually off. "Unmogelijk", comes from the root "mogen", which is closer to "to be allowed". A better translation might be more like unallowable, or impermissible. It is interesting how quickly the Dutch blur permissibility and possibility. It is difficult to say in Dutch, 'I know it's not allowed but can I do it anyway?'. At home, we have a much more efficient translation, 'Ah here, be sound'.

These elaborate Dutch systems don't respond well to crisis. Trains are usually not late, and they are plentiful, but when something goes wrong it goes wrong. Last year a computer malfunction meant that no trains in or out of Amsterdam could run for about 12 hours. All the trains were in perfect condition, but letting them

run was impossible.

In contrast, here in Ireland, trains operate on a more relational basis. Mam, whose internal clock is set permanently five minutes late, has the phone number of the local train station. When she's running late for the early morning train to Dublin she rings your man and charms him into holding it for the crucial minute that marks the line between made and missed. "Ah yeah, I see your car coming over the hill now go on." I relayed this anecdote once to some Dutch friends trying to convey an image of Ireland as a friendly, helpful island, which prioritised relationships over rules. When they started asking questions about corruption, bribery and fraud in small-town Ireland I knew they had gotten the wrong end of the stick.

When I brought my bike to Schiphol airport to bring her home to Mullingar, I expected Dutch efficiency but was faced with Dutch crisis. The air was thick with tension in the bike-packing room. A well-dressed Italian couple in their thirties were bent over two metal triangles that were now unrecognisable as having once been bikes. Their hands (and the floor) were covered in extra virgin olive oil as they greased up their bikes, presumably in an attempt to fit them into the boxes.

"We didn't comment on this. There were too many potential jokes to be made about Italians covered in extra virgin olive oil to choose just one."

Like when someone spills milk and gets upset about it. It's so obvious it feels unfair. We also didn't com-

ment because we saw in them an image of our future. T minus 10 minutes.

While the Italian man sweated through his crisp white shirt as he took a hammer to the pedals of the triangle, we struggled to fit my bike in. Neatly printed infographic instructions on the side of the box bore down on us patronisingly. Simply turn the handlebars! And remove the pedals! No olive oil or grunting in Italian required! It wasn't that simple, and the poor bike had to be dismembered, its skeleton and two wheels left to collide around their cardboard coffin.

The bike boxes were not designed for efficiency and came with only two transport options. Vertical on the trolley, leaving you unable to see your way, or horizontal, which would leave you locked out of lifts and effectively immobile. While in Schiphol pedestrians scurried, frustrated, to escape the trolley's warpath, Dublin airport greeted me with open arms and amused expressions. Four different people helped me in getting that bike box down to the departures level, where I waited for Mam, 5 minutes late. There was a misty, dry rain as I unpacked the bike, Cash style, one piece at a time.

After three years in a city where everything works, until it doesn't, it feels right to be back home where nothing works, but someone will always help you fit a box into the lift, even if they laugh at you while doing it.

Cloudy with a Chance of Grand Slam

Viktorija Greidāne

The end of May and the start of June are marked by the French Open, Roland Garros, where tennis enthusiasts travel to Paris to see the matches, and the rest of the world tunes in live from their living rooms. The recent release of film *Challengers*, starring Zendaya as a tennis prodigy, has brought in a new batch of fans of the sport. This film has become the centre of popular culture and captivated viewers' attention to learn more about this sport.

Competitive tennis is played in singles, doubles and mixed doubles by men and women alike. They all face towards one goal – to be the best, be number one in the world. The ranking reflects the players performance on the court, where points are attributed according to the result of the championship. Grand Slam title is worth the most points, but is the dream beyond numbers. Grand Slam means winning all four major championships in the year in Australia, France, Britain (Wimbledon), and the United States. It takes quite the talent, time, money and mindset to reach that point in a tennis career, and it does not stop there, as the players go on to win multiple Grand Slam titles during their career.

Playing well is a task of its own, and even more so, playing under pressure, that causes the double faults, outs and missed shots. We can talk about each player's physical abilities, but the outcome of the match is often beyond the technical skill to swing a racket.

Key elements are a competitive spirit and an ability to concentrate in the moment when so much is at stake. These players have trained endless hours since their childhood and this is the point they are working towards - being the winner of the championship. Expectations from the team, family, fans, most importantly, from themselves impact the course of the match and also the result.

In every match the player searches for balance between technical and mental aspects, especially in significant matches, like Roland Garros. A well-played rally with a winning point gives the confidence

to keep going, take on more risks and eventually win more points. It is like playing in the high-energy field, where the player leads the way, and not their opponent. However, when the insecurity creeps in, it becomes inevitable to start losing points. The tension and the dissatisfaction of the player may be unleashed beyond the game score and in an expressive and harmful way. This is when we see players break rackets, throw tantrums and call out judges in the heat of the moment, being caught up in the storm.

Whether they show it or not, there is a storm happening within each player. In the championship this year in Paris, two semifinalists displayed their different approaches in handling this storm. One was focused, concentrated and calm, even when the defeat was in the perspective. This collectiveness helped him handle high pressure points. Another player expressed his emotions by smiling, shouting and doing hand gestures, which similarly translated to his style of playing, where he took more risks when confident and made silly mistakes when not, and overall had a diverse style of playing.

"Being in the eye of the storm brings two options: one can release thunder and lightning or sit out the storm and wait while it passes."

The balance between the two extremes is what not only tennis players search for, but each of us. With each season of our lives, we face stressful situations and must choose our fights, and decide when to let out that thunderstorm.

Some say that thunderstorms call for bad weather, but I believe that to be the opposite. After the thunderstorm, there always comes sun, and in this case the Spanish tennis player got to the finals of Roland Garros, and ended up winning that title.



SES Calendar

Beachday - 22nd of June 2024

It is the end of the year so get ready for the annual beach day on the 22nd of June from 2pm on in Zandvoort. We hope for the best possible weather and to get together for some fun games of flunkyball or beach volleyball and for the daredevils among us, go for a swim!

Last Borrel of the Year - 25th of June 2024

The year is coming to and end, which means that we will have the last borrel on the 25th. Join the 39th Board one last time for a drink together with your friends before we separate for the break!

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