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European Young Leaders — Zagreb Seminar

# Saving democracy from itself

EVENT REPORT



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 will shape Europe's future.

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# Saving democracy from itself

While Ukraine's resistance to Russia's invasion is spearheading Europe's defence against the external menace to freedom and democracy, the continent must remain alert to insidious internal threats.

Recent years have seen a surge in extremist politics and the consolidation of movements opposed to European integration and liberal democracy. April's elections in Hungary and France were just the latest examples of how polarised Europe's politics have become.

Against that background, European Young Leaders (EYL40) gathered in Zagreb for three days of passionate discussion on how to defend and strengthen democracy across the continent and beyond.

They focused their unique talents and diverse experience on ways to build a renewed social contract for Europe that revitalises relations between the public, private and social sectors.

They brainstormed on building a constructive alternative to polarised politics, and debated paths where the arts, media, civil society, education, technology and sport can come together to bolster Europe's hard-pressed democratic values. Few have any illusions over the size of the problem.

The largest war on the European continent since 1945 follows a quickfire succession of

shocks to its political, economic and social foundations: COVID-19, Brexit, refugee crises, financial collapse, recession, and, above all, the climate emergency. Globalisation and geopolitical realignment have left Europe's economy vulnerable to overstretched supply chains. The economic impact of Vladimir Putin's war will be immense for Europe and much of the world.

All this turbulence has left voters bemused. Some are angry, others drift to apathy, convinced that they can do little to effect change. Disorientation is accentuated by rapidly transforming media landscapes marked by opinion-shaping algorithms, fake news peddled by hostile powers or domestic demagogues, or platforms controlled by plutocrats with little to no accountability.

Still there are signs of hope. Europe reacted forcefully to Russia's aggression and (eventually) to COVID-19. The European Union has been armed with new financial powers and a wider healthcare mandate. NATO nations have - mostly - pulled together to stand with Ukraine.

Civil society has stepped up, as citizens united to support healthcare systems and vulnerable citizens through the pandemic, and again to send aid to Ukraine or welcome refugees fleeing the invasion. The EYL40s heard from their peers, including politicians seeking to make a difference, entrepreneurs wielding new technologies for the

benefit of citizens, and artists mobilising culture for the defence of freedom.

Held from 12-14 May in the Croatian capital of Zagreb, the EYL40 seminar marked the full resumption of the European Young Leaders' programme after more than two years of pandemic-imposed limitations. Celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2022, the European Young Leaders (EYL40) selects each year reputed leaders under the age of 40. Coming from a wide range of backgrounds, they also play an essential role of helping to reconnect people with politics, EYL40s represent an alternative infrastructure

of leadership, a new generation of leaders able to inspire action and generate change. Each year, Friends of Europe brings them together in a European capital to strengthen the network and discuss the most pressing issues of our times with each other, EYL40 alumni from previous years and invited experts.

The vitality of the discussion in Zagreb showed that the hiatus spurred on by COVID-19 did nothing to weaken the dynamism of the EYL40 project, generating an outflow of ideas that can shape our European future and underpin a democratic regeneration.

Looking ahead, the seminar produced a number of key ideas to be taken:

- Invest in the civil service: bureaucrats often get a bad rap, but maintaining the quality and quantity of civil servants is essential for healthcare, education, justice, security and other services;
- Develop a multi-stakeholder dialogue on principles to be applied in economic sanctions policy to ensure political, social or economic goals are met, while minimising adverse economic impacts for Europe;
- Reach out to young people who might be tempted to vote for extremist politics; seek to understand their motives and provide alternatives rather than marginalise them;
- Unblock the EU accession process for countries in the Western Balkans;
- Introduce a special tax for tech companies, the proceeds of which can be allocated to a fund that supports free and investigative media;
- Make the directors of social media companies personally responsible for abuses carried out on their networks;
- Build on the Constructive Politics initiative to make a real impact with the cohort of young MEPs set to come in with the 2024 European Parliament election.
- Lobby the EU for the rights for professional sportswomen across the continent, to end discrimination, ensure fair treatment and fair pay;

# Getting constructive on polarisation

On the opening day, the young leaders met with **Andrej Plenković**, Croatian Prime Minister. Their discussion ranged from the impact of the war to calls for an overhaul of the European Union's guiding treaty, but Plenković also zoomed in on the central theme of the seminar: saving European democracy.

He expressed deep concern that social media, falling educational standards and a sharp decline in the quality of political discourse were undermining democratic standards.

"We have political movements, totally destructive ... who gain the confidence of the voters," Plenković cautioned. "It's a threat to democracy, a serious threat. The only way to deal with it is with better and deeper education."

Debate throughout the seminar centred on countering that democratic decline. For example, constructive politics could be used as a pathway to overcome polarisation, and rethinking the roles of the private sector, media, education and the arts in building a



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**Andrej Plenković**, Croatian Prime Minister

renewed social contract can underpin Europe's democratic values.

Laying out the problem, **Alison Goldsworthy**, Founder and CEO at The Depolarization Project, author of *Poles Apart* and Advisor to the Conflict and Polarization Lab at Stanford University, explained how disagreements over political ideas and visions of society had evolved into “effective polarisation” where divisions run deeper and become more personal.

“The impact of polarisation on our democracies is very profound,” she warned. “Polarisation is a big issue. It's spilling over and it's getting worse.”

Taking April's French presidential election as a test case, **Nassira El Moaddem**, Journalist, Author and Presenter, Arrêt Sur Images and 2018 European



**Nassira El Moaddem**, Journalist, Author and Presenter, Arrêt Sur Images and 2018 European Young Leader (EYL40)



**Alison Goldsworthy**, Founder and CEO at The Depolarization Project and author of 'Poles Apart', Advisor to the Conflict and Polarization Lab at Stanford University

2018 EYL40, held President Emmanuel Macron responsible for creating and ‘playing with’ polarisation in order to gain advantage over opponents.

“Macron, and not only him, the political leaders in general in France play with fire, with this polarisation between far-right and left, and that is a concern for our democracy,” she asserted.

By recycling some of the traditional far-right discourse, Macron's campaign and mandate normalised and fed into extremism on one hand and apathy on the other, as voters are forced to choose candidates they dislike the least, rather than one they really support.

The EYL40s put forward a number of ideas to counter the problem.

**Talitha Muusse**, Chief Impact Officer at Bikverruimers – a training programme for young professionals in the Netherlands, Founder of Eneegieboot and 2022 EYL40, urged more outreach to understand why young people are alienated by mainstream politics and turn to the far-right; **Ricardo Baptista Leite**, Founder and President of UNITE, Member of the Portuguese National Parliament and 2015-2016 EYL40, called for greater efforts by moderate parties to attract quality leadership; and **Benjamina Karić**, Mayor of Sarajevo and 2022 EYL40, underscored the importance of promoting diversity, tolerance and multiculturalism.

Several participants recalled that a degree of polarisation is positive and warned that cosy consensus politics can also lead to voter disaffection.

“Polarisation is a key element of democracy. I do believe that it is important that we disagree,” contended **Nicolas Brien**, Chairman of the Management Board at EuraTechnologies and 2022 EYL40. “The problem is that, today, we agree too many times on too many things ... Let’s disagree, let’s clash.”

To fix problems afflicting European democracy, *Friends of Europe* launched a Constructive Politics initiative in 2021. Led by **Kirsten Brosbøl**, Founder and CEO at 2030beyond, former Danish minister for the environment and 2017 EYL40, it aims to arm new politicians with tools to be constructive representatives, helping them to serve their community, work together to solve the big problems of today and tomorrow, and ultimately build back citizens’ trust.

Brosbøl wants to overcome divisions and create conditions where politicians work together for the common good, rather than fixating on negative campaigning and backbiting. “We really need to learn new skills about how to avoid falling into the bad habits,” she said.

Far from attempting to erase political differences, the Constructive Politics initiative aims to return to a positive dialogue across parties and opinion, for policies that serve the public and society. To that end, *Friends of Europe* is designing a series of items including a ‘buddy network’ to unite kindred political spirits and an online platform for insights and ideas.

The Zagreb seminar also featured a special working group to thrash out ideas with the goal of forming a bootcamp for newly elected lawmakers in the 2024 European Parliament elections. The bootcamps, designed by *Friends of Europe* and leading EYL40s of the Constructive Politics project, will be tailored to newly elected parliamentarians across Europe, to give them the necessary tools to wade into often unconstructive environment and construct, with the willing, a constructive political dialogue. These bootcamps will also be open to more seasoned and willing parliamentarians and followed by refreshers, in the hope of becoming a staple for policymakers across Europe.



John S. Latsis  
Public Benefit Foundation

The John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation was established in 2005 with a mission of continuing the philanthropic legacy of the late Greek entrepreneur John S. Latsis and his dedication to societal development, with a particular focus on his homeland, Greece. Since its establishment, the Foundation has sought to, on the one hand, address current pressing social challenges and, on the other hand, implement initiatives committed to creating a society of equal opportunities, meritocracy and progress. Within this framework of operation, the Foundation both designs and manages its annual targeted programs and provides grants to nonprofit organisations, across a wide range of fields including education & skills, innovation & sustainable development, social action & solidarity. An engaged funding approach guides the Foundation's activities, whereby all work is done in close collaboration with civil society partners and key players within the relevant issue areas, to maximize social impact. An additional part of the Foundation's activities is the operation of the Neraida Floating Museum, the objective of which is, among other things, to promote the country's shipping, maritime and business history, through activities of an educational, informative and scientific nature. The John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation is a member of the European Foundation Centre.





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1. **Valentina Diouf**, Professional athlete and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40); **Marko Russiver**, Founder and CEO of Grantful and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40); **Agnesta Filatove**, former Executive Director of the Vilnius International Film Festival (VIFF) and 2020-2021 EYL40; **Mila Carovska**, Minister for Education and Science of North Macedonia and 2020-2021 European Young Leader (EYL40); **Ayman Mhanna**, Executive Director of the Samir Kassir Foundation and 2017 MENA Young Leader
2. **Moha Gerehou**, Journalist, Contributor at Vogue Spain and La Hora de La 1 and 2020-2021 European Young Leader (EYL40)
3. **Jasmina Cibic**, Filmmaker, sculptor and artist who explores how political rhetoric is deployed through art and architecture and 2014 European Young Leader (EYL40)
4. **Ayman Mhanna**, Executive Director of the Samir Kassir Foundation and 2017 MENA Young Leader



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# The post-pandemic renewed Social Contract

In 2018, *Friends of Europe* published its #EuropeMatters report, advocating a renewed European Social Contract by 2030. It should frame citizens' lifelong development through childhood, work and old age, covering education, health, civil rights and other key societal elements. It must also address collective challenges, including the environment, public health and security, while remaining rooted in democratic legitimacy.

Much of the Zagreb seminar was concerned with a renewed Social Contract dynamic. One session looked at the role of private sector as companies are called upon to play a more constructive political and social role, from fighting climate change to putting the economic squeeze on Putin's war machine.

Other sessions examined education, with digitalisation opening opportunities for 'anytime, anywhere learning', and others drew a focus on the free press in its struggle to serve as democracy's watchdog as it faces unprecedented economic pressure and violence from criminal gangs and political thugs.

"Is it time to rethink the role of the private sector?" asked **Dharmendra Kanani**, *Friends of Europe's* Chief spokesperson and Director.

"With Ukraine we've seen how people power ... can urge corporations to do the right thing, to pull out of Russia," he said. "The largest companies are having to be thinking very, very seriously about their public-good credentials."

Greater transparency, social-media scrutiny and consumer activism are forcing companies to take a stance on issues like Ukraine and climate change, speakers noted.

"The question of what kind of role business plays in our democracy is an important question that's been overlooked for a long time," argued **Alberto Alemanno**, Jean Monnet Professor in EU Law at HEC Paris, Founder of The Good Lobby and 2014 EYL40. "The moment of truth has finally arrived."

Alemanno pointed to the Good Lobby's work monitoring companies' responses to the Russian invasion as an example of how corporations



now have to contend with an ‘ecosystem of accountability’, obliging them to adapt business policies to consumer pressure.

That includes the complex issue of sanctions compliance in the interconnected world economy, explained **Dominik Kampmann**, Director and Head of Defence, Intelligence and Law Enforcement, Europe and Africa at Moody's Analytics.

“If we talk about social responsibility or the responsibility of corporations right now, I think all corporations across the globe should really screen and check their customers, their entire supply chain, to be compliant with the current sanction regimes,” he said by video link from Berlin.

Kampmann urged politicians, corporations and civil society to work together to establish common goals that support social and environmental objectives without undermining economic



“The question of what kind of role business plays in our democracy is an important question that’s been overlooked for a long time. The moment of truth has finally arrived

**Alberto Alemanno**, Jean Monnet Professor in EU Law at HEC Paris, Founder of The Good Lobby and 2014 European Young Leader (EYL40)



progress. “This would be a very important pillar for the stability of our democracy,” he concluded.

On education, the group heard how the renewed social contract must build a coherent end-to-end European learning strategy.

The debate looked at the opportunities of digital education that were accentuated during the pandemic but cautioned that to ensure distance learning does not leave poorer, more rural or more marginalised students behind. The role of the private and social sectors in complementing state education was another key issue.

“The digitalisation of education anywhere, anytime has huge potential to help tackle the problems we face now in our societies regarding equality,” emphasised **Tatjana Kiilo**, expert in digital education and education strategies from Estonia and former Vice Chair of the OECD Education Policy Committee. “This is a promise of social mobility, the promise of getting better propositions in life, for the labour market, for citizenship, for realisation as a citizen in society.” **Nenad Bakić**, Founder and President of Croatian Makers, a philanthropic organisation and the EU’s largest extracurricular STEM programme using technology to help children, further insisted that “digital literacy today is basic literacy”.

He added that education is key for social mobility. “Education is the tool for equal opportunities, it gives the opportunity for all kids to be equal citizens,” Bakić said. “If you go through the list of the richest people in the world, most of them would be self-made men who are well educated.”



**Nenad Bakić**, Founder and President of Croatian Makers; **Tatjana Kiilo**, expert in digital education and education strategies from Estonia and former Vice Chair of the OECD Education Policy Committee; **Chris Dixon**, Head of Public Benefit and Global Network Lead at The Vodafone Foundation

To level the playing field so kids can make the most of their potential, the European Young Leaders stressed the need to ensure under-privileged children have equal access to digital education, but also get decent housing that enables them to study.

While recognizing the potential of digital, several EYL40s also emphasized the importance of direct contact with teachers and other students in engaging with citizens. They warned against ‘digitalisation for its own sake’.

The private sector’s role in education was hotly debated. While there was broad support for business playing a supplementary role, speakers urged caution.

“I see a risk in looking to the private sector to plug gaps in this space, there is a danger of ending up with a disparate array of initiatives that aren’t

joined up,” warned **Chris Dixon**, Head of Public Benefit and Global Network Lead at The Vodafone Foundation. “Any involvement of the private sector needs to come hand-in-hand with government, with educational authorities and, importantly, with educators.”

The fourth estate will have a key watchdog role under any renewed Social Contract. Despite a slew of bad news about violence enacted on journalists, newspapers folding, fake news, and freedom of speech being squeezed by authoritarian regimes, the meeting shone a spotlight on positive media developments.

“We are in an actual flowering of journalism, right now,” stated **Julia Angwin**, Pulitzer Prize Winner, Investigative journalist, Co-founder and Editor-in-Chief of The Markup. She outlined journalists’ efforts to reveal abuses of power by big tech and push for greater accountability.

Among the positive developments is the global reach of collaborative media investigations to uncover high-level corruption.

**Matthew Caruana Galizia**, Investigative Journalist, Lead Engineer for the Paradise Papers Investigation and 2020-2021 EYL40, told the group that collaborative media investigations were leaving public authorities behind. Regulators, civil administrations, the police and judiciaries must

be strengthened to follow up on cases brought to light by the press.

More robust structures are also needed to protect journalists, added Caruana Galizia, whose mother, journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, was murdered in 2017 as she investigated links between politics, crime and corruption in Malta.

“There is a lot more that can be done multilaterally to ensure that journalists are no longer targeted,” he argued. “We are not saying journalists are a privileged class, that they need these special privileges ... it’s really about protecting the interests of the public that journalists are serving with their work.”

As well as shielding journalists physically, the media needs economic security at a time when sales and advertising are under intense pressure from online competition. Here too there was a candid discussion on the use of state-support, as opposed to privately-funded journalism – and their respective downfalls.

“On taxpayers’ money to fund journalism as a public good, we need to really have a great, in-depth effort to understand what are the necessary safeguards to avoid the capture of journalism,” insisted **Guilherme Canela**, Chief of Section for Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists at UNESCO. “It is possible.”



**Julia Angwin**, Pulitzer Prize Winner, Investigative journalist, Co-founder and Editor-in-Chief of The Markup

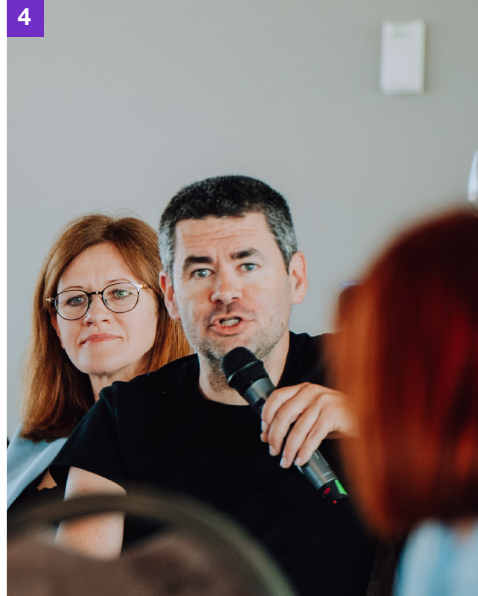


**Guilherme Canela**, Chief of Section for Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists at UNESCO





1. **Lina Džuverović**, Curator and Lecturer in Arts Policy and Management, Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies, Birkbeck College, University of London; Founder of Birkbeck's Decolonial Feminist Forum; **Nektarios Kalantzis**, President of the European Local Leaders and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)
2. **Aleksandar Nikoloski**, Vice-President of the Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)
3. **Matthew Caruana Galizia**, Investigative Journalist and Lead Engineer for the Paradise Papers Investigation and 2020-2021 European Young Leader (EYL40)
4. **André Loesebrug-Pietri**, Chairman and Scientific Director of the Joint European Disruptive Initiative (JEDI) and 2013 European Young Leader (EYL40)



# The view from here

Meeting in the Western Balkans gave the European Young Leaders the chance to hear perspectives from the region on Europe's key challenges. Several speakers called on the EU to unblock membership accession processes for Croatia's neighbours to the east.

"The Balkans are part of Europe, and they should be part of the European Union," insisted **Geert Cami**, Co-Founder and Secretary General of *Friends of Europe* as he kicked off the three-day debate.

That issue was taken up by Prime Minister Plenković. He warned that long delays in enlargement are opening opportunities for other players, including Russia, China and Turkey, to expand their influence in the region. "Where is the anchor? That should be the EU," he added.

Plenković also called for a wider European approach to help countries in the region cope with the energy price crisis triggered by Russia's war in Ukraine. "The problem with this crisis is that nobody knows how long it is going to last," he remarked. "These costs need to be shared further ... we clearly need a wider European solution to help our societies and our economies."

Suggestions from President Macron and others for an overhaul of the treaties underpinning the EU received a lukewarm response. "These



**“The Balkans are part of Europe, and they should be part of the European Union**

**Geert Cami**, Co-Founder and Secretary General of Friends of Europe

debates are fun for the Brussels bubble ... for the citizens they are certainly incomprehensible and not attractive at all,” Plenković told the group. “Treaty changes ... we are not excluding them, but we need to focus on what is essential,” he added, mentioning the energy crisis, inflation and other economic impacts of the Ukraine war.

**Marko Pavić**, Chair of the Committee on Regional Development and European Union Funds at the Croatian Parliament and 2019 EYL40, listed the benefits of EU membership for his country since it joined in 2013, for example in helping recovery since the COVID pandemic. Bringing in the other countries of the Western Balkans would strengthen democracy in the region. “We need to rethink our democracy and how to tackle all the crises and all the challenges,” Pavić said. “For the stability of this region, we need the Western Balkans, they need to have a European future.”

The European Young Leaders also met with **Tomislav Tomašević**, Mayor of Zagreb, to discuss the need for a overhaul in leadership styles. The election of this 40-year-old environmental activist last year broke the mould of politics in the Croatian capital and could serve as a model for others seeking change. “As a politician you have to be a realist, not believing in fairy tales, but always believing you can change stuff,” Tomašević said.

“We were completely honest in what we are saying. We had many opportunities to use shortcuts to positions of power and we refused to do it,” he added. “If we win, we want to do it without any debts to any kind of interest groups. We want to do it on our terms”



“We need to rethink our democracy and how to tackle all the crises and all the challenges. For the stability of this region, we need the Western Balkans, they need to have a European future

**Marko Pavić**, Chair of the Committee on Regional Development and European Union Funds at the Croatian Parliament and 2019 European Young Leader (EYL40)



**Tomislav Tomašević**,  
Mayor of Zagreb

Fondazione Cariplo is a grant making foundation based in Milan, Italy, that operates with the purpose of pursuing social good and promoting economic development. Since 1991 FC has awarded grants totalling € 3.6 billion and supported 35,600 projects in four main fields: Arts and Culture, Environment, Scientific Research, and in the Social realm.

The Foundation advances its mission by providing grants to projects solicited through calls for proposals, directly running in-house designed programmes, experimenting innovative funding approaches and tools and making impact investments consistent with its strategic priorities and the sectors it operates in.

The 2022 strategic framework sets out nine main goals towards which resources and efforts of the four philanthropic areas of the Foundation will be channelled: Demographic challenges, Climate change, Poverty, Work and Employability, Cultural participation, Scientific research, Community-based welfare, Social Housing, and Capacity building of the nonprofit sector.

Despite its regional roots and focus, Fondazione Cariplo has longstanding partnerships internationally and has been a member of Philea - Philanthropy Europe Association (formerly EFC) since 1998.





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1. **Alexandra Dariescu**, Award-Winning Concert Pianist, Producer of "The Nutcracker and I", Creative Entrepreneur and 2018 European Young Leader (EYL40)
2. **Marko Russiver**, Founder and CEO of Grantful and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)
3. **Meghan Milloy**, Co-Founder & Executive Director of Republican Women for Progress and 2017 North American Young Leader
4. **Ivan Štefunko**, Founding Chairman of Progresivne Slovensko, Consultant in Innovation Policies and 2015-2016 European Young Leader (EYL40)

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# Student unrest

Tomašević has support from many younger voters, but Croatian students who met with the European Young Leaders the following day at the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Geodesy expressed a lack of trust in politicians as a group.

"The biggest problem in our society in Croatia is how the politicians put on top of the government are absolutely wrong, people don't have a clue for what they are voting for," complained one student.

A quick online poll with the audience found that three-quarters of those in the room don't trust government, and a ranking of the level

of government they trusted more placed the European Union before local and national government. A similar proportion had no expectation politicians will act to reduce the impact of the Ukraine war or climate change.

That lack of faith in democracy appears particularly dangerous when Europe is under attack from authoritarian Russia. "This is the most complex, dangerous security environment that we've had since the end of the Cold War," warned **Benedetta Berti-Alberti**, Head of Policy Planning in the Office of the Secretary General at NATO, as she addressed the joint gathering of EYL40s and students.

**Benedetta Berti-Alberti**, Head of Policy Planning in the Office of the Secretary General at NATO; **Jesse Klaver**, Member of the Dutch House of Representatives, Leader of the Dutch green party GroenLinks and 2018 European Young Leaders (EYL40)



1. **Almin Dapo**, Rector of the Geodesy Faculty, University of Zagreb
2. **Nicolas Brien**, Chairman of the Management Board at EuraTechnologies and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)
3. **Malcolm Byrne**, Irish Senator for the Cultural and Educational Panel and 2012 European Young Leader (EYL40)
4. Citizens debate at the University of Zagreb with the European Young Leaders and citizens from Zagreb and Croatia.



Russia's attack shows that Europe cannot take freedom and democracy for granted and must invest in defence, security and resilience she said. "You start to underappreciate the value of all this, of freedom and of democracy and I think you also underappreciate their fragility," Berti-Alberti added. "Democracy today is under attack."

Politicians must shoulder some of the blame for citizens' lack of trust, acknowledged **Jesse Klaver**, Member of the Dutch House of Representatives, Leader of the Dutch green party GroenLinks and 2018 EYL40.

"Politicians are not always fair, not always clear about the trust and about problems. Most of the time politicians ... try to say things that people like," he said. "With all the threats we have in front of us, we need to be honest."

The students were not convinced, one even suggesting that the current capitalistic system had failed and that some elements of communism needed to be reinstated in the region, for its own good. Others complained about NATO, feeling that it had failed to intercept a military drone which crashed near a university campus in March.

This conversation, on international defence alliances and the feeling of being left to fend for oneself, was a recurrent theme, even though the European Young Leaders came to the defence of NATO and democracy. "NATO is incredibly powerful and incredibly intelligent and sometimes we need to put our trust in this alliance," said **Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica**,

Parliamentary Secretary of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trustee of *Friends of Europe* and 2017 EYL40.

Several EYL40s urged the students to channel their discontent into activism. **Ivan Štefunko**, Founding Chairman of the Progresívne Slovensko party, Consultant in Innovation Policies and 2015-2016 EYL40, encouraged them to take matters into their own hands and "Go and drink a beer this evening and make a plot to change your country". He referred to his experience founding a progressive party in 2017, fueled by a similar sentiment. This in turn led to the election of Zuzana Čaputová, Slovakia's youngest and first female president just two years later.



**“NATO is incredibly powerful and incredibly intelligent and sometimes we need to put our trust in this alliance**

**Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica**, Parliamentary Secretary of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trustee of *Friends of Europe* and 2017 European Young Leader (EYL40)



# Saving democracy from itself



1. **Tamara Srzentić**, Montenegrin Minister for Public Administration, Digital Society and Media and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40); **Nassira El Moaddem**, Journalist, Author and Presenter, Arrêt Sur Images and 2018 European Young Leader (EYL40); **Mila Carovska**, Former Minister for Education and Science of North Macedonia and 2020-2021 European Young Leader (EYL40); **Krystal Gaillard**, Programme Officer at Friends of Europe; **Talitha Muusse**, Chief Impact Officer at Blikverruimers, Founder of Energieboot and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)
2. **Jens Ole Bach Hansen**, Deputy Head of the Mission at the Danish Embassy in Rome and 2014 European Young Leader (EYL40)
3. **Mary Fitzgerald**, Journalist and Researcher in Euro-Mediterranean Affairs, specialising in Libya, Trustee of Friends of Europe and 2013 European Young Leader (EYL40)
4. **Leszek Konrad Jażdżewski**, Editor-in-Chief of Liberté! and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)



# Art takes a stand

The seminar also had a strong hard look at art beyond its usual parameters and instead as a powerful and bonding protest tool. Held at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MSU), this plenary discussion was led by a trio of engaged artists: **Kate Sutton**, Commissioning Editor of international reviews at Artforum; **Jasmina Cibic**, Filmmaker, sculptor and artist from Slovenia and 2014 EYL40; and **Lina Džuverović**, Curator and Lecturer in Arts Policy and Management, Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies, Birkbeck College, University of London; Founder of Birkbeck's Decolonial Feminist Forum.

"Protest is more than saying 'I disagree'; protest is I disagree, and I will do something ... We are

all more powerful in our own way than we think", said Džuverović, as the EYL40s examined how art can resist oppression, violence and war and succeed in bringing opposites together. However, it also looked at how regimes try to appropriate art for their own ends and discussed controversial issues including how to fund the arts and the pros and cons of cultural boycotts.

Sutton pointed out that definitions of art and protest have blurred. "Protest can take many forms," she said. "Is it productive to draw lines between art and protest? In this context, I would argue that it is, only in so much as structuring something as art can lend it protection that simple protest action might lack."



**Lina Džuverović**, Curator and Lecturer in Arts Policy and Management, Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies, Birkbeck College, University of London; Founder of Birkbeck's Decolonial Feminist Forum; **Kate Sutton**, Commissioning Editor of international reviews at Artforum; **Jasmina Cibic**, Filmmaker, sculptor and artist from Slovenia and 2014 European Young Leader (EYL40)





Andreas Sterzing and David  
Wojnarowicz, (*Silence = Death*),  
1989. Photo: PPOW Gallery,  
New York





Google's mission is to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. Google has been carbon neutral since 2007 and recently set an ambitious goal to run operations entirely on carbon-free energy 24/7 by 2030.

When it comes to sustainability, Google believes we can achieve more when we move together. So they partner with nonprofits, research orgs, governments, and businesses to build custom technology and bespoke tools to accelerate meaningful change.

Google is helping more than 500 cities measure, track, and reduce an aggregate of 1 gigaton of carbon emissions by 2030.

To make it easier to be more sustainable, Google builds products and technology to help people to better understand their impact and actions. They're also adding features to our core products that will help 1 billion people reduce their environmental footprint.



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1. **Jakob Haesler**, Managing Director at Foxdixneuf and 2013 European Young Leader (EYL40)
2. **Johny Pitts**, Multi-disciplinary artist and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)
3. **Benjamina Karić**, Mayor of Sarajevo and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40); **Tomislav Tomasevic**, Mayor of Zagreb
4. **Mario Brandenburg**, Member of the German parliament, computer scientist and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40), **Jesse Klaver**, Member of the Dutch House of Representatives, Leader of the Dutch green party GroenLinks and 2018 European Young Leader (EYL40)



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She showed examples of protest art including acts of self-mutilation by Russian artist Petr Pavlensky; actions that landed Russian performance art group Pussy Riot in jail; and Sanja Iveković's work *Triangle* showing the artist drinking whiskey and appearing to masturbate on the balcony of her Zagreb apartment as Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito visited the city in 1979.

Džuverović sought to look beyond art as a protest against things to examine ways it can make a proactive difference. Exploring the #artistsupportpledge initiative, which raised over £30 mn for artists through online sales as the pandemic shut down galleries and fairs, she brought forth the power that art had in using whatever frameworks exists to bend the rules. Created to support artists in the midst of the pandemic, it has now used its art sales to support Ukraine.

Other effective examples included the Rebuild Foundation set up to regenerate areas of South Side Chicago by restoring vacant buildings and launching cultural initiatives; and the Belarus Free Theatre in exile whose performances support political prisoners, education and democracy.

"We all have agency. We all can do something, even if it seems very simple and very small, it is possible," Džuverović told the group. She appealed for art and culture initiatives to be taken up and expanded into other spheres of civic life.

Art can fill gaps in society, Cibic explained. "Every artist compensates what is lacking, there is a lack in society, there is a lack of utopias, lack of history, there are a lot of lacks around us today, but I want to particularly focus on the lack of political national authority," she said. She went on to explain why that made the shutting down of cultural spaces during the pandemic particularly damaging.

Now, it is important to get back to cultural institutions and, especially to get children back into museums, galleries and theatres. "We need together to learn how to be audiences again."

As in the discussions on education and the media, there was considerable debate on funding for the arts and the roles of the state and private sector. Questions were raised about the possible restrictions on artistic freedom from government or business patrons. This linked into the EYL40 working group on Arts and Culture. The working group published last year its policy briefing, Prioritising arts and culture in a renewed social contract. The recommendations of the report aimed to strengthen Europe as a leader in artistic creation, anchor cultural practices and celebrate the diversity of European identities. They carry one clear message: "We all – as citizens of Europe – should reassess what we value as Europeans and explore the vital role that culture can play in fostering a sense of shared values and an inclusive vision for the future of our continent" and have since led to a series of discussions including the role of digitalisation and AI in supporting the arts.

**Aleksandar Nikoloski**, Vice-President of the Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity and 2022 EYL40, bemoaned the lack of funding alternatives that leaves artists in eastern Europe poor and dependent on the state.

“We should think in eastern Europe how to open funds for artists because it’s impossible to survive in the market,” he said. “If you have no funds, you cannot create. If you cannot create you cannot protest.”

Several participants said artists cannot afford to be too picky about where their funding comes from. “You can’t eat your CV,” said Cibic.

Debate also turned to the question of restrictions on art from Russia. While sanctions on business are generally positively supported there was less consensus on a ban on culture or restricting access to Russian art, artists or historical heritage. Questioning the efficiency of banning Russian youth from competing, **Alexandra Dariescu**, Award-Winning Concert Pianist, Producer of ‘The Nutcracker and I’, Creative Entrepreneur and 2018 EYL40 also questioned the precedent and impact of banning Russian composers from being played.

However, **Agnesta Filatovė**, Executive Director of the Vilnius International Film Festival (VIFF) and 2020-2021 EYL40, explained the reasoning behind the decision to pull Russian movies from the festival programme in the weeks after the invasion. “It’s not the time to make a focus on

Russian culture,” she said. “It’s quite painful from the artistic side, but there is no grey when there is war, it is only black and white.”

Others made a parallel with the sporting and cultural boycott of South Africa which are widely viewed as helping to end the apartheid regime.



“It’s not the time to make a focus on Russian culture. It’s quite painful from the artistic side, but there is no grey when there is war, it is only black and white

**Agnesta Filatovė**, former executive Director of the Vilnius International Film Festival (VIFF) and 2020-2021 European Young Leader (EYL40)



The Coca-Cola Company wants to refresh the world and make a difference. We build loved brands, done sustainably for a better shared future.

For 135 years, Coca-Cola has been making drinks that create joy and pleasure for billions of people around the world. With 700.000 employees globally, 200 brands and a presence in almost every country and territory around the world, we are building our future on beverages that people love drinking – with a strong focus on operating sustainably, and a long tradition of giving back to the communities we are a part of.

At Coca-Cola, we provide drinks for people to enjoy on any occasion: when sharing a meal with family, having a refreshment during a break at work, meeting friends at a restaurant or a bar, or simply when on the go. We focus on developing new, exciting drinks such as plant-based beverages, coffees and teas, while building on the much-loved brands that many people have grown up with.

We seek to positively impact people's lives, communities and the planet through water replenishment, sugar reduction, packaging collection and recycling, sustainable sourcing practices and carbon emissions reductions across our value chain. We have a strong presence across Europe since 1900 with bottling facilities from Antwerp to Zagreb, employing more than 50.000 people across our networked organisation.

Meeting the 2030 SDG targets depends to a large extent on the transformation of food systems. That is why The Coca-Cola Company and its leading bottling partners in Europe, Coca-Cola Europacific Partners and Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company, support the EU Commission's Green Deal and Farm-to-Fork Strategy objective to accelerate the transition to sustainable food systems. Our ambition is to ensure that for our consumers the healthier and more sustainable choice becomes the easy choice. As a result we aim to achieve Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions in our entire European value chain by 2040.



1. **Ruben van Zwieten**, Founder and Reverend, De Nieuwe Poort and 2019 European Young Leader (EYL40), **Malcolm Byrne**, Irish Senator for the Cultural and Educational Panel and 2012 European Young Leader (EYL40)

2. **Kirsten Brosbøl**, Founder and CEO, 2030beyond, former Danish minister for the environment and 2017 European Young Leader (EYL40)

3. **Paolo Petrocelli**, Director-General for the Stauffer Center for Strings and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40), **Valentina Diouf**, Professional athlete and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)





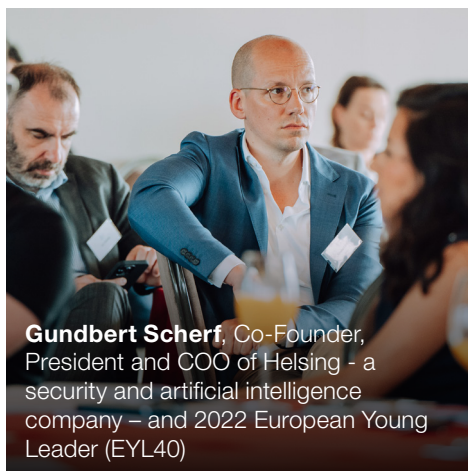
# Connections

The Zagreb seminar maintained the EYL40s tradition of hosting a number of successful roundtable exchanges. Peer-learning roundtables were held on themes ranging from ‘Cyber for Democracy’ headed by **Gundbert Scherf**, Co-Founder, President and COO of Helsing - a security and artificial intelligence company – and 2022 EYL40; ‘Why Hackathons Work’ with Marko Russiver, Founder and CEO of Grantful and 2022 EYL40; and ‘Leveraging AI for intelligent health solutions’ by **Loubna Bouarfa**, Founder and CEO of OKRA Technologies and 2022 EYL40.

**Valentina Diouf**, Professional athlete and 2022 EYL40, briefed on the difficulties faced by women in professional sports. As a female volleyball player, she faces discrimination in wages and work conditions. Women are paid less and are often forced to accept amateur status which deprives them of social protection and makes them vulnerable if they become pregnant. “Why should my time not have the same value as their time?” she asked. She also hammered the fact that athletes who complained often find themselves left off the team or unable to find a club, feeding into this discriminatory culture. “They feel they don’t even have to give us a rational explanation” for the discrimination, she said.



**Loubna Bouarfa**, Founder and CEO of OKRA Technologies and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)



**Gundbert Scherf**, Co-Founder, President and COO of Helsing - a security and artificial intelligence company – and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)

A second round featured **Arancha Martínez Fernández**, Founder of It-willbe.org, Co-Founder and CEO of The Common Good Chain and 2022 EYL40, who explained how to tackle poverty through innovation; **Ruben van Zwieten**, Founder and Reverend at De Nieuwe Poort and 2019 EYL40 discussed his experience as a pastor and social entrepreneur; and **Samir Abdelkrim**, Founder EMERGING Valley, Member of the Digital Strategy Group of the Africa Europe Foundation and 2020-2021 EYL40, talked about building a new partnership between Africa and Europe through innovation.

being called into government in 2020. The work included streamlining government websites to make them easier for the public to use and reforming government services to get the right people in the right place to provide optimal services. “Good government in the digital age should be about people. They are the core,” she said. “The biggest lesson was to start with the user’s need.”

**Tamara Srzentić**, Montenegrin Minister for Public Administration, Digital Society and Media, and 2022 EYL40, shared her experience in building digital services for the public in California and in Montenegro, after



**Talitha Muusse**, Chief Impact Officer at Blikverruimers, Founder of Energieboot and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)



## Make 'anytime, anywhere education' an EU wide goal harnessing digital for an end-to-end European strategy for education by 2030

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europe

vodafone

friends  
of europe



1. **Guillem Anglada-Escudé**, Astrophysicist and Exoplanet Discoverer; Ramón y Cajal Research Fellow at the Institute of Space Sciences (IEEC-CISC) and 2018 European Young Leader (EYL40); **Beatrice Leanza**, Cultural Strategist, Museum Director and 2018 European Young Leader (EYL40)
2. **Tamara Srzentić**, Montenegrin Minister for Public Administration, Digital Society and Media and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)
3. **Arancha Martínez Fernández**, Founder of It-willbe.org, Co-Founder and CEO of The Common Good Chain and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40); **Edoardo Camilli**, Co-Founder & CEO at Hozint - Horizon Intelligence and 2017 European Young Leader (EYL40)



# Conclusion

The EYL40 Zagreb 2022 seminar showed that the COVID-imposed hiatus has done nothing to dim the dynamic spirit of the EYL40 programme. Meeting in the context of security, climate, health and economic crises, over 50 young leaders from 24 countries joined together to brainstorm solutions to some of the key challenges facing European society today. They came from diverse backgrounds, including politics, tech, civil society, science, sports, health, journalism, the arts, academia, diplomacy and religion.

The debate and flow of ideas clearly lived up to the ambition of Friends of Europe, as Co-founder and Secretary General **Geert Cami** had urged at the beginning of the seminar – fostering a vision for the European Young Leaders to find inspiration in each other's experiences, and to seek a renewed sense of hope in such difficult times.

The EYL40s proved once more their willingness to engage in these conversations and, at times, thorny topics for the good of Europe and future generations. Committing to a more constructive political future, a Europe of tomorrow that includes the Balkans, sustainable equality in arts, sports and academia, and greater dialogue with citizens were some of the necessary tools put forward to rework today's most intractable problems. Since the seminar, many have come

together to put pen to paper and join hands — prime evidence that collaborative leadership and the EYL40 are the key to a fair, sustainable and inclusive tomorrow.

"This is all about letting people with different backgrounds and political beliefs, from different cultures, come together ... create bonds of trust that hopefully will then lead to collaborative action," Cami explained. "To work on the challenges of the 21st Century and tackle them in a more constructive and holistic way."

Those ambitions will be advanced when the young leaders meet next, September 8-10 in Lisbon.





Unique in its scale as the largest pan-European and African technology communications company, Vodafone transforms the way we live and work through its innovation, technology, connectivity, platforms, products and services.

Vodafone operates mobile and fixed networks in 21 countries, and partners with mobile networks in 47 more. As of 31 December 2021, we had over 300m mobile customers, more than 28m fixed broadband customers and over 22m TV customers.

Vodafone is a world leader in the Internet of Things (IoT), connecting more than 142m devices and platforms through innovation that aligns with the aspirations of society for cleaner and safer cities, better transport and improved agriculture. Vodafone's digital leadership is also changing how governments deliver healthcare and education, and how businesses, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), serve customers.

We have revolutionised fintech in Africa through M-Pesa, which celebrates its 15th anniversary in 2022. It is the region's largest fintech platform, providing access to financial services for more than 51m people in a secure, affordable and convenient way.

Our purpose is to connect for a better future, enabling an inclusive and sustainable digital society. We are taking significant steps to reduce our impact on our planet by becoming net zero by 2040, purchasing 100% of our electricity from renewable sources in Europe and across our entire operations by 2025, and reusing, reselling or recycling 100% of our redundant network equipment. Vodafone proactively works to expand access to connectivity for rural communities, students and jobseekers.

We support diversity and inclusion through our maternity and parental leave policies, empowering women through connectivity and improving access to education and digital skills for women, girls, and society at large. We are respectful of all individuals, irrespective of race, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, belief, culture or religion.

Responding to the war in Ukraine, Vodafone has supported affected customers and refugees fleeing the conflict. Vodafone enabled free calls and SMS to Ukraine and free roaming for any customers in Ukraine; has handed out free SIMs and data to refugees arriving in Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Romania and UK; and is fast tracking recruitment for individuals of any nationality displaced from Ukraine. Meanwhile, Vodafone Foundation deployed Instant WiFi and Instant Charge equipment to Hungary and Romania and donated €500,000 to the humanitarian response.

For more than 30 years, Vodafone Foundation (UK registered charity 1193984) has supported communities in Europe and Africa in the areas of health, education, and equality. In Europe, Vodafone Foundation is investing €20 million to 2025 to improve digital skills, focusing on rethinking education for the 21st Century and addressing the digital skills gap among the over 65s.

Vodafone Foundation's headline programme in Europe, SkillsUpload Jr, aims to empower educators and students in the self-confident, creative and critical use of digital technologies. In partnership with local education authorities in seven EU states, we rethink education by providing cutting-edge educational resources to make our education systems more equitable, innovative and resilient and enable young makers to actively shape the digital world around them.



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1. **Stevan Dojčinović**, Investigative reporter, Editor-in-Chief of Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK) and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40), **Mila Carovska**, Minister for Education and Science of North Macedonia and 2020-2021 European Young Leader (EYL40), **Ivan Lesay**, Board Member and Head of Strategy and M&A of ESCO Slovensko, civil servant and fiction writer and 2020-2021 European Young Leader (EYL40)

2. **Justas Janauskas**, Serial entrepreneur, Co-Founder of Vinted and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)

3. **Andreea Dobra**, Europe Social Contract Lead at Vodafone

4. **Dharmendra Kanani**, Chief spokesperson and director, Friends of Europe

5. **Ricardo Baptista Leite**, Founder and President of UNITE, Member of the Portuguese National Parliament and 2015-2016 European Young Leader (EYL40)

5



# The EYL40 programme



EYL40.org



/EYL40



@EYL40

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 will shape Europe's future.

The European Young Leaders represent a promising European leadership from all over the continent and with a wide variety of backgrounds including politics, business, civil society, academia, arts, science and the media. From trailblazing biochemists to budding political leaders, and from 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.

Every year, they meet during two 3-day seminars that take place in symbolic European cities, joined by 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.

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.

The 2017 Autumn seminar in Tallinn also increased the programme's outreach by inviting North American and Middle East and North African (MENA) Young Leaders to join the discussions for the first time. The aim is to create synergies, promote structural dialogue and foster better mutual understanding between established leaders from the three regions and develop an inter-regional, multidisciplinary network of alumni to support the leaders of tomorrow.

Since 2020, young leaders of the Western Balkan region are also included in the European yearly class.

# EYL40



**SAMIR  
ABDELKRIM**  
2020-2021  
European Young  
Leader

**Founder EMERGING Valley & Member of the Digital Strategy Group of the Africa Europe Foundation** **FRANCE**

Samir Abdelkrim is not only a French entrepreneur but also an author and a tech reporter. Passionate about all things digital, he founded EMERGING Valley as an international summit on African innovation to connect tech start-ups with investors, thinkers and decision-makers across continents. He also leads StartupBRICS, a company that provides insights on entrepreneurship in emerging economies. Abdelkrim is a former chronicler on African tech entrepreneurs for Le Monde and has also featured in the Huffington Post, Le Point and Les Echos. His book, "Startup Lions", chronicles his experience travelling the African continent in search of the most interesting and innovative tech start-ups. With French President Emmanuel Macron's initiative "Summit of the Two Shores of the Mediterranean", Abdelkrim was amongst 10 selected to make proposals to relaunch European and Mediterranean cooperation.



**ALBERTO  
ALEMANNO**  
2014  
European Young  
Leader

**Jean Monnet Professor in EU Law at HEC Paris, Founder of The Good Lobby** **FRANCE**

Alberto Alemanno is a leading voice on the democratization of the European Union. He's currently the Jean Monnet Professor in EU Law at HEC Paris and visiting professor at the College of Europe in Bruges and at the University of Tokyo School of Public Policy. His research has been centred on how the law may be used to improve people's lives, in particular through the adoption of power-shifting reforms countering social, economic, and political inequalities within European societies and beyond. He is a regular contributor to Le Monde, Bloomberg, Politico Europe, Forbes, and Il Sole 24 Ore, and his scholarly work has been featured in The Economist, The New York Times, The Financial Times, as well as Science and Nature.





**GUILLEM  
ANGLADA-  
ESCUDE**  
2018 European  
Young Leader

**Astrophysicist and Exoplanet Discoverer  
Ramón y Cajal Research**

**SPAIN**

Guillem Anglada-Escudé is a well-known astrophysicist and scientist, whose current work focuses on exoplanet detection and planetary exploration. Most notably, Guillem and his team discovered the Proxima b exoplanet orbiting Proxima Centauri, our closest neighbouring star and the nearest star to the Sun. He- has previously worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the Carnegie Institution for Science, University of Goettingen, as well as Queen Mary University of London, where he became a reader in astronomy. He has conducted research in several countries and has been actively engaged with space agencies, such as NASA and the European Space Agency. In 2016, Guillem was named among the ten most prominent scientists worldwide by Science Magazine and one of TIME Magazine's 100 most influential people in the world.



**WITOLD  
BAŃKA**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**President of the World Anti-  
Doping Agency (WADA)**

**POLAND**

Witold is a former Polish athlete, who currently heads WADA in its mission to lead a collaborative worldwide movement for doping-free sport. He is the youngest person to assume the presidency of WADA in its 22-year history. Witold values sportsmanship and actively demonstrates the importance of listening to athletes. Under his leadership, WADA is reinforcing the global anti-doping programme through implementation of the 2021 World Anti-Doping Code. He is also strengthening the Agency's governance, with more independent voices, athletes and anti-doping experts involved in the organisation's decision-making processes. Witold previously served as the Polish minister of sport and tourism and, for nearly a decade, he competed internationally as a 400m sprinter. Most notably, Witold won a bronze medal in the 4x400m relay at the 2007 World Championships.



**RICARDO  
BAPTISTA LEITE**  
2015-2016  
European Young  
Leader

**Founder and President of UNITE, Member  
of the Portuguese National Parliament**

**PORTUGAL**

Ricardo is best known as a Member of the Portuguese Parliament where he currently serves as a member of the committee on health. He also founded the UNITE global network of parliamentarians committed to achieving political impact towards ending infectious diseases as a global health threat. He is a medical doctor with specific training in infectious diseases, having studied at Johns Hopkins University and Harvard Medical School, and has an active role on a number of scientific and advisory boards of health-related foundations and organisations – including his role as Head of Public Health at the Catholic University of Portugal.



**LOUBNA  
BOUARFA**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**Founder and CEO of OKRA  
Technologies**

**UNITED KINGDOM**

A Dutch machine learning scientist turned entrepreneur, Loubna is the Founder and CEO of OKRA Technologies, a leading artificial intelligence analytics company in the life sciences sector. The start-up aims to revolutionise traditional healthcare systems by abandoning the one-size-fits-all model and building a future of personalised medicine. OKRA uses explainable AI to empower healthcare professionals to make decisions that will support the delivery of the right drug to the right patient at speed. In recognition of Loubna's leadership, OKRA received the StartUp Europe Award for Best Female-Led Startup. The same year, Loubna also accepted the CEO of the Year Award at the Cambridge Independent Science and Technology Awards. As a former member of the European Union High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence, she supported the implementation of the Union's strategy on AI within the digital single market.



**MARIO  
BRANDENBURG**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**Member of the German parliament,  
computer scientist**

**GERMANY**

Mario is a German computer scientist and politician, who currently serves as a Member of the Bundestag for the Free Democratic Party (FDP). He is determined to support Germany's future through the use of digital technologies. With strong knowledge in quantum computing, biotechnology, AI, 3D printing and blockchain technologies, Mario currently is the Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Research. In addition to his role at the federal level, he remains active in local politics as a Member of the Municipal Council of Rülzheim and the District Council of Gernersheim. Mario also has a keen interest in how digital processes can benefit rural areas within society's digital transformation.



**NICOLAS  
BRIËN**

2022 European  
Young Leader

**Chairman of the Management Board at  
EuraTechnologies**

**FRANCE**

Nicolas is the Chairman of the Management Board of EuraTechnologies, Europe's largest and oldest incubator, and President of the European Startup Network, an industry group which represents start-ups in Brussels. An avid supporter of Europe's digital sovereignty and named among the most influential people in the digital sector in Europe, Nicolas promotes greater investment in local start-ups across Europe. Nicolas sits on the board of a number of other companies and foundations, including Tilder and France Alzheimer, and regularly contributes to the global conversation on tech policies through op-eds in global media. He is the former chief executive officer of the largest start-up organisation in Europe, France Digitale. Prior to entering the tech sector, he was the research director at Kantar-TNS Sofres and a senior advisor to the French government's spokesperson.



**KIRSTEN  
BROSBØL**

2017 European  
Young Leader

**Founder and CEO, 2030beyond, former  
Danish minister for the environment**

**DENMARK**

Kirsten is the CEO of 2030beyond, a do-tank which she established to accelerate action on 2030 Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2020, she founded the Parliamentarians for the Global Goals initiative, a global network of parliamentarians committed to the 2030 Agenda. Kirsten formerly served as the Danish minister of environment and a member of the Danish parliament, during which time she founded and chaired the All-Party Group on the Sustainable Development Goals. She is a German Marshall Fellow and former Obama Foundation scholar at Columbia University.



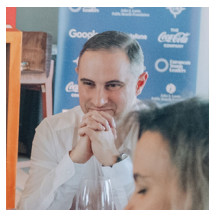
**MALCOLM  
BYRNE**

2014 European  
Young Leader

**Irish Senator for the Cultural  
and Educational Panel**

**IRELAND**

Malcolm is an Irish politician for the centrist Fianna Fáil party and currently serves as a Senator for the Cultural and Educational Panel of the Irish Parliament. Malcolm formerly served as a member of the lower house for the Wexford constituency from 2019 to 2020, prior to which he was a member of Wexford County Council from 2009 to 2019 and Mayor of Gorey. Additionally, Malcolm was the Head of Communications and Public Affairs with the Higher Education Authority, the statutory agency in Ireland that allocates public funding to higher education and advises government on higher education and research policy. Having worked for various lobbying and representative organisations throughout his career, Malcolm was also the first commercial manager with myhome.ie, Ireland's most successful property website. Outside of his professional career, Malcolm has completed over 30 marathons.



**EDOARDO  
CAMILLI**  
2017 European  
Young Leade

**Co-Founder & CEO at Hozint - Horizon  
Intelligence**

**BELGIUM**

A young entrepreneur and security expert, Edoardo started working as a political and security risk consultant after graduating from the University of Bologna. In 2010, he established the International Security Observer, a web-based think tank seeking to foster the next generation of security experts. At the time, he was also working as a research analyst at the Italian Institute of Strategic Studies Niccolò Machiavelli, where his activities focused on insurgency, intelligence, national security policies and organised crime. Edoardo is the co-founder of Hozint (Horizon Intelligence), a consulting firm providing location-based media and social media monitoring services on political, safety and security risks. He is frequently interviewed on security issues by media in Italy and across Europe.



**MILA CAROVSKA**  
2020-2021  
European Young  
Leader

**Former Minister for Education and  
Science of North Macedonia**

**NORTH MACEDONIA**

Prior to her current position, Mila served as Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of North Macedonia as well as Deputy Prime Minister responsible for economic affairs during the transition Government in 2020. She was elected to government in 2017. Mila is an avid proponent of human rights whose professional career to date has been marked by a commitment to social work on behalf of the most vulnerable and threatened citizens, whether it be Roma, disadvantaged youth, drug addicts or victims of domestic violence. Projects she has managed over the years include organising drama workshops with children housed in institutions, hosting educational workshops, offering consultations for drug users and their families, and conducting field research. Mila has used her platform as Minister to advocate for gender equality, the elimination of violence against women, and anti-discrimination.



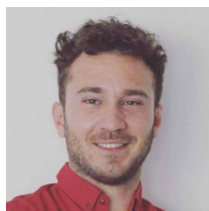
**MATTHEW  
CARUANA  
GALIZIA**  
2020-2021  
European Young  
Leader

**Investigative Journalist and Lead Engineer  
for the Paradise Papers Investigation**

**MALTA**

Matthew is a renowned Maltese journalist and software engineer with a distinguished career that spans over a decade. Having previously worked for the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), he co-founded the organisation's Data & Research Unit in 2014 and was a lead engineer on six major investigations, namely Offshore Leaks, Swiss Leaks, Luxembourg Leaks, Fatal Extraction, Panama Papers and Paradise Papers. The Unit's core work on the Panama Papers notably won a Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting in 2017. He left the organisation in 2018 to continue working on the case around the assassination of his mother, Daphne Caruana Galizia.





**ARMIN CERKEZ**  
2020-2021  
European Young  
Leader

### **Founder & CEO of Youth Power**

**GERMANY**

Armin founded Youth Power, an influential Bosnian NGO which pushes for non-violence, human rights and tolerance in the country. The inspirational work he did on Program Y led to the inclusion of gender-based violence prevention in school curricula. Coming from a region that has historically suffered from religious violence, Armin has championed the need for more inter-faith dialogue. He has also brought his message directly to citizens, providing lessons to prevent alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and violence in schools.



**JASMINA CIBIC**  
2014 European  
Young Leader

### **Filmmaker, sculptor and artist who explores how political rhetoric is deployed through art and architecture**

**UNITED  
KINGDOM**

Jasmina works across a range of media including photography, performance, installation and video. Most often characterised as a visual artist, her artwork is focused on the positioning and analysing of space vis-à-vis other societal categories. She is the author of numerous exhibitions which have been shown all over Europe, as well as the recipient of prestigious Slovenian, European and international awards, including the Bevilacqua la Masa (Venice 2002 and 2005), the Slovenian Trend Award for Outstanding Achievements in Visual Art (2011), and the Catlin Commission Award (London, 2011). She represented Slovenia at the 55th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.



**ALEXANDRA  
DARIESCU**  
2018 European  
Young Leader

### **Award-Winning Concert Pianist, Producer of "The Nutcracker and I", Creative Entrepreneur**

**UNITED  
KINGDOM**

Alexandra is the creator and producer of "The Nutcracker and I", a groundbreaking multimedia performance created for a piano solo with dance and digital animation. She made her debut at the Carnegie Hall in New York and has performed in many prestigious orchestras, including the Sydney Opera House, London's Wigmore Hall, Dubai Opera House and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. She was the first female Romanian pianist to perform at the Royal Albert Hall in London. Alexandra is an Honorary Associate Artist at the Royal Northern College of Music, Patron of Music in Lyddington, Cultural Ambassador of Romania and Officer of the Romanian Crown. An activist for gender equality in classical music, she is a recipient of the UK's Women of the Future Award in the Arts and Culture category and dedicates her life to education projects, building bridges and reaching out to the younger generation.

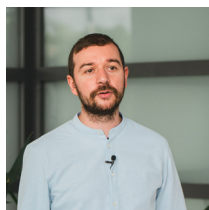


**VALENTINA  
DIOUF**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

### **Professional athlete**

**ITALY**

A professional Italian volleyball player, Valentina is a true role model for girls and women in sport. She currently sports the #7 jersey for LKS Commercecon Lodz in Poland, prior to which she played for Wealth Planet Perugia in Italy. Valentina is an Ambassador for Laureus Italia and Nike Made to Play project, two initiatives which encourage inclusion, gender equality and female leadership in youth sports. Before returning to Italy to play for the Italian women's volleyball league, Serie A1, Valentina spent three seasons abroad. She played for KGC Ginseng in South Korea, where she scored a personal record of 54 points in a single match and earned her position among the top 10 best single-game scorers in the world. While playing for Associação Vôlei Bauru in Brazil, she helped lead the team to its victory at the Paulista Championship. Valentina has won gold medals with the national Italian team at the U20 World Championship and Mediterranean Games.



**STEVAN  
DOJCINOVIC**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

### **Investigative reporter, Editor-in-Chief of Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK)**

**SERBIA**

Stevan is a Serbian reporter, specialising in the investigation of organised crime, corruption, privatisation deals and money laundering. He is the Editor-in-Chief of KRIK and the Regional Editor of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) for the Balkans, prior to which he was the founding editor-in-chief of the Center for Investigative Journalism of Serbia. The author of "Šarić", a book which dissects the role of the Balkan mafia in international cocaine smuggling, Steven also teaches journalists how to collect and analyse business data and property records. He has received national and international recognition for his journalistic work, most notably as the recipient of the Knight International Journalism Award, the CEI SEEMO Award for Outstanding Merits in Investigative Journalism and the Serbian National Award for Investigative Reporting. He was also a member of the award-winning OCCRP investigative team that uncovered links of the former Serbian government to organised crime.



**NASSIRA EL  
MOADDEM**  
2018 European  
Young Leader

**Journalist, Author and Presenter,  
Arrêt Sur Images**

**FRANCE**

Nassira is a French journalist, who currently works as a reporter for the evening news at France 2 and an interviewer on the French parliamentary TV channel. She is the former director and editor-in-chief of the Bondy Blog, a news website which highlights the topic of ethnic diversity in France. In this role, she was notably among the few female editors-in-chief of a French national media outlet. Her work focused on local investigations related to marginalised people living on the outskirts of cities, particularly around Paris. She began her career as a TV reporter and news anchor at Itele/Canal+.



**AGNESTA  
FILATOVE**  
2020-2021  
European Young  
Leader

**Executive Director of the Vilnius International  
Film Festival (VIFF)**

**LITHUANIA**

Agneta is a Lithuanian image and executive specialist with extensive knowledge of the creative industry and public advocacy. She currently heads Lithuania's annual Vilnius International Film Festival (VIFF) 'Kino Pavasaris', one of the biggest film festivals in the Baltic States. In 2019, VIFF screened around 170 films in 17 cities, 34% of which were made by women directors. Agneta's long career in the cultural environmental also extends to the role of coordinator at the European Commission's 2007 MEDIA programme office in Lithuania, as well as a number of cultural projects, including the Latin American culture festival 'In Latino' and the educational cinema project for youths 'Cine Book' in Lithuania.



**MARY  
FITZGERALD**  
2013 European  
Young Leader

**Journalist and Researcher in Euro-  
Mediterranean Affairs, specialising in Libya,  
Trustee of Friends of Europe**

**FRANCE**

Mary is a journalist and researcher specialising in the Euro-Mediterranean region with a particular focus on Libya. Her work has appeared in publications including the Economist, Foreign Policy, the New Yorker, the Washington Post, the Financial Times and the Guardian. She has conducted research on Libya for the International Crisis Group, European Council on Foreign Relations and European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMED), and regularly briefs European governments and international organisations. In her previous role as Irish Times foreign affairs correspondent, she reported from 40 countries across the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe. She has also been a foreign affairs columnist for the Irish Independent, Ireland's biggest selling newspaper. Mary is a member of the Global Women's Forum 'Rising Talents' network.



**MOHA GEREHOU**  
2020-2021  
European Young  
Leader

**Journalist, Contributor at Vogue  
Spain and La Hora de La 1**

**SPAIN**

Moha is a Spanish journalist and anti-racism activist. Prior to his current roles at Vogue Spain and La Hora de La 1, he wrote for eldiario.es, a leading online newspaper in Spain, contributing op-eds and video content on issues related to race and discrimination. Moha served as president of SOS Racismo Madrid, a prominent organisation that seeks to combat racism and xenophobia. Additionally, Moha is active on the speaker circuit and is a lecturer at the University of Syracuse and the University of Stanford's campuses in Madrid. Known for utilising both print and multimedia content to advance his message, Moha is the creator of the audio-visual monologue, "How my life would be if I were a black character in a movie", and one of the authors of the book, "Lost in Media: Migrant Perspectives and the Public Sphere".



**JAVIER  
GONZALEZ**  
2012 European  
Young Leader

**Entrepreneur**

**SPAIN**

Javier is an entrepreneur and founder of a number of award-winning technology start-ups, which have been backed by top venture capital funds and multinational corporations. Javier is currently a shareholder and board member of several tech companies, prior to which he was the international director of Digimarc Corporation and served in management roles for various start-ups, including Alvento and Mobile 365 Inc. He founded aquaMobile SL, a mobile value-added services provider based in Madrid, which became one of the most successful digital watermarking solutions companies during his time as CEO. He is also the co-founder of the tMA Foundation, which encourages innovation and entrepreneurial projects in conjunction with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and operates FabLab León, a member of MIT's FabLab Network and host of the Fab Academy training program.



**JAKOB HAESLER**  
2013 MENA Young  
Leader

**Managing Director at Foxdixneuf**

**FRANCE**

Prior to founding Project Alloy, Jakob was the CEO and Co-Founder of Tynyclues SAS, a Paris-based software startup with the objective of industrialising datamining on Big Data with the help of advanced machine learning algorithms in a Cloud Computing environment. Previously he was a partner and consultant at McKinsey & Company in Germany and France where he worked on topics ranging from Banking to Public Sector Reform to Global Public Health issues, notably the creation and distribution of child HIV treatments. Prior to McKinsey he briefly worked at the World Bank. He holds a Master's in Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and a Bachelor of Science from the University of St. Gallen. Jakob is also a founding partner of the "Cercle du Leadership".



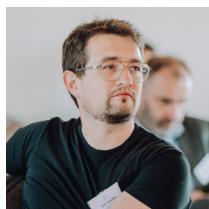


**JENS OLE BACH  
HANSEN**  
2014 MENA Young  
Leader

**Deputy Head of the Mission at the  
Danish Embassy in Rome**

**DENMARK**

Jens is a Danish diplomat focused on the changing international architecture, climate, the UN sustainable development goals and the role of the United Nations in addressing global challenges. Jens was Counsellor at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations in New York. Having worked and studied in the United States, France, Palestine, Israel, Denmark and Jordan, Jens Ole defines himself as “a dedicated internationalist and multi-lateralist”. He has 15 years of experience in international relations and international negotiations.



**JUSTAS  
JANAUSKAS**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**Serial entrepreneur, Co-Founder of Vinted**

**LITHUANIA**

Justas is a Lithuanian entrepreneur and the Co-Founder of Lithuania's first unicorn start-up, Vinted. The mobile shopping platform for second-hand fashion is Europe's largest online customer-to-customer (C2C) marketplace in Europe. Operational in 15 countries with over 45mn users, the platform has continued to experience tremendous growth, as consumption patterns continue to shift against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Justas served as Vinted's CEO for nearly a decade. A serial angel investor who offers his expertise and financial support to young entrepreneurs, Justas has backed a wide range of projects, including Memby, an after-school online learning platform, the sustainable Local Ocean shrimp farm, as well as Dogo, a mobile app for dog training that has been named Apple's App of the Day in countries across North America, Europe and Australia.



**LESZEK  
KONRAD  
JAZDZEWSKI**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**Editor-in-Chief of Liberté!**

**POLAND**

A Polish writer, speaker and activist, Leszek is the Editor-in-Chief of Liberté!, a journal which he founded over a decade ago to promote freedom, share ideas and counter populism. He is the co-creator of Freedom Games, an interdisciplinary event that gathers 4,000 attendees and 350 speakers to discuss the key challenges Western societies must face in the 21st century. Leszek is also the Founder and CEO of Bookme, an app which makes reading internet-friendly. He currently serves on the Council of European Forum for New Ideas and recently completed a policy fellowship at the European University Institute in Florence, where his work focused on how the narrative of change could counter the rise of populism in EU member states, overcome the European identity crisis and strengthen transnational governance.



**TOMS JURJEVS**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**Founder and CEO of  
Sun Finance Group**

**LATVIA**

Toms is a Latvian entrepreneur in the fintech industry. He is the Founder and CEO of Sun Finance Group, a fintech company that operates a user-friendly online and mobile lending platform. One of the fastest growing companies in Europe, Sun Finance has expanded its operations beyond Latvia to Denmark, Poland, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Vietnam and Sweden and secured over €1.2bn in loans to clients who have been typically unable to access funding. He has also launched two additional successful businesses, supporting their growth in the start-up stage and development as international multi-million companies. Toms is also the Founder and Chairman of the Council at the Alternative Financial Services Association of Latvia, which connects fintech and other companies in order to promote responsible practices and cooperation in the sector.



**NEKTARIOS  
KALANTZIS**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**President of the European Local Leaders**

**GREECE**

Nektarios is a Greek politician with a passion for good local governance. He currently serves as the President of the European Local Leaders, a committee of young European politicians that have been elected at the regional or local level. The initiative aims to promote creativity and share pioneering ideas among the new generation of locally elected officials throughout cities across Europe, with a focus on climate change, environmental protection, smart cities and new technologies. Nektarios is also the President of the Union of Young Local Councillors of Greece, which brings together newly elected regional and municipal councillors, governors, deputy mayors and mayors in Greece and organises events on the role of local governments in the development of smarter and greener cities. He is also the Municipal Councillor of the Pallini Municipality in Greece, prior to which he has served as a member of the Municipal Council.



**ZANDA  
KALNINA-  
LUKASEVICA**  
2017 European  
Young Leader

**Parliamentary Secretary of the Latvian Ministry of  
Foreign Affairs, Trustee of Friends of Europe**

**LATVIA**

Zanda is a Latvian politician and serves as the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia. Her role is to ensure cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Latvian Parliament and the European Parliament. She also represents the Latvian government at the EU Foreign Affairs Council meetings of development and trade ministers. Zanda also currently chairs the Consultative Board for Development Cooperation Policy of Latvia and sits on the board of European Movement – Latvia, a non-profit organisation. She previously served as a member of the Latvian parliament and chaired the Committee on European Affairs Committee and the Innovation and Research Subcommittee during her mandate. Zanda started her professional career at Jurmala's city council and then went on to work at the Strategic Analysis Commission of the President of Latvia, where she served as an advisor to the president.



**BENJAMINA  
KARIĆ**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**Mayor of Sarajevo**

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

A Bosnian politician, Benjamina is the Mayor of the City of Sarajevo, the second woman to serve the office in the history of the city, and the Vice-President of the Social Democratic Party. As mayor, she has spearheaded a number of green infrastructure projects, including a large park in the heart of Sarajevo and a bike path that connects the city to the nearby town of Pale. Benjamina is the youngest doctor of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the first post-war doctor of classical Roman law. An Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Travnik, she has authored over 50 publications books, articles, reviews and translations from Latin to Bosnian. Benjamina is also a Founding Member of BATHINVS, an association which studies and promotes the Illyrian heritage and ancient and classical civilisations.



**JESSE KLAVER**  
2018 European  
Young Leader

**Member of the Dutch House of Representatives,  
Leader of the Dutch green party GroenLinks**

**THE  
NETHERLANDS**

Jesse currently serves as the green-left party leader in the Dutch Parliament, with a mandate focused on environmental and educational issues. In his time as party leader, Jesse was instrumental in capturing 10 additional parliamentary seats, rising to an all-time high of 14, and making GroenLinks the fifth most important group in the House. Previously, Jesse was the spokesperson for Finance, Environment and Education and sat on a wide range of parliamentary committees. He has publicly opposed tax evasion and has co-authored a memo on protecting the Dutch flora and fauna.



**BEATRICE  
LEANZA**  
2018 European  
Young Leader

**Cultural Strategist, Museum Director**

**PORTUGAL**

Beatrice Leanza is a cultural strategist, curator and critic with a background in Asian studies who was based in Beijing for 17 years. She has served as executive director of the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, Lisbon, creative director of Beijing Design Week, and co-founded The Global School, the first independent institute for interdisciplinary creative research established in the PRC. She is an advocate of a critical practice founded on social engagement, educational empowerment and place making applied to institutional and cultural agency. Beatrice is also a member of the international advisory board of Design Trust (Hong Kong).



**IVAN LESAY**  
2020-2021  
European Young  
Leader

**Board Member and Head of Strategy and M&A of  
ESCO Slovensko, civil servant and fiction writer**

**SLOVAKIA**

Ivan is a political scientist, economic advisor and writer from Slovakia. Shortly after joining the Slovak Ministry of Finance as advisor to the minister, Ivan instigated the setup of the Slovak Investment Holding (SIH). Since being appointed its CEO in January 2017, Ivan led this state-owned fund in investing in strategic sectors of the economy, and driving economic development throughout the country. As of 2022, Ivan now leads ESCO Slovensko, a joint company of Czech and Slovak energy companies as a board member and head of Strategy and M&A. He previously served as deputy finance minister, and held leading roles during the Slovak Presidency in the EU Council. Ivan is a keen writer and has seen the publication of a number of his works, including a popular study of the 2008 Financial Crisis he co-authored and a children's book.



**ANDRÉ  
LOESEKRUG-  
PIETRI**  
2013 European  
Young Leader

**Chairman and Scientific Director of the Joint  
European Disruptive Initiative (JEDI)**

**FRANCE**

André Loesekrug-Pietri is an entrepreneur and has held leadership positions in private equity, government and industry. He is currently the Chairman of JEDI, which aims to accelerate Europe's leadership by financing and nurturing the development of breakthrough technologies. He previously served as a special advisor to the French Minister of Defence, where he was responsible for European defence policy, as well as technology and innovation, prior to which he has 15 years of experience in private equity and venture capital. Loesekrug-Pietri is a lecturer at Sciences Po and a regular columnist at several international media outlets. Having studied aerospace engineering, he is also a private pilot and Colonel with the French Air Force People's Reserve.





**ARANCHA  
MARTÍNEZ  
FERNÁNDEZ**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**Founder of It-willbe.org, Co-Founder  
and CEO of The Common Good Chain**

**SPAIN**

Arancha is a Spanish social innovator on a mission to maximise the impact of social projects. With 13 years of experience in the field of humanitarian aid, Arancha is tackling poverty through innovation and reshaping the world of philanthropy. She founded It-willbe.org to maximise aid and funds by leveraging data to understand the dimensions and significance of problems faced by vulnerable people. Its largest project, the People's Protection App, promotes the right to identity by accurately identifying homeless minors through biometrical recognition and data processing software, making “invisible” people visible. Arancha is also the Co-Founder and CEO of The Common Good Chain, the first blockchain-backed platform to measure and report social impact across entire value chains, providing the social sector with the traceability and transparency it needs to transform society. In recognition of her work, she has received the European Commission's EU Prize for Women Innovators and the Princess of Girona Social Award.



**AYMAN MHANNA**  
2017 European  
Young Leader

**Executive Director of the  
Samir Kassir Foundation**

**LEBANON**

Ayman Mhanna is Executive Director of the Beirut-based Samir Kassir Foundation, one of the leading press freedom NGOs in the Middle East. In this capacity, he oversees the foundation's advocacy, monitoring, research and training activities. Mhanna has previously held the position of Executive Director of the Global Forum for Media Development, focusing on monitoring violations targeting journalists and providing them with the necessary support. He has also extensively worked with issues related to election observation, electoral reform and civil society involvement. Until recently, he was a lecturer on policy development and communications at Saint Joseph University in Beirut. In 2016, he was appointed Secretary-General of the Democratic Renewal Movement, a secular, social-liberal political party in Lebanon.



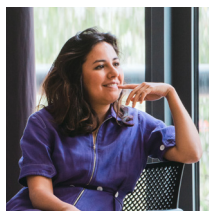
**MEGHAN  
MILLOY**

2017 European  
Young Leader

**Co-Founder & Executive Director of  
Republican Women for Progress**

**UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA**

Meghan Milloy is the Co-Founder of Republican Women for Progress (RWFP) and the Director of Strategic Communications at the Institute for International Bankers. Prior to this, she was a fellow at the Robert Bosch Foundation, where her work focused on trade issues in the German public and private sectors. Meghan previously served as the chair of Republican Women for Hillary (RWFH) and director of financial services policy at the American Action Forum (AAF). During the Obama administration, Meghan worked as a presidential management fellow at the Small Business Administration on matters of financial inclusion and as a counsel with the House Financial Services Committee. She was an intern at the National Republican Senatorial Committee and the George W. Bush White House. Meghan has also worked in the office of former Senate majority leader Trent Lott and has volunteered for the campaigns of Haley Barbour, George W. Bush, John McCain, Mitt Romney and Hillary Clinton.



**TALITHA  
MUUSSE**

2022 European  
Young Leader

**Chief Impact Officer at Blikverruimers,  
Founder of Energieboot**

**THE NETHERLANDS**

A Dutch businesswoman and entrepreneur passionate about sustainability and innovation, Talitha is involved with a number of social initiatives. She launched Blikverruimers, a training programme and recruitment selection agency for young professionals in the Netherlands, who aspire to become business leaders. She is also the driving force behind Energieboot, a leadership programme for young professionals developing sustainable energy projects. As one of the faces of the Coalition-Y movement, a partnership of youth, trade union and climate organisations, Talitha promotes youth participation in society. She also regularly appears on talk shows and previously hosted the current affairs TV programme, Op1. She started her career at MVO Nederland, an organisation which guides companies in corporate social responsibility, where she became the youngest member to sit on a supervisory board in the Netherlands nearly a decade ago. Talitha is also Member of the Advisory Board at the research institute TNO.



**ALEKSANDAR  
NIKOLOSKI**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**Vice-President of the Democratic Party for  
Macedonian National Unity**

**MACEDONIA**

A Member of the Assembly of North Macedonia, Aleksandar is the Vice-President of the country's main opposition party, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). Committed to tackling corruption and pursuing the country's EU membership, he serves as the Chairman of the National European Integration Council, in which role he facilitates the country's EU accession talks. Aleksandar is a Vice-President of the European People's Party group in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), where he also sits on the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. He previously served as vice president of PACE and first vice-chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, as well as the Monitoring Committee. Prior to his entry in politics, Aleksandar was the secretary of FRESTA, a programme led by the Danish Foreign Ministry to promote the NGO community and interethnic dialogue in south-eastern Europe.

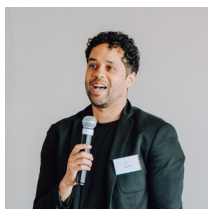


**PAOLO  
PETROCELLI**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

**Director-General for the  
Stauffer Center for Strings**

**ITALY**

Paolo is the Founding Director-General of the Stauffer Center for Strings in Italy, the first international music centre for higher education dedicated entirely to string instruments. Paolo's work is driven by the belief that culture, arts and education are a major force for growth, development and change on the global level. He is the Founder and President of EMMA for Peace (Euro-Mediterranean Music Academy), among the largest international non-profit organisations for the promotion of a culture of peace through music diplomacy and education in Europe, the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Paolo is the Founder and Honorary President of the Italian Youth Association for UNESCO, the largest youth organisation in the UNESCO system, and Cultural Diplomacy Officer for the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates. A performing arts manager, professor and researcher, he has become an influential global cultural leader, collaborating with renowned organisations and artists, including the United Nations, European Commission, Rome Opera House and Coldplay.



**JOHNNY PITTS**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

### **Multi-disciplinary artist**

**UNITED  
KINGDOM**

Johnny is a writer, photographer and broadcaster, known for his work in exploring African-European identities. He is the curator of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) award-winning Afropean.com, and the author of “Afropean: Notes From Black Europe”. He currently co-hosts the ‘Open Book’ literature programme for BBC Radio 4 and is the creator of a forthcoming Afropean podcast funded by the National Geographical Society. Johnny has contributed words and images for The Guardian, The New Statesman, The New York Times and CondéNast Traveller, and in recognition of his work, has received the Jhalak Prize, the Bread & Roses Award for Radical Publishing, the Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding and the European Essay Prize. He is the recipient of the inaugural Ampersand/Photoworks Fellowship and will be exhibiting a new body of photographic work called ‘Home is Not a Place’ in a touring exhibition beginning in 2022.



**MARKO  
RUSSIVER**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

### **Founder and CEO of Grantful**

**ESTONIA**

An Estonian designer and innovator, Marko is passionate about the open sharing of knowledge and its capabilities to shape the future. Having most recently founded Grantful, he helped launched a global online hackathon series, Hack the Crisis and The Global Hack, to address challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Marko delivered a TED talk on how the initiative could create solutions for the post-pandemic world. He is the Co-Founder and former CEO of Guaana, an online platform that connects scientists and researchers to break down barriers between disciplines. Marko is a Member of Accelerate Estonia’s Advisory Board, the Estonian Founders Society and the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs’ mental health think tank. He has worked closely with research organisations and government institutions, including CERN, the European Space Agency, Dubai Future Foundation and the European Commission, to empower researchers and innovators. Marko previously worked as a creative and art director at branding and service design companies.





**GUNDBERT  
SCHERF**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

### **Co-Founder, President and COO of Helsing**

**UNITED  
KINGDOM**

A German technology expert, Gundbert's personal mission is to make technology work for the purpose of democratic defence and security institutions. He co-founded Helsing, a security and artificial intelligence company that specialises in real-time information processing software, with the aim of strengthening Europe's liberal democracies by providing the clearest image possible of an operating environment. Assisting democratic governments in becoming technology makers not takers, Helsing has quickly become one of the fastest growing tech companies in Europe. A self-described 'transatlanticist', Gundbert is also a Member of Atlantik-Brücke, a non-profit association which aims to deepen transatlantic cooperation. Gundbert previously served as a commissioner at the German Federal Ministry of Defence, in which role he contributed to the design of the Cyber and Information Domain Command, a new military service related to the information domain.



**TAMARA  
SRZENTIC**  
2022 European  
Young Leader

### **Montenegrin Minister for Public Administration, Digital Society and Media**

**MONTENEGRO**

Tamara currently serves as the Minister of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media in Montenegro, in which role she advocates for public administration reform, digital transformation and the development of e-government services. Prior to her current role, Tamara was integral to the launch of the Government of California's Digital Innovation Office, established to improve the state's digital services. In this capacity, she led the COVID-19 digital response, the Policy Design Lab and the Inclusive by Design initiative. She is also the Co-Founder and former deputy director of the Office of Innovation at the California Health and Human Services Agency, where she was responsible for driving innovation to provide critical healthcare and social services. She has been involved with a number of organisations and programmes, including Alchemist, CivicMakers, Code for America, New America and most recently, Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA), where she provides support for public administration reform in the Western Balkans.

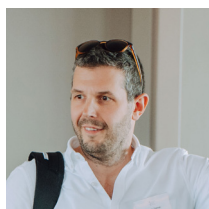


**IVAN ŠTEFUNKO**  
2015-2016  
European Young  
Leader

**Founding Chairman of Progresívne Slovensko,  
Consultant in Innovation Policies**

**SLOVAKIA**

Ivan has extensive experience in technology, media and the Internet as a serial entrepreneur and angel investor in the Slovakian venture capital industry. Ivan co-founded Progresívne Slovensko (Progressive Slovakia), a social-liberal and pro-European political movement, becoming the party's first chairman and currently serving as Vice Chairman. Prior to this, Ivan co-founded Neulogy Ventures, a management company which invests public and private funds in early stage tech companies, and Neulogy, a Bratislava-based consultancy boutique specialising in R&D management, technology commercialisation and start-up consultation. He has also been at the helm of a number of start-up companies with global or regional reach, including Diagnose.me, Pelicantravel.com, Piano Media and GA Drilling.



**DAVOR TREMAC**  
2017 European  
Young Leader

**CEO of Fonoa**

**IRELAND**

Davor is the CEO of Fonoa, a technology start-up which assists both small and large companies worldwide with tax compliance. Until recently, he served as the general manager of Uber, where he was responsible for developing the transportation network company across southeast Europe, prior to which he worked at a leading consultancy firm at which he managed media, technology and telecommunications projects in Europe and Southeast Asia. Davor co-founded and served as COO of Gourmeo, a web start-up in the premium restaurant space, which expanded across Brazil, Germany and the United Kingdom and also partnered with the best restaurants in major cities across Europe, South America and Asia. Davor is also a member of the Board of Governors of the American Chamber of Commerce in Croatia.



**RUBEN VAN  
ZWIETEN**  
2019 European  
Young Leader

**Founder and Reverend,  
De Nieuwe Poort**

**THE NETHERLANDS**

Ruben is a Dutch pastor and social entrepreneur, well-known for building bridges between the financial sector and spirituality. As a pastor he fills in for ministers, marries couples and baptises babies, as co-founder of the project Zingeving on the Zuidas (finding meaning in the Amsterdam Financial Sector), he aims to discuss a more human and moral perspective on the financial sector with its employees. Recently he opened The New Gate, a modern community house in Amsterdam and Rotterdam dedicated to philosophy, meeting people, and building a kinder society. Ruben is adviser at Goldschmeding Foundation and board member at VUMC Foundation and also member of the Dutch Monitoring Commission for banks. Dutch Newspaper De Volkskrant called him one of the nation's most influential people.

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