

#YEYS2021: European young generation takes up challenges and delivers its say on climate change



Concrete proposals were handed to the European Commission's Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans by high school students from all over Europe, who took part in a virtual Youth Summit on Climate organised by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on 18-19 March 2021.

Young Europeans have a say in the EU's future: without your calls for action the [European Green deal](#) would not have been here , said [Mr Timmermans](#) welcoming the event [Your Europe your say 2021](#). I am really impressed at your in-depth understanding of the climate change problem and at the way you presented your proposals to me, this is the way to live, understand each other, it's extremely difficult to hate a person that you can understand, he concluded.

After two days of lively virtual discussions and debates, over 234 students aged 16-18 participating in #YEYS2021 developed concrete recommendations, which they presented during a final plenary session.

The students had to wear the hat of a stakeholder group in a simulation of a [United Nations Climate Change Conference](#) (COP) and work together with other groups to create a plan to limit global warming to safe levels of well below 1.5° C by the end of the century. The groups represented real sectors and industries, whose activities and advocacy influence global warming.

The [proposals](#) included:

- Planting city trees and installing vertical gardens
- “Ecological-Manhattan-Project” for the EU, investing vast amounts in new technologies
- Investing in more education for the general public
- Implementing tailor-made policies that respond to each country's specific circumstances
- Supporting afforestation as one of the most efficient long-term solutions in carbon removal
- Introducing hydrogen and biogas while phasing out fossil fuels
- Closing the gap between developed and developing nations

The final plan created by the young Europeans predicted a temperature increase of +1.4°C by 2100, thus reaching the goal of the exercise, and was presented by eight students.

Students were welcomed by [Christa Schweng](#), President of the EESC, who said: *I am full of hope for the future of Europe and confident that the next European generation is in good hands. We need a green transition to a green economy*

*that leaves no one behind. To achieve this, we need active citizens. This starts with involving young people. **Cillian Lohan**, Vice-President of the EESC in charge of communication, closed the event with these remarks: *I hope the experience of YEYS has given you the desire to be active citizens, we need your participation for democracy to be strong. The youth movement has shown that change can come from the streets. Today we help those demands for more action to resonate in the corridors of power.**

During the event, the students had the opportunity to share their ideas and views with different guests, such as the Belgian climate activists **Anuna de Wever** and **Adelaide Charlier**; **Samuel Masse**, President of the European Council of Young Farmers; and **Ska Keller**, Co-President of the Greens/European Free Alliance Group at the European Parliament, who said: *We are not inventing the wheel; there is a lot of research! We know what procedures to adopt and implement at national level! The Climate Law is a very important step! This is really thanks to the outside pressure and youth engagement.*

Background:

After its cancellation due to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, the 2021 Committee's flagship event for young people selected 33 schools, one from each of the 27 EU Member States and five candidate countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey) and one from the UK.

Through this initiative, the EESC aims to ensure that the views, experiences and ideas of the younger generation are taken on board in EU policy-making.

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