



YOUR VOICE OUR 2030

Messages from young people on their
most pressing concerns

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This report is dedicated to the thousands of young people that took time to share their stories with us. We received 2360 messages from young people across 56 countries. While each of them is very personal, this report aims to highlight the widespread issues that young people are facing today.

CONTEXT & PURPOSE

This report is part of a campaign run by the Youth Panel of the European Youth Card Association (EYCA). Called “Your voice, our 2030”, this campaign aimed to collect the messages directly from young people across Europe on the issues that really matter to them. Several studies have been published on the needs of young people, but our approach is to complement them with actual stories from young people.

Why now? The European Union is currently shaping policies that will define the next decade: the future EU budget, the next EU Youth Strategy, initiatives on housing and broader socio-economic priorities. At a moment when vitally important, long-term decisions are being made, it is imperative that they consider the lived realities of young people today.

In total, more than 2030 young people sent in their messages* painting a vivid, personal picture of the realities they are facing. By analysing these qualitative responses, this report aims to accurately honour the voices and stories of young people in Europe. It has the benefit of easily enabling the participation of non-organised youth and offering a medium for young people to voice their concerns in an open and unconventional way.

Messages were collected via an online form, shared widely with schools, networks, youth groups and others youth communities. This outreach took place alongside several in-person actions organised by the EYCA Youth Panel members with small groups of non-organised youth.

Analysing responses was a considerable task, given the wealth of information and personal tone of the stories collected. While this report aims to best reflect the qualitative angle of the contributions, it was necessary to organise them according to overarching themes in order to highlight the issues most relevant to young people. As such, each message was given up to 5 tags from a list of broad themes. This allowed for the most important themes to be understood while also noting the diversity of the messages according to how the themes crossed with one another.

THE THEMES WE IDENTIFIED

Economic Precarity

Housing Challenges

Job Market Barriers

Education & Skills Pathways

Administrative & Institutional Barriers

Life Direction & Future Outlook

Work Conditions & Work–Life Balance

Discrimination & Inequality

Migration & Integration Challenges

Social Connections & Support

Health & Wellbeing

Civic & Political Concerns

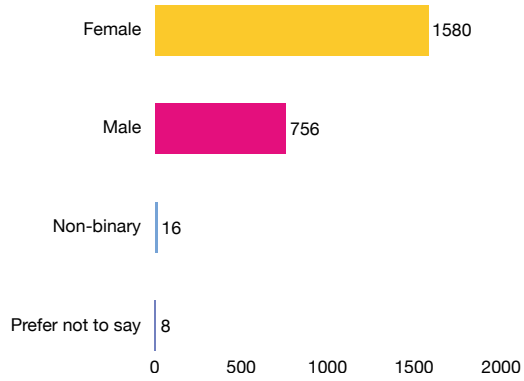
Sustainability & Environment

With this report, the EYCA Youth Panel hopes to highlight the voices of young people across Europe to showcase what the main issues of relevance to young people are today, how the different challenges relate to each other and what solutions could be implemented to best address young people’s needs.

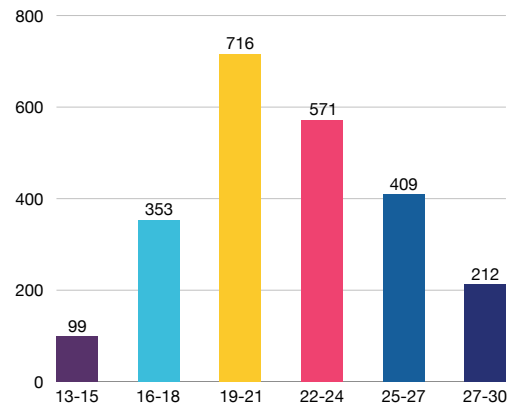
* 2360 messages were received from 56 countries, to be exact.

A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE WHO SHARED MESSAGES

GENDER

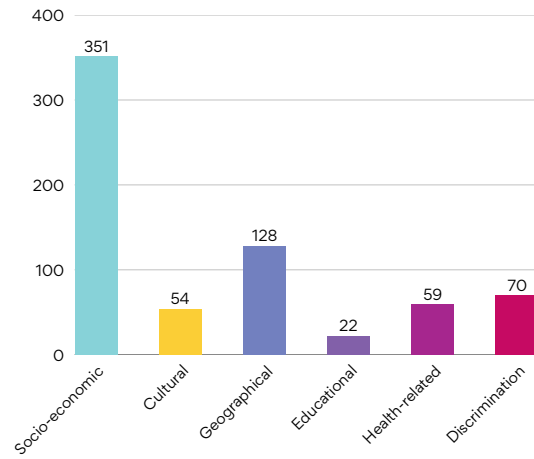


AGE

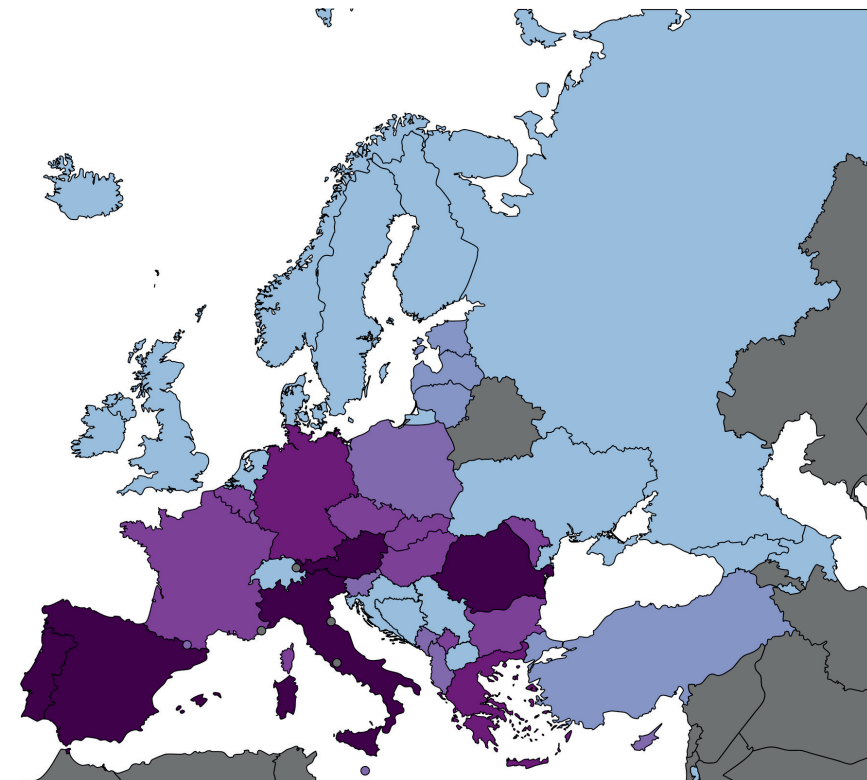
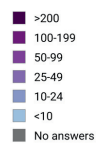


2360
messages

BARRIERS



COUNTRIES



KEY FINDINGS

Through a bird's-eye view analysis of the responses, several themes were uncovered, including Economic Precarity, Health and Wellbeing, and Life Direction and Future Outlook. After exploring these themes in further depth, it became clear that they were closely intertwined with each other. Individual themes could not be explored in isolation, as they were both driving forces and consequences of each other.

As a result of this, the key findings of this report have emerged by synthesis of these themes, resulting into six intersecting chapters each exploring challenges experienced by Europe's youth today:

1. Jobs, Education, Affordability and Independence
2. Economic Instability and Housing
3. Loneliness and Integrating in Communities
4. Introduction to Adulthood: Pressure, Uncertainty and Mental Health
5. Collective struggles: Civic Rights & Sustainability
6. Barriers to Emancipation

These findings are borne out of the realities bravely faced by young people and their hopes and anxieties over the future.

The messages contained in this report have been anonymised through pseudonyms for privacy reasons. The countries and ages references remain unchanged.

1. Jobs, Education, Affordability and Independence

Employment is a central concern for young people, defined by a struggle for stability and fairness. Many face a difficult entry into the labor market, characterised by low wages, income insecurity and a disconnect between their education and available roles. This makes long-term financial planning nearly impossible.

Beyond just finding a job, the **quality of employment** is a major issue. Concerns include exploitative work conditions, unfair recruitment and a lack of support when transitioning from school to work. For those already employed, high workloads and unstable contracts frequently lead to burnout and a poor work-life balance. Youth are seeking more than just a paycheck – they are **looking for security, meritocracy and a foundation for a stable future.**

General affordability issues and limited social protection or financial support were described as sources of daily stress, shaping choices around education, career steps and personal development. Housing represented a particularly visible dimension, with challenges related to affordability and access as well as **overcrowded or inadequate living conditions** affecting comfort, wellbeing and the ability to focus on work or studies.

These constraints also limit mobility – many young people miss out on training or studying abroad due to the **high costs of travel and accommodation**. Furthermore, **complex bureaucracy** makes it difficult to access support systems such as healthcare and housing benefits meant to help them. These financial barriers do more than limit spending, as they restrict where young people can live and which opportunities they can realistically pursue, undermining their confidence in the future.

For many young people, education feels less like a bridge to the future and more like a series of mounting hurdles. The feeling that years of academic study have left them **unprepared for the specific demands of today's job market**, together with a lack of guidance, resulting in many young people navigating the leap from classroom to career entirely alone.

Beyond the curriculum, the journey is defined by a widening divide in access. Focusing solely on one's studies is often reserved for those with safety nets, while others, particularly students with disabilities, must **battle systemic and physical barriers** that turn simple learning into a test of pure endurance. Instead of a period of discovery and growth, education has become a high-stakes race fueled by the fear of failure and the weight of financial insecurity, leading many to hit burnout before their professional lives have even begun.

“Food prices rise annually, as do rent and utilities. Without parental financial support, I must survive and exhaust myself to make ends meet (...) it's harsh for students escaping abusive families. I left my small hometown for a better future, but Tallinn isn't much better, and things are worse at home: Narva has the highest heating costs now, and I worry daily about my mom managing on her low unemployment benefits and dwindling savings.”

Anna, 21 from Estonia

Independence is described as an uncertain, gradual process rather than a single milestone. Many young people feel lost or lack a clear direction, struggling with life planning due to the immense **structural pressures** of a difficult job market and financial instability.

The social context further complicates this journey, as **family expectations and caregiving responsibilities** can often limit personal autonomy. Consequently, "delayed adulthood" has become a common theme, with milestones such as moving out or starting a household being postponed indefinitely. Independence is shaped less by individual choice and more by the prevailing economic conditions and the accessibility of opportunities.

“I had to move back to my parents' house; I lost my place because I got laid off. Going back at 27 is really hard and I feel awful. It's frustrating because I feel like I've lost my independence and I'm not building my life the way I want to.”

Alessandra, 27 from Italy

2. Economic Instability and Housing

Though there was not a particular geographic focus of answers in terms of respondent countries, many messages from participants experiencing concerns over the economy and housing came from rural areas. The poor or **nonexistent transport infrastructure** typically found in rural areas was highlighted as a challenge for accessing employment, education and other opportunities:

“It is very difficult to get to work in a rural area because there are hardly any buses, so I wouldn’t be able to get to my job if I couldn’t drive, but petrol and insurance are expensive. I would then go to work to pay for the journey to work.”

Gizem, 18 from Germany

Rural youth experience economic difficulties in accessing work because they are often forced to rely on more expensive methods of transport and access to travel to workplaces, or have to settle for lower paying jobs which they are overqualified for, as this is all that is available in their local areas. This highlights the disparity between youth living in urban and rural areas in terms of economic difficulties.

Some rural youth are instead pushed away from their home environments and **drawn towards major cities** to access education or employment opportunities. This introduces specific challenges which young people who grew up in urban environments are not forced to grapple with.

“I am a university student. During the degree, I had to commute daily to Barcelona, since I could not afford an apartment near the university, which meant almost 2 hours of transport each way to attend 3 hours of class.”

Julia, 22 from Spain

In order to access expensive housing, young people are forced to juggle various responsibilities to make ends meet, with home-ownership still remaining a seemingly impossible goal. This is particularly true for those living in desirable areas, such as major cities, where young people are being priced out of environments they have grown up in. **Accommodation costs have risen significantly**, though not in line with average pay.

This disparity between income and housing costs has led to young people making great sacrifices to afford basic life functions, with many experiencing delayed independence.

“The prices of flats and rents skyrocketed in the last 5 years and for a lot of young people it won't be possible to afford it. Friends moved out from the capital to other small cities around, because even with a loan they can't afford it”

Klara, 25 from Czech Republic

In this respect, young people across Europe are forced to become **more dependent on their families** due to the inaccessibility of housing for their demographic.

Economic instability has thus affected the independence of young people, causing them to be both reliant on and reliable to their families economically. Economic dependence is a frequently recurring theme, not only in terms of housing but also for monetary support through studies and unpaid or poorly paid work. This has led to many young people feeling a sense of **delayed independence**.

“[I] Still have to live with my parents while saving up for the apartment. Unfortunately, apartment prices are rising faster than my income, therefore, I am having less purchasing power now than a year ago.”

Ieva, 27 from Lithuania

Other respondents also described **pressure** they felt to support their families financially during difficult economic periods. Thus, economic challenges that young people are facing, including difficulties in accessing housing, has a profound impact on their wellbeing, causing anxiety and feelings of instability. It therefore intersects with many of the other worries young people hold discussed in this report.

“I am currently the main breadwinner of my family.”

Theodora, 21 from Greece

3. Loneliness and Community Integration

Another recurring theme is the feeling of loneliness or the difficulty in integrating a community. A high number of stories coming from 34 countries mentioned this when explaining the most pressing issue they face in their personal stories.

Being **part of a peer network is a crucial** element of one's personal growth and a precious source of resilience and mutual support in times of struggle. Becoming an adult is a complex process, bringing significant **changes in daily life** and often also a change of surroundings. In this context, many young people feel lonely when faced with these challenges and struggle to find a wider collective space where they can position themselves.

“I feel that one's life path loses meaning, what is the meaning of being ambitious if then there isn't a community or someone with whom to share the results?”

Antonio, 26 from Italy

The wish for a stronger sense of belonging often intertwines with other concerns that young people feel. Work and study commitments are intensified by **high pressure** felt by young people **to perform highly**, making it difficult to spare time for social gatherings or events. This is exacerbated by the rising cost of living, as social events and activities can often be expensive.

Demographic factors are also influential in driving social exclusion. Young people from **migrant backgrounds** or with **queer identities** frequently reported difficulties in accessing and integrating into communities due to persisting social stigmas.

Many young people move abroad to pursue their studies, find new employment opportunities, or even to avoid a danger in their home country. The process of settling in, however, can be challenging. Many respondents have expressed **fears over feeling lonely in a new country**, with no clear way to meet new people. A lack of belonging appears to be a challenge for all young people, however it is a particular challenge for those who have chosen to move abroad, with detrimental effects on their mental health.

SHARED SPACES OF COMMUNITY

Young people are also struggling to find shared places where they can feel part of a community. Geographic constraints often mean places are not present or, in other instances, are present but may not feel safe or accessible. Some respondents reported feeling that there are no opportunities easily accessible without undertaking significant financial burdens.

To cultivate community spaces, universities and educational institutions could play a significant role in fostering a sense of community. More widely, attention from local, national and pan-European policymakers is crucial to address this issue.

4. Introduction to Adulthood: Pressure, Uncertainty and Mental Health

In a world marked by economic, climate, social and geopolitical instability, many young people find themselves constantly thinking about what lies ahead. What are their main personal concerns, and how does the state of the world today affect the mental health of those who will shape the world of tomorrow?

The transition into **adulthood** is a complex and demanding process. Many young people question the direction their lives are taking while trying to choose the right degree, country or purpose. At the same time, **expectations appear to be increasing**, leaving many with the feeling of constantly running to catch a train that sometimes seems to be moving faster than they are.

“Transitioning to the next stage in life that involves finding a job, moving on my own and finding a partner, all while trying to explore as much of the world as possible.”

Marko, 26 from Slovenia

More than half of the respondents reflected on their life direction and the impact this has on their health and wellbeing. The findings reveal a strong **overlap between structural uncertainty** (education, employment, adulthood) and **emotional distress** (stress, anxiety, loss of motivation).

The weight of these transitions has clear implications for mental health. **Stress and anxiety over the future** were the most frequently reported concerns, followed by loss of motivation or hopelessness and emotional overload. These trends suggest that uncertainty is not occasional, but persistent, **affecting study, work and personal relationships**. Social media and a global trend of comparing ourselves to others has exacerbated this issue, to a level that was not the case for previous generations.

Beyond individual challenges, respondents also express frustration with **political instability** and **recurring crisis**, which contribute to a sense of constant alert and concern about the future. Climate and political uncertainty reinforce the feeling that young people are expected to address and solve long-term systemic problems, often **without sufficient institutional support**.

“I am not sure what ‘bomb’ of news will come tomorrow.”

Dorota, 22 from Slovakia

While physical health issues and access to healthcare are mentioned less often, this may reflect barriers to access or the normalisation of unmet needs rather than a lack of concern. The scale of reported mental health distress points to a **gap between needs and available support**.

At the same time, **EU mobility opportunities such as Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps are widely described as empowering experiences** that foster intercultural understanding and personal growth during formative years. These experiences highlight the importance of a strong European framework that supports youth mobility while addressing young people’s need for stability and security.

“(…) in times like these we need a strong EU that promotes our cohesion and enables young people to have experiences like the ones [through Erasmus+] I was able to have.”

Melanie, 19 from Germany

5. Collective Struggles: Civic Rights & Sustainability

While other issues have a more clear individual impact, **sustainability and civic rights concerns reflect a collective challenge**. Protests led by young people calling for justice, transparency, and independent institutions are an example of young people's civic engagement. As some messages highlight, these movements have brought people together, creating a sense of community. Yet, **long-term formal participation structures**, such as youth councils at local and national levels, often **lack real influence** and are reduced to tokenistic gestures. At the same time, limited access to funding, spaces and opportunities further deepens inequalities.

There is also concern over the **growth of extreme and exclusionary narratives**, since general precariousness and widening social disparities foster frustration and make such narratives more appealing, fueled by misinformation. These issues go beyond European borders as part of a global context, marked by instability which has led to declining trust in multilateral cooperation.

PROPOSALS & GOOD PRACTICES

To address these challenges, one respondent suggested investing in civic and ethical education from an early age to strengthen society's capacity to engage critically and constructively. Solidarity projects and Erasmus+ mobility schemes are highlighted as important tools to develop skills of active citizenship and tolerance.

Sustainability concerns have shown a similarly collective nature. While individuals can adopt environmentally conscious habits, young people believe that meaningful impact depends on **coherent public policy, corporate accountability, and infrastructure investment**. When environmental commitments are not matched by concrete action, trust in institutions erodes further.

The call for greener, healthier, and more resilient cities reflects both environmental and social priorities; **reliable public transport**, for example, reduces emissions while connecting remote areas to education, employment, and essential services. Young citizens also rely on their institutions to ensure food safety and accessibility.

Advancing climate action, strengthening democracy and promoting social equality must therefore be approached through **common lenses** in order to rebuild public confidence and ensure inclusive development.

“Climate change should still be addressed, but suddenly no one cares anymore. Global warming is destroying our planet, livestock farming and artificial intelligence should be discussed! These are the main reasons why our planet is dying and no one is talking about!”

Inês, 20 from Portugal

6. Barriers to Emancipation

The messages received through the Your Voice, Our 2030 campaign reveal **clear and consistent patterns** in the challenges young Europeans face when trying to build independent lives. Across responses, barriers linked to **entering the job market, health and wellbeing and economic precarity emerge most prominently**. Other prevalent themes were income insecurity, stress and anxiety and challenges in balancing work, study and personal life, highlighting how economic and emotional pressures intertwine in the path towards independence.

“With agreements made to introduce a minimum wage at European level, where are internships positioned?”

Lina, 26 from Sweden

Challenges experienced by young people differ according to the barriers they are faced with. For many that experience discrimination relating to factors such as sexual orientation or religion, concerns related to inequality become more prominent obstacles. Among those facing educational barriers, issues around work conditions and work-life balance gain greater importance. Cultural or geographical barriers, including lived experience of migration or rural living, bring affordability concerns more strongly to the forefront.

“For them, my religion defines my origin... since I was little I have heard phrases that hurt more than they seem: ‘Where are you *really* from?’ ‘Go back to your country.’ ”

Juan, 15 from Spain

Despite these variations, the overall picture remains consistent: structural barriers related to employment, financial security and well-being continue to shape young people’s emancipation and transition into independent adulthood.

“I am grateful to be an EU citizen, but there is still much to be done: housing, internship regulation, job access, transfer of social rights.”

Klara, 16 from Sweden

Effective decision-making would entail taking these barrier into account and thoroughly listening young people’s concerns in order to improve the lives of every European. Policy-makers should collaborate across different levels of power (European, national and local) to establish where action can be taken more systematically to address these inequalities.

SOME STORIES WE WANT TO HIGHLIGHT

Julia, 23 from Austria

“My dreams are above all described by the words freedom and peace. I wish for a situation in which I can freely follow my feelings and wishes, and not feel restricted or prevented by my external environment from implementing my dreams and ideas.”

Federica, 27 from Italy

“I had to move back to my parents’ house; I lost my place because I got laid off. Going back at 27 is really hard, and I feel awful. It’s frustrating because I feel like I’ve lost my independence and I’m not building my life the way I want to.”

Tomas, 30 from Lithuania

“Many young people across Europe, especially those with migrant backgrounds or from disadvantaged regions, often feel socially isolated. Even when opportunities exist, there’s a gap in communication, cultural understanding, or support systems that prevents them from fully participating. This sense of exclusion affects their mental health, motivation, and ability to contribute actively to society. There’s a growing need for more inclusive programs, language-accessible resources, and better integration support across European communities.”

Hannah, 20 from Germany

“Rising prices and seemingly dwindling opportunities make it harder for me to plan and shape my future life. Missing resources and crumbling infrastructure pose ever greater problems in actually taking advantage of the opportunities that exist. [...] There is also a lack of free or low-cost third places where you can meet friends casually. That strains my friendships, reinforcing the feeling of loneliness. If the real fears of the new generation are truly heard and taken seriously and effective measures are implemented, the new generation might be able to look to the future again with a bit of hope.”

Olivia, 19 from Belgium

“Finding balance as a student is hard. You face constant pressure from studies, work, and social expectations, often feeling like you’re falling short despite putting in so much effort. You try to stay cheerful with friends, work enough to cover daily expenses, and still meet everyone’s expectations.

At the same time, you want space for the things that truly matter to you, like volunteering with children, even though finding time for it is becoming harder. It brings real joy and purpose, yet there’s rarely room left for genuine rest-time without pressure, obligations, or guilt. Managing all of this mentally, academically, and financially without losing yourself is a real challenge.”

Gabriel, 19 from Portugal

“[Having an autoimmune disease] affects my life because to keep the disease under control I can’t take certain vaccines, which prevents me from going to some countries, and it also means I have to have monthly medical treatment [...].”

Maria, 28 from Romania

“I feel disappointed that even though I managed to finish higher education and worked very hard for it, it does not help me get a job in the EU, there are lots of job postings in my field but I always get rejected even though my CV is good. My current job is not paid well enough for me to be able to cover rent, necessities and to be able to travel to my hometown from time to time to see my family and spend time with them, because if I do, then I’m not able to afford to pay my bills and medical treatments. My medical treatments are not covered by insurance and they take up to half my paycheck. I wish there were more opportunities and that employees hire people with multiple degrees. Almost all my friends are in the same situation, which is depressing. I also wish I could be able to buy an apartment instead of renting it.”

Sofia, 25 from Slovakia

“Challenges in life make me very stressed because I feel like I don’t have a safety net. That if I fail in something, it’s going to be my end (money, opportunities...) Also at times I feel inescapably lonely, as if I’m all alone for all the situations and changes life brings.”

Anna, 21 from Estonia

“Food becomes more expensive as the years go by, and so does the rent, utilities, etc. As a student without any parental monetary support, I need to practically survive and burn myself out to get by. And that’s only because my mum is not working – if she did, I wouldn’t be getting anything at all from the government. It’s cruel for the students who ran away from abusive families. I got out of my small hometown hoping for a better future, but it doesn’t really get better in Tallinn, and it became even worse back at home: Narva has the highest heating tariffs right now, and I fear for my mom every day, anxious if she will get by on the low unemployment support she gets and the miniscule amount of savings she has left.”

Florian, 18 from Austria

“Young people [...] face [...] aggression or street violence. Being in the wrong place [...] can quickly turn into persistent harassment or open intimidation. [...] This becomes especially exhausting when you have a girlfriend, a sister, female friends (etc.). [Going] out in the evening should not be a calculated risk, yet [...] it has become exactly that. [...] Almost every friend I have has been assaulted at least once. [...] This reality deserves to be discussed [...] by acknowledging what people actually experience every day and asking why so many feel unsafe [...].”

All respondents' names have been anonymised through pseudonyms for privacy. However, their ages and countries remain accurate.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE YOUTH PANEL: OUR POINT OF VIEW

Jorren, 22 from Belgium

"This campaign was never meant to be a random survey. It was an effort to step outside the so-called EU bubble and genuinely listen to young people with lived experience, people who took the time and placed their trust in us, to share something deeply personal. They did so with the hope that their voices might help shape Europe's future.

Reading their responses was both moving and confronting. Each story carried its own weight, a reminder of why listening truly matters. Our responsibility now is to ensure these voices are not lost, to give them the amplifier they are asking for. Not to speak on their behalf, but to carry their words forward and make them heard."

Samuel, 23 from Italy

"I feel fortunate and grateful for the numerous responses this survey received. So many young people have decided to raise their voice and let us know that they have something to say and that they want to be heard. Let's not stop!"

Juhan, 27 from Estonia

"Reading the answers from people has been an emotional rollercoaster. Sometimes it brings a smile to your face that people are not alone, the problems they have, they share with others all over the continent, if they only knew... But a LOT of the stories were moving in a way that made you stare at the screen and hoping that typing things out and knowing that someone has read your thoughts has brought these people some solace."

Mallikarjun, 27 from Germany

"I am the voice of a generation born between ashes and hope, yet still believing that change is possible'. This line from one of the responses stayed with me because it reflects the reality of many who were denied rights in their homeland and forced to rebuild life elsewhere. What moves me most is how some do not just adapt, but choose to become voices and advocates for the very freedoms they once lived without."

Joana, 27 from Portugal

"I do believe that the power to tell each one of these stories was the real magic behind this survey, as we were able to turn all this data in more than just numbers – each one of us has a different story to tell, and everyone had a space for that here!"

Vincent, 21 from Austria

"The stories we received pierced my heart, they were raw, intimately personal, brimming with profound pain that left me questioning: Why such depth? We invited these narratives, but are we truly equipped to hold space for such overwhelming hurt and vulnerability? Yet, these tales revealed a heartbreaking truth young people so often lack a safe haven to unburden their souls: a listener who is approachable, anonymous, and truly present, making them feel seen and valued. Creating this digital sanctuary fills me with immense pride! It fueled my passion from day one and drives me still to safeguard every voice, every lived reality, every destiny from fading into silence."

Orjana, 23 from Albania

"I am deeply moved by the stories shared by these young people. It is clear that we face similar struggles, and these shared anxieties are what truly connect us. It breaks my heart to see so many 'lost' in the stress of surviving this economy and the weight of professional unfulfillment. Many are so consumed by meeting their basic needs that they no longer have the energy to reach for more. It is painful to see a generation become so demoralised by these barriers. Yet, I still see hope; I see people who desire change and who will one day be that change for themselves and for Europe."

Andreea, 23 from Romania

"When this campaign began, I thought the stories we would receive would reflect experiences we already hear in everyday conversations.

Instead, I was deeply moved by how unique and diverse each response was, revealing that many young people face complex challenges far beyond what we usually notice in daily life. This experience reminded me that behind every answer is a real person with their own struggles, encouraging us to be more empathetic, less judgmental, and more supportive of one another.

So many stories truly touched me, and I sincerely wish the best for everyone who shared their voice. Most importantly, this campaign shows why we must not lose hope. We created it to be heard, to raise awareness, and to stand united so that more people understand these realities and together we can push for change."

Laura, 26 from Spain

"Thanks to everyone who so generously shared their concerns with us. The messages we received show that it doesn't matter whether you're a student in high school or a young adult striving for independence, we all share a feeling of uncertainty about our dreamed future. The system is not meeting the expectations once created. For this reason, more than ever, it is important to take care of our friends, communities and support networks, as individual solutions will never fix collective struggles."

Caitie, 23 from Scotland

"What struck me the most about the responses from Your Voice, Our 2030 was the way that so many young people are seriously concerned about fundamentally basic aspects of life. Education, employment, citizenship, healthcare, a roof over ones head; the status quo is not fit for purpose or delivering a fair deal for young people. This report does not only highlight stories, but genuine lived realities whose voices deserve consideration. Europe's youth are not looking for luxury, but begging for necessities."

LOOKING FORWARD

From the start, this campaign was different in format and purpose, and aimed to give a voice to **grassroots communities** of young people. Giving them a platform to tell their stories and highlight the most pressing issues that are affecting them at the moment is not something typically seen in other policy-shaping initiatives.

Through storytelling, this report has shown the wide variety of issues that young people face, but also the common intensity these challenges have on their daily lives. From this come three key takeaways to inspire future action and research:

1. **Using storytelling to listen to young people.** The depth and passion with which young people spoke of their challenges shows the all-encompassing and overwhelming nature of them. Facts and figures can only say so much, but really listening to citizens paints a deeper picture of what is of concern.
2. **Using storytelling to shape policies.** For the most part, the issues raised by this campaign are not new. Yet with many young citizens around Europe still highlighting them as the most pressing challenges in their daily lives, it is clear that no lasting solution has yet been found. Such campaigns highlight this.
3. **Using storytelling to empower other young people.** The feeling of loneliness and powerlessness is very prominent in the messages received through this report. By sharing personal yet common experiences, young people can overcome that feeling, thus inspiring each other to stand up for change.

Above all, the hope is that these stories will encourage decision-makers on the European and national level to better take young people's needs in mind when establishing their structural policies.

TOP TEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ANYONE SHAPING YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

- Young people should be empowered with high-quality education on critical and ethical thinking.
- All young people should have access to current, realistic information about job market and labour rights through mentorship programmes to help transition into employment.
- All qualifications and degrees, including vocational training, should be recognised, valued and accessible across borders.
- Prioritise stable, fairly compensated work for young people and ban exploitative, unpaid and unfair work programmes and contracts.
- Conciliation measures at workplaces should be introduced for young people.
- Simplify bureaucracy for young people, by improving institutional transparency and communicating complex information in youth-friendly ways.
- Spaces built by and for young people should be supported through funding youth centres and youth-led initiatives.
- Meaningful participation of young people in policy processes must be ensured to eliminate tokenism.
- Price caps and speculation control on housing should be introduced specifically for young people.
- Simplify access to affordable physical and mental health support, while banning discrimination in professional environments of those accessing mental health support.

In short, young people are calling for a 'New Social Contract' where education is practical, work is stable and paid and the state provides a safety net that protects mental health and equality regardless of a person's background.



Messages collected and analysed by the EYCA Youth Panel from November 2025 to February 2026.

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