



PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
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What Will the EU Become When It Grows Up? Young people's visions on the future of the European Union

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Young people's visions on the future
of the European Union

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Abstract <p>What Will the EU Become When It Grows Up? Young people's visions on the future of the EU' is a statement depicting how the European Union would ideally look in 20 years' time. It comprises three main themes: Finland's role in the EU and the EU's global role, structures and institutions, and the European identity and participation among young people. These themes are expressed through ten visions.</p> <p>While the statement sees much room for improvement in the EU, the Union is also viewed as the solution to many problems. The EU must become more democratic, strengthen its social aspects and engage in deeper, more extensive integration. Finland has a great deal to offer European cooperation. European citizenship is based on common values, a shared culture and interaction between people.</p> <p>The statement regards the realisation of intergenerational justice within the EU as vital to participation by young people. Universally available education will create trust in the future, as well as strengthening expertise. In terms of the economy, practices should be further harmonised and the European Central Bank should be accorded a stronger role. In environmental matters, a vision is offered of the EU as a trailblazer that fulfils its global responsibilities across a broad front of policy areas.</p> <p>Young People's Working Group on the Future of the EU; assignment</p> <p><i>Objective:</i></p> <p>The objective of the Group is to draw up a statement on how the European Union should be developed in order to bolster and secure its status as an effective, vital mode of cooperation between European countries. As its main aim, the Group will act as a sounding board for Finnish youth, on the content and focus areas of official EU policy.</p> <p><i>Schedule and activities:</i></p> <p>The Group will begin its work on 13 February 2013 and continue running until 30 April 2013 at the latest, so that its statement is published prior to the preparation of the Government's Report on EU Policy. The Group will elect three chairpersons from among its 26 members.</p> <p>According to the preliminary schedule, it will submit its report to Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade, Alexander Stubb on 19 April 2013.</p> <p>While the Group will determine its own approach, aside from the initial and report handover meetings the aim is for it to perform most of its work on a virtual basis.</p> <p>Concerns about the future of European cooperation, and a desire to involve young Finns in the discussion of Finland's role in the EU, lie behind this initiative. Since the value and importance of European cooperation are not self-evident, it is important that we lend an ear to the thoughts and viewpoints of young people on the future of European cooperation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The European Union has undergone profound changes in the form of enlargement, the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, and the economic crisis and the measures taken in response. So, what is the future of the EU like in terms of its various tasks and policy areas? What areas should the EU primarily try to influence on behalf of its citizens? - European cooperation is strongly based on economic cooperation, originally in the hope of preventing future wars. Since then, the internal market has grown into the world's largest and most important economic area. The common currency, the euro, represents European economic cooperation in one of its most prominent forms. How, in the short, middle and, especially, the long term, should the European Monetary Union (EMU) be developed following the prospective banking union? - Throughout its membership, Finland's role within the EU has been a major topic of conversation. What policy lines should Finland follow in our shared union? What kind of relationship do decision-makers at national and EU-level have with their citizens, and how might such a relationship be developed? - Is there such a thing as a European identity? Could a European identity supersede national identities; or is a European and national identity mutually exclusive at all, for that matter? What should be done in Europe to address this issue? - As globalisation continues, Europe is integrating. What does the EU mean to young people? And what can be done to promote participation by young people? How can we engage young people and guarantee that future generations take an interest in European cooperation? 	

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FOREWORD

What will the EU become when it grows up?

#grownupEU #detvuxnaEU

At the end of this year, Finland became a fully-fledged adult member of the European Union. Now, 18 years since Finland's EU membership referendum, we can justifiably refer to young people as the "E generation". We are European in a very different way to our parents and grandparents. We live within a European culture, and travel, study, work and fall in love on the continent. We participate in European society and politics and want to develop Europe.

These visions of the future give a glimpse of how we 26 young Europeans want the European Union to look when it grows up. While, in many respects, this is a work in progress, we did not allow our outlook to be overcast by grim political realities and gloomy financial news. The European Union is a dream, not a plan set in stone, and there are as many opinions on its future as there are people expressing them. The visions given below represent the writers' dreams, which we can and should discuss.

Our working group would like to thank Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade Alexander Stubb (@alexstubb) and the Government (@valtioneuvosto) for convening the group and, in particular, Parliamentary Assistant Miika Tomi (@MiikaTomi) for making its work possible.

Building a Europe of the future will require great effort from Finland, lasting at least until our EU membership has reached middle age. We have opened a discussion on this – please join in. Whatever the EU is set to become, it already plays an important part in our lives.

Helsinki, 19 April 2013

On behalf of the working group,

Milla Ovaska, Matti Niemi and Robert Torvelainen
Chairpersons

*The characters # and @ pepper the text.
These are references to Twitter, a social networking service.
You can comment on the group's activities there, using the hashtags
#mikaEUstaisona, #detvuxnaEU or #grownupEU.*

The EU needs greater democratic accountability

#lisäävaltaakansalle #meidänEU

Development of the EU must be based on popular consent, which can only be achieved through democratic reforms. In future, the EU will be close to its citizens, who will be interested in and knowledgeable of EU matters. The EU will genuinely be steered by its citizens.

The EU will undergo structural reform. The key legislative organ will be its Parliament, of which the current European Parliament will act as the Lower House. The Upper House will consist of representatives of the member states, elected through a direct popular vote. The Commission will serve as the EU Government, elected by Parliament based on its political alignments.

Both Parliament and the Government will have the right to propose legislative bills. The Government must enjoy the confidence of Parliament. In addition to national lists of candidates, Parliamentary elections will use common, Union-wide candidate lists, based on U-wide rather than national parties.

The Union will have adopted a citizens' initiative and referenda that enable direct participation in politics by citizens. Direct, EU-wide referenda on reforms of basic treaties and the EU citizens' initiative will serve to open up debates. They will increase the EU's democratic representativeness and create a common European forum. Legitimacy cannot be conferred on the EU through communication alone; instead, citizens must feel that they exercise ownership over the Union, while being willing and able to have a say in its activities.

Deeper and wider integration

#lisääjäsenmaita #talouden tulevaisuus

The EU will hold onto its European values, democracy and human rights, and follow a development path towards federalism. In the future EU, decisions will be made at the most appropriate level in each case. The EU will expand to include Turkey and the Balkans. Europe will have a shared economy which must be managed together.

Decisions will be made at the most suitable level in each case. This means dealing with supranational problems, for example those related to the environment, at multinational level, while handling the detail at the level of citizens. Local decision-making will be held in high regard, while acknowledging the benefits of supranational decision-making when agreeing on major policies and goals. Transfer of decision-making power to EU level will no longer seem like the end of the world.

The European Union will continue to observe the principle of enlargement. This will support the Union's fundamental principle of guaranteeing and preserving peace. Enlargement will bring the opportunities represented by Europe to millions of new citizens. States seeking to become members will be required to fulfil all accession criteria, terms and conditions before being accepted. Particular attention must be paid to human rights and the realisation of democracy within membership candidates.

Concern has been raised about human rights and the state of democracy within Turkey, in particular, whose membership negotiations have proceeded at a sluggish pace. In order for Turkey to become a future member state, the EU will actively support the development of human rights and democracy within the country.

The European economy will be built on a sustainable foundation: its economy based on sound public and private economies, with growth-promoting structural reforms and efficient internal markets. A shared, responsible European economy will mean the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union, and new unions will have been created to achieve this: a banking union, and a taxation and political union. Democratic structures will have been strengthened: sharing of risks and responsibilities will require more comprehensive, stronger common oversight. This will secure an Economic and Monetary Union, regarded as sustainable because it is fair and has a sound legal basis.

The European Central Bank (ECB) will play a key role in ensuring the stability of the European financial system. In the future, the ECB will prioritise employment as well as low inflation. It will act as a lender of last resort for member states and thereby guarantee their solvency. Public and private debt in the Euro zone will be reduced in a sustainable fashion. The ECB will support not only the financial system, but also sustainable consumption in member states. The imbalance in the European economy will be corrected through an equal focus on current account deficits and surpluses, backed up by sanctions where necessary.

Taxes could be harmonised to a reasonable extent, while duly respecting each member state and its interests. For example, an economically destructive race to the bottom in terms of corporate taxation rates could be avoided through harmonisation. The EU will strive to root out tax havens, both within the Union and globally. It will also adopt a financial market tax to prevent harmful forms of speculation and to gather revenue for common purposes.

Our future Europe will not march forward in lockstep. Within the limits of the EU Treaty, member states with the desire and resources for closer and deeper cooperation may forge ahead. Others, which opt for looser forms of cooperation, will follow on later. However, a multi-speed Europe must also cater for the interests of all members and avoid the formation of elite groups of states.

The EU takes care of its citizens

#yhteisvastuuhmisistä #NordicModel #EqualOpportunity

Europe has collective responsibility for its people. A social guarantee will be implemented in the European Union, guaranteeing all citizens sufficient income, a home, employment opportunities and education. Wellbeing will be the guarantor of social stability. Society's wellbeing will be measured using indicators other than economic growth, which will no longer be unreflectively regarded as a self-evident goal. Shared responsibility will be borne by and for the people, not solely for the sake of the economy. Europe will be a continent of opportunity.

The EU of the future will have shifted from measuring GDP to sustainable development, the well-being of citizens and the environment, education, health, employment and happiness.

Together with the other Nordic countries, Finland will promote the Nordic welfare-state model within the EU. Closer integration will require greater social cooperation within the Union. Based on employment and a strong public sector, the Nordic model will create a strong foundation for this. The EU is home a wide array of social security systems – these differences will be narrowed by moving towards commonly dimensioned systems.

The Finnish model of a youth guarantee has proven necessary and has been expanded into a social guarantee for people of all ages. Prevention of social exclusion will ensure that citizens stay connected as active participants in society. Such a social guarantee will make young people feel confident and secure about their futures, giving them the courage and ability to study and work. The entrepreneurial, creative spirit is based on wellbeing. Prevention of social problems is ultimately more cost-effective than clearing up the costs and consequences of allowing issues to come to a head. An EU tax to pay for the social guarantee will create a feeling of true ownership.

Finland: from the mainstream to the crest of the wave

#itsetunto #futuremaker #arvojohtaja

As an EU member and actor, Finland will be aware of its own strengths and have healthy confidence and trust in its own expertise. It will build, solve problems, network and be proactive at every level of preparation. In the EU, Finland will be a peacemaker that acts pre-emptively in order to influence the policy lines underlying decision-making. In relation to its population size, Finland will punch above its weight in the EU. It will proactively champion a Nordic social model based on which every European has equal opportunities to lead a fulfilling life.

Finland will identify problems requiring European-level action and boldly champion its own solution models. Finland will generate international visibility for its own good practices, such as the youth guarantee. While complying with the rules, it will be more vocal in its demands on others, by promoting stronger supervision mechanisms. Finland will strive towards common solutions but have a bolder impact on the content of decisions, with the aim of promoting the fulfilment of the EU's vision. Continuous, fruitful and lively discussion of the EU's future will take place within the media, political life and the public administration: in what direction would we like to take the Union?

This EU conversation will be conducted in everyday language, avoiding abstruse concepts. Political parties will publish their own EU visions and give clear explanations of their ideas on the direction and objectives of integration. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will take advantage of the opportunities, afforded by the EU, to network and have an impact. They will also bring new perspectives to the Finnish discussion on the EU. Rather than simply relaying government statements, the media will generate multifaceted, impartial and well-researched articles on the EU.

Values will be the cross-cutting theme of Finland's EU policy. Finland will reform and develop the Nordic model, based on equality, equal opportunities and an inclusive welfare state, and work alongside the other Nordic countries to promote this model at EU level. The model will be based on equal opportunities to enjoy wellbeing and a fulfilling life, for all Europeans regardless of where they are born on the continent. The boundary line between Europe's core and peripheral regions will be erased and poverty eliminated.

A strong European identity

#YhteinenEurooppa #grassrootsEU #iknowmyEU

The future will be characterised by awareness of EU policy and the alternatives, and the Finnish people will have the desire and ability to influence EU policy making. Hundreds of millions of Europeans will intermingle in their everyday lives. Europeans will understand their own, shared cultural heritage and its national characteristics. Citizens will understand their rights and the Union, because they finance the latter directly through their taxes.

People will be generally aware of the various areas of EU policy and understand their effect on daily life. In schools, because the EU is based on cooperation in multiple sectors, EU issues will run through all subjects. For all Finnish pupils and students, student exchanges, friendship school activities and informal learning experiences at youth meetings enabled by the EU, will be familiar aspects of educational life. European history will be taught using common teaching materials. This will teach us to think of Europe as a whole, rather than emphasising the special characteristics of our own countries. Education will focus on the history of European peoples and cultures rather than nation states.

People will be aware of their own rights as citizens of the Union. They will also be aware of European issues and take an interest in the continent's future. People will feel that the EU plays a concrete role in their lives. Low election turnouts will be a thing of the past, and having an impact will be easy and rewarding.

Achieving a common Europe will require knowledge of our shared cultural heritage. To new generations, Otto von Bismarck, Jean Monnet and Victor Hugo will be as familiar as J.V. Snellman, Aleksis Kivi and Jean Sibelius. The European Broadcasting Company and other pan-European media outlets will be channels for daily information. European films and popular culture will attain high popularity through a pan-European cultural prize. In addition to the Eurovision song contest, joint media spectacles for EU citizens will include live broadcasts of European Parliament election nights and the European Film Festival.

When preparing decisions and drawing up an impact strategy, attention will be paid to the idea of an internationally networked, active civic society. Citizens will take part in building a shared identity and voluntary activities will flourish. The Union will support the activities of NGOs and strengthen European civic society and its capabilities.

In the EU, education belongs to everyone

#educatedEU #nuortenEU #rajatonta rakkautta

Education will be at the centre of European development and form a main pillar of the European welfare state. It will be used to promote an equal, democratic and participative society. High expertise will form the foundation of strong competitiveness.

A greying Europe will understand that its hopes lie with young people. It will invest in this age group by providing it with some of the fairest treatment and most promising conditions on a global scale.

Education will be viewed as a social investment, a normal part of life available to all citizens. The costs borne by private individuals will have been minimised and educational expenditure will be covered from public funds. Degrees within the European area will be mutually comparable and will include an element of mobility and internationalisation. Both high school qualifications and higher education degrees will match the requirements of working life. No university graduates will need to work without pay as "interns". The value and benefits of informal education will be recognised.

Student organisations will be an essential stakeholder in political decision-making on education and students will be represented at all levels of educational administration. Student organisations will be viewed as an important part of European civic society. In Europe, young people will have uniform opportunities to succeed in life. Europe will be a continent where young people are full members of society who help to build it. The public administration will leverage the international expertise, language skills and social capital of the younger generations and boldly recruit young people for EU policy-making.

Labour will move freely and effortlessly from one member state to the next, because degrees and professional qualifications will be recognised everywhere, based on mutual standards. Participation in exchange programmes will be commonplace among people of all ages, both in studies and working life. IT will be used to open and maintain contacts from home.

European values as part of identity

#arvokkaatarvot #rightsbased EU

Decisions in the European Union will be taken on the basis of values. The Union was established to maintain peace in Europe through cooperation and democracy, rather than isolation and arms races. The EU will operate globally, in accordance with its values. Within the EU, everyone's human rights will be respected and discrimination will not be tolerated. Human rights and the rule of law will be monitored based on a Directive on the Rule of Law.

The EU will promote its key values on the global political stage: the right to lead a life with human dignity, promotion of democracy, an egalitarian world, peace and ecological values. The EU will promote these values consistently, rather than bowing to financial interests. In trade

policy, it will wield its might to promote human rights: EU cooperation will be conditional and countries that violate human rights will be subjected to economic boycotts.

Legislatively, the Union will have long lived up to its responsibilities of acting in line with its values and the social dimension. Discrimination in working life on the basis of age, gender, special needs, ethnic background or any other factor will be a thing of the past. A representative body for young people will have been officially designated as an advisory body of the EU, NGOs will have been given broader opportunities to have an influence, and the EU will have drafted a treaty on the rights of young people. Employers will be open-minded about hiring disabled persons and will be prepared to change the working environment and work conditions to accommodate disabled persons as equal members of the work community. Employment in the future will be based on a broad range of organisations.

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law must be realised without exception within Europe too. The European Union will have passed a directive on the rule of law, imposing concrete obligations at institutional level. A supervisory organ for democratic rights and the rule of law will be appointed, to monitor the directive's implementation.

An ecologically sustainable EU

#edelläkävijyys #GreenNewDeal #carbonneutralEU

The EU will solve the economic, social and ecological crisis through a green economy revolution. On behalf of future generations, the EU will declare itself an environmentally sustainable community and promote sustainable development on a global scale. Sustainable development and intergenerational justice in environmental matters will be watchwords when drafting regulations, and Europe will boldly lead the rest of the world by example, while demanding green reforms. Clean energy will power the entire EU.

The EU will invest in green education, green entrepreneurship and the Green New Deal, a green employment programme for the public sector. Economic growth and consumption of natural resources will have been dimensioned to environmental limits and society's development will be measured using meaningful indicators. The EU's assets in the global markets will be green technology, energy efficiency and the service economy, inspiring other economies to join the race to take the ecological lead.

The EU will reduce its emissions by 40% by 2020 and declare that it will become carbon neutral by 2040. It will reform emissions trading, and adopt carbon duties and a carbon tax. Under the leadership of the EU, the United Nations will agree on a fair, ambitious and binding framework of climate agreements that will halt global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The EU will shift to clean and efficient power generation, transfer and consumption. By 2040, all electricity within the EU will be based on clean energy and, led by the EU, the world will turn its back on fossil fuels. The EU will build three large networks: a super-grid for electricity transfer to joint energy markets, the world's most advanced railroad network, and a charging network for electric vehicles. Moving around Europe will be effortless and environmentally friendly thanks to new, high-speed rail networks. Efficient transport connections linking the entire continent will have been guaranteed for small member states, located on Europe's periphery.

An influential, global and fair EU

#fairplay #globalpower #responsibility

The EU will be an influential, global player that acts in line with its values. It will create a secure surrounding environment through a fair, proactive approach. The EU will be a unified international actor, with a clear strategy and vision of the future.

The various EU policy sectors will act in concert, on behalf of global justice. The EU will enable the global South to develop, by signing fair trade agreements and halting unfair support for agricultural overproduction and overfishing.

The EU will have set up an External Relations Service with a clearly defined organisation and duties, led by a strong political figure elected on the basis of parliamentary representation, and pursuing the EU's interests on the world stage. The External Relations Service will have a broad outlook on global issues and present the outside world with a more consistent EU policy, by coordinating and harmonising the EU's various policy areas.

The EU will hold a uniform line within international institutions, with its own umbrella strategy and security concept, transforming it into a heavyweight in world politics.

A secure EU, secure frontier areas

#muuritonEU #eiuuttaSyriaa #peacemakerEU

The European Union will have a well-functioning society in which different cultures peacefully co-exist. Through a common immigration policy, a greying Union will avoid stagnation. Rather than erecting barriers, the EU will be known as a peacemaker and creator of wellbeing, as well as a disseminator of democracy and rule of law. The EU will act as an influential peacemaker in its neighbouring areas and will no longer permit the development of catastrophes such as that in Syria.

In neighbouring areas, the EU will exercise fair trade, agricultural and fishing policies, allowing neighbouring countries to improve their living conditions. This will be reflected in an easing of immigration pressures and more stable neighbouring areas.

Immigration policy will be fair and uniform. The EU will have developed its own model of immigration policy, providing immigrants with better integration and employment opportunities. A stable and wealthy EU will feel no need to scapegoat the 'other'. It will still live up to its major responsibilities towards humanitarian refugees.

The EU will take an active stance towards its neighbouring areas, implementing policies that prevent the emergence of situations such as the conflict in Syria. Through various agreements and programmes, it will support the development of democracy and democratic participation among the citizens of its neighbouring areas. The EU will act as a peace envoy in the region. However, when necessary, closer defence cooperation and sufficient defence materiel will enable it to exert stronger diplomatic pressure and mount effective joint military operations.



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