New Concept for Europe: About the initiative

Europe has many strengths including a rich legacy of cultural heritage, democratic norms and leading economies, but it is fractured by a decade of crisis management. Lacking a shared sense of what needs to be done, and in what order, Europe must develop a modern, shared vision based on a strong reform agenda that recognizes different needs and ensures mutual benefits and progress for all EU members and close neighbours.

The World Economic Forum’s New Concept for Europe initiative will provide decision-makers with ideas at the Annual Meeting 2018. As Europe’s spirit and success rest on its unique intergenerational social contract, the initiative emphasizes the voice of youth. It expresses their vision for the future of Europe and captures the values about which they care most.

“Now more than ever we must stand up for European values and I call on youth to create their Europe.”

Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman, World Economic Forum

In June 2017, the Forum created the Youth Champions community, comprising 35 young adults and representatives from European youth organizations. Over the following months, these champions organized brainstorming sessions in their communities and collected input from all walks of life. In parallel, the Europe Policy Group was established. Consisting of more than 130 government, business and civil society leaders, the group has been developing ideas aimed at challenging conventional thinking and translating long-term aspirations for Europe. Once the first stage of work of both groups was completed, their members met and produced suggestions for policy recommendations, each of which was assigned a working group:
- Democracy and governance
- Energy and sustainability
- Human-centric economy
- Migration and borders
- Security and defence

Reshaping Europe Meeting: 28-29 September, Milan, Italy

German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen opened the meeting, which brought both groups together. Her theme of leveraging diversity and scale to strengthen European leadership resonated through the subsequent discussions.
The Youth Champions explored what tools Europe needs to empower its young people to be more active citizens. They stressed the need to make clear what Europe does for its people, and to create ways beyond party politics for greater public engagement.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution can potentially provide tools to engage and redefine relationships between institutions, businesses and citizens in Europe. Panellists explored how accelerated innovation and digital change is both offering new means to collaborate and creating fractures within society.

After the working groups refined their key ideas, participants selected their favourites, which included “lowering the voting age to 16 across the continent” and “creating a universal learning right for all citizens”.

The New Leaders for Europe community, a group of rising political stars, explored new models of leadership and governance in Europe that contribute to achieving the aspirations of the New Concept for Europe initiative.

Next steps

The working groups are finalizing their ideas, which will be collated and presented in a report, the draft of which will be available in early January before its formal launch on 22 January. Beginning in December 2017, articles about the initiative will be available in the European media.

On 25 January, the Forum will present the New Concept for Europe to European leaders at the Annual Meeting.
Europe Policy Group Aspirations

Democracy and governance

We aspire to rebuild trust in democratic principles and the rule of law, by making institutions and processes more transparent, open and responsive to citizens. Technology driven solutions offer opportunities to increase transparency and engage citizens, but also create challenges, such as fake news.

Europe should seek to strengthen its global role as a values-based norm setter of democratic governance of technology. Europe can uphold the rule of law and enhance civil liberties online.

Energy and sustainability

We aspire for Europe to lead the implementation of the Paris climate agreement and therefore encourage citizens to drive the change to affordable and net-zero carbon power, heat and transport. We must free our energy data, give all consumers the right to generate and trade energy, better integrate energy markets inside the EU and with its neighbours, and empower entrepreneurs to create new technological solutions.

We invite stronger political leadership to accelerate the journey to digitize, decarbonize, decentralize and democratize our energy supply journey. This is something that requires both smart transition planning and regulation.

Security and defence

We aspire for European governments and societies to take greater responsibility for their own security and defence. Diverse threats demand greater collective European institutional, material and political capacity.

Citizens experiencing the daily effects of insecurity – whether from terrorism, mass migration or cyberattacks – rightly demand that their governments set more ambitious targets.

Europe should aspire to be the dominant security actor in its region, capable of acting independently to project security around its neighbourhood. No European nation can aspire to play this regional role alone: the EU should be at the heart of this process, making full use of its strategic partnership with NATO.

Human-centric economy

We aspire to build a Europe that empowers citizens to be at the centre of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, maximizing the impact of new technologies on well-being, growth, innovation and job creation through investment and a new social contract.

This implies investing in “skills for tomorrow”, with a shift in mindset towards more fluid job markets and a commitment to lifelong learning; investing in critical digital assets and technologies; adapting welfare and taxation systems to the Fourth Industrial Revolution economy; and putting human values at the centre of data and tech regulation.

Migration and open borders

We aspire to create an inclusive Europe, which harnesses migration for economic growth. Countries must work together to develop a unified system to gather, process and share information on arriving migrants. A common policy should give individual countries flexibility in terms of quotas, and include mechanisms to incentivize countries to accept more migrants.

We aspire to improve the integration of migrants and create a Europe free from xenophobia, changing the narrative on migration by highlighting success stories and dispelling myths. We must create policies that transform Europe into the preferred destination for high-skilled immigration.

Contact

For more information, please contact:
Martina Larkin, Head of Europe and Eurasia, Member of the Executive Committee, martina.larkin@weforum.org