

EUROPEAN IDEAS – OUR COMMON FUTURE
European Ideas Discussion Workshops



EUROPEAN IDEAS

www.europeanideas.eu

Information Dossier
on the
European Ideas - Our Common Future
initiative.

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European Ideas

European Ideas (www.europeanideas.eu) is an **independent** and **non-partisan platform** encouraging an **open debate** about **current issues** directly affecting the future of the **European continent**. Our principal aim is to bring European politics **closer to the citizens** and to foster **dialogue** between European Union institutions, representatives and Europeans.

Our website features exclusive video-interviews, lectures, opinion pieces and short articles by academics and policy-makers on European affairs. Our contributors have included Martin Schulz (President of the European Parliament), Viviane Reding (EU Commissioner), Johannes Hahn (EU Commissioner), Vesna Pusic (Croatian Foreign Minister), Daniel Cohn-Bendit (MEP), Ewald Nowotny (Governor of the Austrian Central Bank), Simon Hix (London School of Economics), Brendan Simms (University of Cambridge), Jan Zielonka (University of Oxford) and many others.

Our project is also one of the national winners of the **2012 European Charlemagne Youth Prize** that is awarded by the European Parliament.

European Ideas - Our Common Future

The '*European Ideas - Our Common Future*' initiative features **discussion workshops** involving students, politicians, experts and professors on specific issues concerning the **future of the European Union**.

Objectives

European Ideas Discussion Workshops give students from all over Europe and beyond the opportunity to **exchange their views** on current EU Issues and to **foster a common identity** by focussing on our common human needs.

European Ideas Discussion Workshops establish a **platform for dialogue** between students, young professionals, politicians, experts and professors. Discussion Workshops give students and young professionals the opportunity to **communicate their own ideas** about current EU issues and the future of the European Union. Just like the European Ideas platform, European Ideas Discussion Workshops encourage an **open debate** about current issues directly affecting the future of the European continent. Our principal aim is to foster the involvement of Europeans in the EU decision-making process as well as the dialogue between European Union institutions, representatives and Europeans.



Discussion Workshops involve a **continuous follow-up process**, with the results of the workshops being published on our **website** and further discussion rounds building upon the obtained results. Workshops always feature one general theme to be discussed on a global level and thereby allowing us to compare our views and perspectives. Workshops take place at universities and learning institutions all over Europe. In the near future, workshops will also reassemble participants from different cities.

Before each workshop, participants are invited to send in their own **sub-questions**, specific issues they are most interested in and they would like to discuss. Sub-questions cover one important aspect of the main topic and should reflect the personal interest of the respective participant. Workshops are supposed to take place at least once a month at each participating institution. As they proceed, the topics are analyzed in increasingly greater depth as participants have the time to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Planning and organization

A first round of discussions takes place at different teaching institutions and on one common subject. In Vienna, the first European Ideas Discussion Workshops have taken place at Webster University and the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. More workshops shall be held this year at the *Law and Political Science Faculties of the University of Vienna*, the *University of Luxembourg*, *Sciences-Po Paris*, the *University of Oxford*, *Saint Louis University Madrid*, *Ohio State University* the *Columbia University* in the US and others.

Each workshop brings together a group of ten to fifteen student participants, one or two experts, one or two professors, a moderator and his or her assistant. Before the respective workshop, participants have the chance to send in their own sub-questions either per email to the Workshop Leader at the university concerned or on the public *Facebook* page. *Facebook* event pages may be created to advertise the discussion workshops and collect sub-questions from potential participants. The results of all discussions will be made available online on our site www.europeanideas.eu and the sharing of our common results shall allow us to base our future discussions on the outcome that has already been obtained.

While European Ideas Discussion Workshops first take place on a local level, further discussion rounds shall reassemble participants from all over Europe.



Values

Creativity - Solidarity - Empathy

European Ideas discussion workshops focus on the joint output at the end of each session. Instead of competing with each other or focussing on rhetorical skills, participants are invited to focus on the **joint output** and a **balanced discussion** that is enriching for everyone involved. We aim at fostering **solidarity** by drawing on **creativity** and **empathy** in our discussions.

Languages

Concerning the use of languages, *European Ideas* discussion workshops follow one main principle: **inclusiveness**. This same principle may have different practical effects:

- on the one hand, the implementation of this principle means that workshops take place in the **language spoken by most of the potential participants**.
- on the other hand, this principle also draws attention to the **need of including other European languages** in order to give everybody the opportunity to express him or herself in the language that is most familiar to him or her.

Furthermore, the use of various European languages may draw attention to differences in perceptions depending on the different cultures within Europe. For a common European identity to develop at least to a certain extent, awareness about these differences in perception needs to be created which in turn fosters mutual understanding.

On that account, discussion workshops at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna for example shall be implemented in all of its three official languages: German, French and English.

Incentives for participation

Participants will have the opportunity of becoming part of the *European Ideas network* consisting of young people all over Europe wanting to actively shape the future of the European continent. Being part of this network enhances their possibilities for implementing their own future projects. Furthermore, participants have the opportunity to **share their ideas** with politicians and experts in the field. Finally, participants get a *European Ideas - Our Common Future certificate* testifying their participation and indicating the place of the workshop as well as the experts involved.



Guidelines for the organization

European Ideas student representatives are invited to:

- find at least one professor at their teaching institution willing to participate
- organize the discussion round either as part of a university course or as a separate meeting
- find experts in the field of discussion willing to participate
- encourage students to participate
- provide preparation materials for participants on the respective subject, including articles from www.europeanideas.eu, quotes, interviews etc.

An advertisement poster will be published in order to attract the attention of potential participants. Next to the advertisement poster, potential participants will find an **Information Sheet for Participants** with all relevant information on the objectives of the workshops, the organization, and the guidelines for participation.

Before a workshop, participants will have to **register through email** with the respective *European Ideas* Workshop Leader. This email can be found on the “Description Sheet” (Annex 2, EI_OCF_Description_Sheet) that will be published at the respective institution. Registration will need to be confirmed. A minimum of five and a maximum of fifteen student participants will be accepted. If a person does not get a place on a specific workshop, then he or she will be offered one on one of the next workshops. In fact, if many participants want to register on a specific discussion theme, more workshops on this subject shall be organized. Registered participants will receive articles, interviews and other references that will support them in their preparation.

Furthermore, participants are asked to **submit sub-questions** to the moderator of a respective workshop. Sub-questions address one particular issue within the subject discussed and show particular interests of each participant. Sub-questions can be submitted either through email to the European Ideas Workshop Leader (indicated on the description poster and the ‘Information for Participants’ sheets) or through the Facebook Event-Page. The moderator compiles these questions and, if necessary, divides them into sections which can then be treated jointly during the workshop.

It is important to highlight **only active participants** and administrators will be present at a workshop. Thereby, participants are encouraged to speak up freely without feeling observed by people who would not actively participate. The exclusive presence of active participants shall also favour the development of **team dynamics** which can be fruitful in the search of a joint position. All participants including the moderator and the assistant shall **sit in a circle**, indicating that all participants have the **same standing** during the discussions.



Subject of the first round of European Ideas Discussion Workshops

“Is the European Union democratic?”

Abstract:

Whether you argue in favour or against this proposition: why is democratic decision-making important in a political system? What is the aim of a democracy? After finding an answer to these questions, to what extent does the European Union have to be democratic in order to achieve its goals? Many would argue that economic integration would eventually push forward political integration. Do you agree? Finally, to what extent do European countries have to be politically unified in order to defend the interests of their citizens?

First suggested sub-questions: (participants will submit their own sub-questions)

1. If the answer is yes: why? Why are the given possibilities sufficient?
2. If the answer is no, what can be done to make the EU more democratic?
3. Elections of Members of the European Parliament: should European citizens be given the possibility to elect their European representatives on an EU-wide scale? What are the advantages and challenges of this initiative?
4. Should European politics be made less dependent on money flows?
 - a. Is the general concern about ‘economic growth’ still justified?
 - b. Should democracy stay within the political sphere or can it be implemented in private companies as well?
5. Should transparency within European Union decision-making be increased?
6. Should participation by the public be increased?
 - a. If no, is the current system sustainable?
 - b. If yes, how can participation be increased? Through direct democracy? Through more subsidiarity in the decision-making process?
 - c. What are the prospects of European Press: Euronews, Press Europ, etc.?
7. What is the role of education? In how far is reform needed?
 - a. Should ERASMUS be open not only to students, but also to professionals who would otherwise not have the possibility of living in another European country?
 - b. Should European countries develop a common curriculum on political education that would enable citizens to actively take part in the decision-making process?
8. In what ways does *European Ideas* contribute to democratic decision-making within the European Union?
 - a. What other initiatives could be implemented by *European Ideas*?

**Web resources for participant's preparation:**

Web resources for preparation are continuously updated and published on our [website](#) and on our Facebook page.

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European Parliament. "United in diversity: Rules for the European Parliamentary elections." 2009 elections – Institutions. 12 May 2009.

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Micossi, Stefano. "Democracy in the European Union." Centre for European Policy Studies. February 2008. <http://aei.pitt.edu/7586/1/Wd286.pdf>

Sampol, Célia. "Andrew Duff proposes creation of transnational list." *Europolitics, The European Affairs Daily*. 26 April 2010.

<http://www.europolitics.info/institutions/andrew-duff-proposes-creation-of-transnational-list-art270042-46.html>

Simms, Brendan. Towards a mighty union: how to create a democratic European superpower. *European Ideas*. 22 April 2012.

<http://www.europeanideas.eu/pages/politics/eu-political-system/towards-a-mighty-union-how-to-create-a-democratic-european-superpower.php>



Guidelines for the discussion workshops

The **moderator** of a discussion workshop, either a member of the *European Ideas* team or a professor from the respective university, shall make sure that the **discussion is balanced**, meaning that all participants can actively contribute. Accordingly, the moderator can invite participants to take the floor who have spoken less than others. Most importantly, the focus of the discussion shall be on the joint outcome. The main task of the moderator is thus to make all participants focus on a common result and reflect not only on their own positions, but also insightfully on those of others. In the end, it is not necessary that all participants agree on a certain proposition and diverging opinions should be highlighted in the joint document. At the same time, participants shall focus on the establishment of a consensus on a certain ideas, topic or proposition. In order to be able to fulfil these tasks, the moderator should not participate as a discussant, i.e. he or she should only take up a position if it is necessary to encourage discussion.

Before the start of the workshop, participants have the opportunity to give short interviews in front of the camera on a voluntary basis. Short interviews will also be made in the break of the session as well as at the end, so that the learning effect of the workshops can be approximated. These interviews will be put on our website with the consent of the interviewed person. **During the discussions, participants shall not be filmed.** Furthermore, it will not be allowed to cite a particular participant in any form after the workshop, unless this participant explicitly agrees to him or her being cited in a particular way. However, the **general output** of the team will be put online and used for further discussion rounds without reference to a particular participant. Participants can indicate whether they would like to be mentioned publicly as a participant in a specific workshop.

The moderator will need **at least one assistant** during a workshop who takes detailed minutes of the discussion on a laptop. These minutes shall be used by the moderator and the assistant during the break to prepare a visual presentation giving an overview of the issues and ideas discussed. This overview shall be projected on a screen during the second half. The assistant will also have to handle the camera during the interviews. Ideally, interviews are made by a third person, so that the moderator can focus on welcoming the participants and answering their questions.

Politicians, experts and professors participating in a workshop will be kindly asked to provide one article or interview for the *European Ideas* website, or alternatively, to write a review of the workshop. In either case, the European Ideas Team shall stay connected with former participants in a workshop.



Timetable

1. Welcoming and short introduction of the subject by the Moderator (~3 min.)
A written Discussion Plan is distributed presenting the sub-questions regrouped into sections.
2. Short introduction by each student participant (1-2 min. per statement)
 - a. What is your background?
 - b. What has motivated you for participating in the workshop?
3. Participants introduce their own sub-questions in groups according to the sections presented on the **Discussion Plan**.
4. After each group presentation, experts invited have the opportunity to give a first feed-back on the questions raised by the student participants.
5. Once all sub-questions have been presented, the moderator makes sure that the discussion flows nicely by introducing questions whenever it is needed. Furthermore, the Moderator shall make sure that the discussion is balanced, meaning that all participants get an equal chance to speak and that the most important issues that have been addressed get the necessary attention.
6. In the end, the moderator explains how the follow-up of the workshop will be organized. The minutes will be put on a *Google document*, so that every participant has the chance to make remarks and suggest changes before the **Summary** is published. Participants also have the chance to make suggestions for the organization of future workshops and the next topic to be discussed at their institution. Furthermore, participants are invited to contribute to an **Article** including the results of the workshop and presenting the topics raised in a coherent way.
7. The experts as well as participants will be invited to make **short video interviews** with the team of European Ideas to be put on our webpage in order to attract attention of future participants and inform the general public about the results and proceedings of the workshop.

Participants who would like to obtain a **Participation Certificate** from *European Ideas - Our Common Future* are invited to send an email to the Moderator of their respective workshop indicating their full name and their current learning institution or professional activity.



Main Administrators

Philippe Ternes

Philippe Ternes is the Initiator and Administrator of the ‘*European Ideas - Our Common Future*’ initiative that features discussion workshops involving students, experts and professors. Philippe is a firm believer that policy-making of the future will have to be guided by our common human needs. In this sense, discussion workshops aim at fostering a European identity that will allow us to focus on these common needs. Philippe is a graduate of the Master Programme at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. He also holds a Diploma in theory and practice of international relations from the same institution as well as a Magister Artium in Music Education and Spanish from the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna and the University of Vienna, Austria.

Olivier Gergely

Olivier Gergely is the co-founder and Director of *European Ideas*. He currently studies for an MPhil in European Politics and Society at the University of Oxford and holds a BSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics, where he initiated the “Business and Politics from an Austrian Perspective Lecture Series” while he was President of LSE’s Austrian Society. Olivier also gained work experience as the trainee of a Member of the European Parliament, as a volunteer at the Austrian Cultural Forum in London and as an assistant to a Professor at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. He also wrote articles about international affairs for a leading Austrian newspaper (*Die Presse*) and worked for an international consulting firm specialised in EuropeAid projects. Olivier is Austrian and French and driven by the belief that the big problems of our time create an ever-greater convergence of European national interests, which ultimately form a rational basis for creating an ‘ever closer union among the peoples of Europe’.

Simon Leissingner

Simon Leissingner founded *European Ideas* with Olivier Gergely and is the Director of the platform. He has a profound interest in Europe and has lived in several different European capitals. He is fascinated by the political system of the European Union and the interplay of economic and political issues. Simon is currently studying International Business at Saint Louis University at the Campus in Madrid. Beforehand he studied at Regents College in London where he started to work on several international projects. For Simon a good understanding of different cultures is essential, and he therefore considers *European Ideas* as a great possibility to be in contact with fascinating persons from all over the world.

European Ideas Discussion Workshop Leaders can be found on our website: <http://www.europeanideas.eu/pages/home/our-common-future.php>



Inventory of resources

The present section aims at giving an overview of the workload and capital needed to implement *European Ideas Discussion Workshops*. In fact, preparation and implementation of *European Ideas* discussion workshops entail a significant amount of time, skills and commitment. For these reasons, *European Ideas* aims at establishing EI discussion workshops **professionally** in order to secure their sustainable implementation over the long term. To this extend, we are calling upon relevant institutions to support *European Ideas* with the **necessary funding** for the implementation of the “*European Ideas - Our Common Future*” initiative.

Organization and preparation time for the first round of workshops:

- liaising with student participants, politicians and experts, approx. 5 hours a week
- organization within the team, approx. 5 hours a week
- preparation of information documents, approx. 7 hours per week in the first 2 weeks; 3 hours for the following weeks.
- administration of the website and advertisement, approx. 3 hours per week
- organization of workshop materials: beamer, laptop, screen, room, camera etc., approx 3 hours.

Total amount of working hours per week: 20

Total amount of working hours for the implementation of a **new round of Discussion Workshops: 120 hours**. Each new round of EI Discussion Workshops should be planned at least one month ahead of the first workshop (**minimum 80 working hours**).

Implementation time for more workshops within the first round:

- liaising with student participants, politicians and experts, approx. 5 hours a week.
- organization within the team, approx. 5 hours a week
- organization of workshop materials: beamer, laptop, screen, room, camera etc., 3 hours.

Minimum planning time for one workshop within an already **ongoing discussion round**: 2 weeks = 23 hours, minimal preparation time.

Purchase of materials: writing material, banners, refreshments etc.
approx. 150 Eur. per workshop