European Young Leaders
Bold leadership, ground-breaking ideas, unparalleled passion – the European Young Leaders are one of a kind and represent a wide variety of sectors including politics, business, civil society, academia, arts, science and the media.

For almost a decade the European Young Leaders programme has brought together the brightest minds and outside the box leaders to put their innovative thinking to work at building a more forward-thinking Europe that is a global champion for a better world.

The European Young Leaders represent a new generation of leaders, able to think innovatively in order to tackle the increasing disconnects between citizens and political elites, rebuilding the trust that is vital to democracies. They are selected from promising, established leaders from across the continent, with a wide variety of backgrounds including: politics, business, civil society, academia, arts, science, and the media.

“The European Young Leaders are already starting to shoulder the burden of pulling the European Union out of the deep crisis it finds itself in and will become ever more important in providing a positive vision for the EU”

Sony Kapoor, Managing Director of Re-Define and Senior Visiting Fellow at the London School of Economics and 2014 European Young Leader
OVERVIEW

The European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme, led by Friends of Europe, is a unique, inventive and multi-stakeholder programme that aims to promote a European identity by engaging the continent’s most promising talents in initiatives that aim to shape Europe’s future.

The EYL40 programme was launched in 2012, harnessing the talents of 40 of the brightest 40-and-under minds to debate challenges facing the continent. The Young Leaders represent promising European leadership from all over the continent, with a wide variety of backgrounds including politics, business, civil society, academia, arts, science and the media.

Every year, the new class of European Young Leaders is invited to meet during two 3-day seminars that take place in symbolic European cities. They are joined by the alumni of the programme, together with decision-makers, stakeholders and key European actors, to discuss issues of common concern and develop concrete proposals and recommendations to tackle the challenges facing Europe and its citizens.

The relaxed tone and out-of-the-box nature of the European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme have brought about salient and open discussions that have facilitated the development of a strong network of committed Europeans.
The European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme provides a fresh and unique opportunity to harness the untapped potential and passion of a diverse group of young citizens whose joint mission is to make the difference in Europe and beyond. Regardless of what you think about the EU, the EYLs demonstrate every year that bottom-up Europe not only exists but also works”

Alberto Alemanno, Jean Monnet Professor of European Law at HEC Paris and Founder of eLabEurope and 2014 European Young Leader

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the European Young Leaders programme are:

- To connect established young leaders to one another, building bonds across nationalities, areas of work and political outlooks
- To enable young leaders to engage directly with leaders and decision makers across Europe and beyond to gain an appreciation of leadership constraints, policy and delivery challenges
- To stimulate change through a network of young leaders to devise, develop and implement thoughtful and creative responses to challenges facing Europe.
- To foster and build a community of young leaders with a passion and commitment for Europe that offers leadership and inspiration to young people across the continent
- To stimulate promising young talent to engage in politics by providing them with the tools (network, leadership development and knowledge) to become active and influential European citizens
**SELECTION PROCESS OVERVIEW**

The European Young Leaders are carefully selected by a selection committee chaired by a senior European personality and made up of alumni of the European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme, foundation representatives and trustees of Friends of Europe.

The selection criteria for nominees are: under 40 years of age; have proven track records as established thought leaders in their fields of activity; have reached or are on track to reaching the highest ranks of their field of expertise.

**A LASTING IMPACT ON THE EUROPEAN STAGE**

From trailblazing biochemists to budding political leaders, and dot.com entrepreneurs to NGO ‘stars’ who are shaping the social and environmental policies of tomorrow, the European Young Leaders are a unique community that crafts innovative responses to European challenges and positively affects the lives of future generations.

They form a powerful and tightly-knit group that meets each year for two seminars hosted in cities across Europe where they engage with leading European figures.

From two meetings a year to a year-round engagement, this programme also turns ideas into actions. That means ongoing interactions between young leaders, alumni and outside participants to boost innovative ideas and have a bigger impact on the European stage by forwarding projects that matter to the community.

**A STRONG NETWORK OF ALUMNI**

The European Young Leaders now represent a network of 250+ alumni who are constantly in touch with each other through social media. They form hubs in several European cities and develop concrete and multi-stakeholder projects that matter to the community. They are also involved in working groups, allowing their input from afar into the topics and projects of their choice based on their availability and interest.

They regularly interact on our online platform Debating Europe with its 4.3 million strong community of citizens and contribute insightful articles to our policy journal Europe’s World.
THEY HAVE ENGAGED WITH OUR YOUNG LEADERS:

Laurence Tubiana, CEO European Climate Foundation (ECF)
Geoff Mulgan, CEO Nesta
Isabelle Durant, Vice President of the European Parliament (2009-2014)
Cristina Gallach, High Commissioner for the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Spain

Nicolas Henin, Journalist, former ISIS Hostage and Author of ‘Jihad Academy’
Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of Portugal

Taavi Roivas, Vice-President of the Estonian Parliament and Prime Minister of Estonia (2014-2016)
Zanny Minton Beddoes, Editor-in-chief of The Economist
Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council (2009-2014)
Vera Jourová, European Commission Vice-President for Values and Transparency
"Being a European Young Leader means more than just a title! This programme emphasizes leadership, results, academic background and character. This network has empowered me to dare more, to stand and speak up on behalf of Europe and all the opportunities and challenges we face. I am so ever thankful for this recognition and network"

Soulima Gourani,
Chief Executive Officer
of Capital Aid and 2014 European Young Leader

PROGRAMME EXPANSION

Faced with Europe’s migration crisis and the election of Donald Trump in the United States, Friends of Europe decided to expand the programme with Young Leaders from North America and from the Middle East and North Africa in 2017 to meet and discuss issues of common concern with their European counterparts.

The initiative was successful in promoting structural dialogue and fostering better mutual understanding between established leaders from the three regions, and the EYL40 programme is therefore continuing to seek ways to facilitate similar inter-regional dialogue as part of its ongoing work.

Friends of Europe is further extending the programme, this time with the inclusion of the Balkan region in the 2020 class, inviting Young Leaders from Western Balkan states currently on the path towards EU integration (Serbia, Kosovo*, Bosnia, Albania, North-Macedonia, Montenegro). In doing so, Friends of Europe aims to promote structural dialogue across the continent to foster better mutual understanding.

*References to Kosovo in this document are used without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UN Security Council resolution 1244/99 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

1. Xavier Damman, Founder of OpenCollective, Co-Founder of Storify and 2018 European Young Leader
2. Lindsey Nefesh-Clarke, Founder & President of Women’s Worldwide Web and 2012 European Young Leader
3. Mehdi Hasan, Award-winning journalist and political commentator, named one of the 500 Most Influential Muslims and 2017 European Young Leader
4. Joss Garman, UK Director of the European Climate Foundation and 2019 European Young Leader
5. Magid Magid, Member of European Parliament and 2019 European Young Leader
6. Viktoria Modesta, bionic pop artist, creative director, futurist and 2019 European Young Leader
7. Ricardo Baptista Leite, Member of the Portuguese Parliament and 2016 European Young Leader
8. Anne-Marie Imafidon, Co-Founder & CEO of Stemettes and 2018 European Young Leader
9. Eneko Atxa, Chef at three-Michelin-starred restaurant Azurmendi and 2017 European Young Leader
10. Marta Krupinska, Co-Founder of FreeUp & Azimo, Head of Google for Startups UK and 2019 European Young Leader
11. Jens Spahn, German Minister of Health and 2012 European Young Leader
12. Nasima Razmyar, Deputy Mayor of Helsinki and 2018 European Young Leader
13. Antónia Mészáros, Executive Director, UNICEF Hungary and 2014 European Young Leader
14. John Colisson, President & Co-Founder of Stripe and 2018 European Young Leader
15. The late Maria Vlachou, CEO of Fereikos-Helix, CEO of Maria Vlachou LTD and 2014 European Young Leader
16. Marko Pavic, Croatian Minister of Regional Development and EU Funds and 2019 European Young Leader
17. Kaja Kallas, Leader of Estonia’s winning liberal Reform party and 2017 European Young Leader
18. Jesse Klaver, Leader of the green party in The Netherlands and 2018 European Young Leader
OUR YOUNG LEADERS FROM EUROPE
“The European Young Leaders are inspirational, courageous, action-oriented individuals who commit both their time and talent to making Europe a better place – it’s an essential programme for Europe to reinvent itself”
Carl Bildt, Prime Minister of Sweden (1991-1994)

“Having been part of the programme myself, I can say that the European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme connects the work happening on the ground to discussion happening at the highest level”
Franziska Brantner, Member of the German Bundestag and Member of the European Parliament (2009-2013)

“The multi-stakeholder nature of Friends of Europe’s programme is helping to cover difficult conversations, such as how to address migration, get going at the European level and finding solutions collectively”
António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations

“European Young Leaders demonstrate courage of conviction – the reason why this programme is truly vital. These days it takes a lot of courage to face the public with a real European message”
Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council (2009-2014)

“What we need in Europe today [...] is political leaders with not only national but also European perspectives. Friends of Europe’s European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme makes this possible”
Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of Estonia (2006-2016)

“European Young Leaders should be encouraged to design and disseminate new ideas [...]. Europe’s political leadership needs inspiration and unconventional solutions to the challenges facing the EU and its member states. These solutions can come from Friends of Europe’s group of committed leaders”
Marietje Schaake, Member of the European Parliament (2014-2019)
Every year, European Young Leaders meet during two 3-day seminars in symbolic European cities, joined by decision-makers, stakeholders and key European actors. These two meetings kick-start a year-round engagement that turns ideas into actions.

ATHENS
BARCELONA
BERLIN
BRUSSELS
DUBLIN
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LONDON
MARSEILLE
PARIS
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TALLINN
VALLETTA
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Friends of Europe is a leading think-tank that connects people, stimulates debate and triggers change to create a more inclusive, sustainable and forward-looking Europe