

"Our climate, our future!";: European students take part in a virtual Youth Summit on Climate



Students from 33 schools across Europe will hold an online European Youth Summit on Climate on 18 and 19 March 2021. The event is organised by the [European Economic and Social Committee \(EESC\)](#) and modelled on a [United Nations Climate Change Conference \(COP\)](#).

After its cancellation due to the COVID outbreak in March 2020, the 2021 Committee flagship event for young people, **Your Europe, Your Say! (YEYS)**, will take place on 18 and 19 March 2021. Students from 33 secondary schools across Europe will come together to discuss the best ways to protect the environment, under the slogan **"Our climate, our future!"**. The list of participating schools is available [here](#).

During the opening session on 18 March the participants will have the opportunity to talk with **Frans Timmermans**, Vice-President of the European Commission for the European Green Deal, and the EESC president, **Christa Schweng**. EESC vice-president and green economy expert, **Cillian Lohan**, will chair the summit's plenary sessions.

Over a hundred 16-18 year old students and more than 30 teachers will take part in the virtual YEYS 2021. The aim of the event is to listen to students' innovative ideas for dealing with the current climate crisis and to progress towards achieving our goal of becoming climate-neutral by 2050. Students will be asked to represent a sector, industry or bloc of countries and negotiate with each other. They will discuss their proposals using the model of a Conference of the Parties (COP) from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Representatives of international youth organisations such as **Anuna de Wever**, a Belgian climate activist, will help them convert their ideas and proposals into specific recommendations. **These recommendations** will be conveyed by the EESC to international environment policymakers and discussed at conferences around Europe throughout the year, such as **the [European Parliament's European Youth Event](#)** in May 2021.

On **Saturday 20 March**, in line with the COP model, the EESC will hold a **public side event** for young people live on social media, entitled **Designing Systemic Change**. The event will bring together several young experts, activists and influencers to share their knowledge and expertise on climate change in the context of systemic change. This will provide the young audience with valuable new insights and, importantly, the opportunity to express their views and ideas. In addition to the discussions, the audience will have the possibility to **discover systemic change through art**.

In preparation for the debates, a member of the EESC will visit each participating school - in person, where possible, or by videoconference - to

talk about the European Union and the EESC and the work they do for young people, and to explain the structure of the event and what will be expected from the school. The visits will take place in February and March.

Background

Your Europe, Your Say! (YEYS) is an event organised by the European Economic and Social Committee, the voice of civil society in Europe. YEYS is the Committee's flagship event for young people. It started in 2010 with the aim of connecting Europe's youngest citizens with the European Union.

The 33 schools chosen to participate in this initiative were selected randomly from 800 applicant schools from the 27 EU Member States, the United Kingdom and five candidate countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). Every year, 16-18 year old students come to Brussels for two days and work together to draw up resolutions, which are then passed on to the international policymakers. These resolutions contain the students' ideas, proposals, and hopes for their future as European citizens.

Any secondary school in Europe can apply to send three students to participate in YEYS. Through this initiative, the EESC hopes to ensure that the views, experiences, and ideas of Europe's younger generations are taken on board in the EU policymaking process.

Further details about YEYS 2021 are available on the [event's official page](#).

[embedded content]