EUROPEAN STUDENT CONFERENCE 2020

a european horizons conference

Conference Overview

Yale University
April 16–April 18, 2020

With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Yale MACMILLAN CENTER
European Studies Council

KONRAD
ADENAUER
STIFTUNG

EUROPEAN
HORIZONS

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WHO WE ARE AND MISSION

European Horizons is a global, student-led policy incubator whose mission is to give young people a voice in shaping the future of Europe and of transatlantic relations. We want to achieve our mission by harnessing the energy, idealism and ambition of young people and by empowering them with the right tools, skillsets, and connections to influence our policy and political institutions now and in the future. Our method is unique: a network of university chapters engaged in collaborative projects with political, public policy, civil society, and business organizations. Our activities aim to both inspire and train our members through projects that have discrete, tangible policy outcomes. These projects provide members with new skill sets, knowledge, and connections, while increasing the capacity and creativity of our partner organizations.

Through our network of university chapters across the world, and in collaboration with our partner organizations, European Horizons devises, tests, and advocates for innovative policy ideas to advance European integration.
In particular, European Horizons' members and chapters:

- undertake collaboratively-designed projects with partners in European politics and policy-making, business, society, and culture;

- conduct independent research through the Review of European and Transatlantic Affairs and other publications; and hold international and regional events, such as the annual European Student Conference at Yale or the Youth Summit on the Transatlantic Digital Economy, that connect students to each other and to our partner organizations, and thereby empower them to shape the future of Europe and transatlantic relations.

OUR VALUES

The youth is a fringe actor in society. Although we account for more than 17% of the EU's population and 16% of the U.S. population, we are not included in the decision-making process of our institutions. Others take decisions for us, decisions that affect us directly, from unemployment to educational opportunities. Yet, we seldom have a say in determining the future of our societies beyond our responsibility as voters. We are the next generation of leaders, but we increasingly inherit a world that does not reflect our values and our vision for Europe.

Today we face a world that is increasingly divided – East and West, North and South, young and old, urban and rural, wealthy and poor– a political system that is less responsive to the needs and voices of its constituents, and an economic system increasingly ignorant of the suffering of vulnerable, less mobile members of society. We are also facing crises in the rule of law, social justice, migration, and financial and cultural solidarity among states, each culminating in the mobilization of right-wing populist agendas on both sides of the Atlantic and a general decline in the level and substance of public dialogue. But most worrisome, we face a decline in the desire for mutual understanding and commitment.

Our network of students – engaged and committed to the project of European integration and the transatlantic partnership – respects and affirms the plurality of political life, and thus stands opposed to populism's reduction of politics to the nativist impulses to exclude and divide. We are committed to working through differences, seeking to understand how to realize principles of post-national justice and freedom.

This struggle today requires a transatlantic and global perspective – we stand against the ascendant 'international nationalism'. The struggle for a pluralist politics requires learning lessons from around the world and the joining of forces.
We also stand opposed to any simplistic embrace of one or another theory of European integration or European state-building. Our network is one in which these ideas must be debated, explored, deepened, challenged, and refined. Our tent is a large one, precisely because we seek to bring diverse voices into productive conversation. The comparative perspective of young people who study and work around the world is invaluable.

ESC2020: OVERVIEW

On April 16 - 18, 120 undergraduate and graduate students from across the United States, Europe, and all over the world will gather at Yale University for the sixth annual European Student Conference, to discuss some of the major challenges facing the European Union today.

Students will be selected from universities around the world, in a competitive application process. They will be joined at the conference by twenty dignitaries from politics, diplomacy, business, academia, and the media, who will share their knowledge and expertise with the students in workshops and panel discussions. Before and during the conference, the students will craft policy papers that shed new light on European challenges in the realms of Democracy, Security and Defense, EU-China Relations, Enlargement, Environment, Digital Single Market, and Internet Governance. The aim of the European Student Conference is for students to take on these challenges, by engaging in critical thinking and enriching discussion and debate.

FORMAT

The conference is structured around three main formats:

- Keynote speeches will be held by some of our guests from the world of European politics and transatlantic relations in the opening and closing plenaries, followed by questions from the audience.

- Three panels will be held throughout the course of the conference, featuring up to three guest experts, as well as a moderator. Each 60-minute panel will focus on a select topic currently dominating our discussion and understanding of Europe. Panels are followed by ~ 20 minutes of questions from the audience.

- Workshops of up to 20 students, advised by up to three guest experts, will each tackle owwne of the conference themes outlined on the following page. Students will arrive at the conference having already prepared drafts of their policy papers, and will revise their ideas in light of their group discussions in three workshop sessions throughout the conference. Each group will present a final policy paper proposing concrete policy solutions on the final day of the conference.

PURPOSE & THEMES

The conference will be framed thematically around a number of key challenges facing Europe that participants will seek to resolve, with one another and with the guidance of the guest experts, professors and decision-makers. The aim of the conference is to make progress towards understanding and tackling these challenges—both by coming up with concrete plans of action for implementing the policy visions and strategies students develop and by identifying steps that conference participants themselves can take. The headline challenge of this year's conference is "Redefining European Values in the Context of Modern Challenges".

Within their workshops the students will discuss the following themes:

1. **Democracy:** How should Europe protect its current values with the rise of support for extremist parties in its national governments and the European Parliament?

2. **EU-USA:** With the growing distrust from the United States, how can the EU and USA work together to maintain and further develop their mutually beneficial partnership?

3. **Cyber Security and Defense:** How can Europe adapt its security policy to changing political relations and enhance cooperation with its strategic partners on this issue?

4. **EU-China:** How can Europe reposition itself and maintain strategic partnerships in a new multipolar world order?

5. **Environment:** How can Europe work with its strategic partners to create impactful environmental policies?

6. **EU Enlargement:** How can the EU reform its enlargement policies to adapt to its core challenges?

7. **Digital Single Market and Internet Governance:** How can the EU navigate the Digital Single Market efficiently? How can Europe harness the economic and informational benefits of digitalization, while simultaneously regulating potential misuses that threaten liberal democracy?

DEMOCRACY

1. Could reshaping European values be counterproductive in achieving and maintaining democracy across Europe? How?

2. How relevant is local political activism in reducing the rise of extremist parties? How can the EU have greater success in this area?

3. What is the next step for European integration considering the newfound importance of citizen participation and the challenges of new EU membership?

EU - USA

1. Considering US protectionist policies on migration under the Trump administration and their consequences on the EU migration agenda, how should the common migration framework be (re)invented?

2. How can environmental incentives to the private sector in both the US and the EU help overcome further national mistrust regarding commitments to the environment?

3. NATO has been paralyzed on most grounds. Is NATO, a unique multilateral defense alliance, a lost cause for EU-US military cooperation?

CYBER SECURITY AND DEFENSE

1. How can Europe implement rules on jurisdiction in cyberspace at an international level to mitigate threats, maintain stability, and improve security in cyberspace?

2. To keep up with the never-ending battle of cybersecurity, how can Europe develop policies in order to maintain a leading position in the industry and to face the international competition?

3. How can Europe ensure the institutional cohesion needed in order to ensure an effective cyber defense policy, while maintaining a balance between not eroding individual national interests and meeting the wide security requirements?

EU - CHINA

1. Should the EU strive for more economic connectivity (e.g. through the BRI) or take a rather protectionist approach in its relationship with China?

2. How can the EU leverage its unique diplomatic position as being a negotiator between the United States and China in their recent trade/political disputes?

3. Which strategic priorities should the EU pursue regarding the growing economic and political influence of China, both regionally and internationally?

ENVIRONMENT

1. What steps should the EU take to ensure that the targets set by the 2030 climate and energy framework (adopted by the European Council in October 2014 and revised in 2018) are met? How can this framework, as an exemplary initiative, be used to mobilize Europe's strategic partners towards adapting low-carbon emission policies?

2. In what ways can Europe work with its strategic partners to incentivize green business and circular economy?

3. What might be the challenges of collaborating with strategic partners in the way of obtaining effective results? What strategy should Europe follow in instituting future partnerships and improving the current ones?

EU ENLARGEMENT

1. Can the next phase of enlargement happen without a new equilibrium on the meaning of values and rule of law within the EU? What are the ways to combat Euroscepticism and forces of disintegration when it comes to EU enlargement policy?

2. How can the EU ensure fairness and equality of the reform process for all candidate states? Can the enlargement process be reformed in order to recognize the transformation that Central and Eastern Europe had to undergo to join the EU while also recognizing future Members as truly equal?

3. What are the different scenarios for enlargement (scenario building)? To what extent is Wider Europe concept feasible particularly for the associated countries?

DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET AND INTERNET GOVERNANCE

1. How can the EU successfully and efficiently navigate the digital single market? As the influence of tech giants grows, what responsibilities do the Commission and EP have to safeguard competition? How can they adapt traditional competition and antitrust regulation to this relatively new and rapidly evolving arena where the services are costless but paid for with personal data?

2. How can Europe best shape and harness the economic and informational benefits? How can we incentivize integration of new-generation technologies in industry to better-innovate and become more efficient? How can EU policy adapt labor market and education systems to the needs of the digital market?

3. How can Europe regulate potential misuses of technology that threaten liberal democracy? How can Europe continue to promote user privacy and bolster cybersecurity? Is there room for directives that standardize the rules governing online discourse? Looking at past examples of election interference, how can we minimize the use of personal data and misinformation by political and state actors to affect change in public discourse?
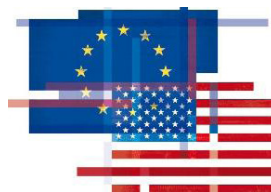
OUTCOME

Before the conference, students in groups will discuss their policy ideas for the themes of their respective workshops and formulate them into policy-papers.

At the conference, students will present their policy papers to one another, as well as to the decision-makers and professors. During the workshops, they will exchange ideas and engage in common discussion with other participants in order to refine their policy solutions. The solutions will have a very concrete, structured form, assigning each step of the process to relevant authorities to further underline the plausibility of the solution framework. They will present the final versions of the policy-papers during the final presentation session on day two of the conference. In addition, the list of actions that can be taken on an individual level will be shared with all participants of the conference, to inspire everyone to make an impact on multiple issues with their actions.

After the conference, the students will go back to their respective universities and share their policy ideas for the future of the Union and the vision for transatlantic relations with their university communities. Each chapter, whose members attended the conference, will be responsible for writing a short response on why the given problem is significant to us, the youth, and how effectively the solutions tackle this issue.

This conference is organized in partnership with the European Parliament Liaison Office with the U.S. Congress, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, as well as the Yale MacMillian Center. Additionally, this event is funded in part by the European Union.

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esc 2020 program

Day 1: Thursday, April 16

TIME	ACTIVITY
19.00–21.00	Evening welcome reception for student participants. Guest Experts already in town are warmly invited to attend.

Day 2: Friday, April 17

TIME	ACTIVITY
9.00–10.00	Welcome, registration, breakfast
10.00–11.00	Opening plenary and welcoming speeches
11.00–12.00	Panel #1: Transatlantic Connections
12.00–13.00	Lunch
13.00–14.30	FIRST WORKSHOP SESSIONS
14:30–15.00	Coffee break
15.00–16.00	Panel #2: Environmental Policy
16.00–19.00	SECOND WORKSHOP SESSIONS
20.00	Dinner Event for VIP Guests

Day 3: Saturday, April 18

TIME	ACTIVITY
9.00–10.00	Breakfast
10:00–11:30	Panel #3: The Growing Union
11:30–13:30	THIRD WORKSHOP SESSIONS
13.30–14.30	Lunch
14:30–15:00	European Horizons Presentation
15:00–16:30	Presentation of final policy papers
16:30–17:30	Closing plenary, farewell speeches

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