

# LEAP

THE NEXT STEP FOR EUROPE

## THE NEW SCHUMAN DECLARATION

BY YOUNG EUROPEAN CITIZENS



## A EUROPE FOR CITIZENS FUNDED PROGRAM

Funding stream: European remembrance  
– The EU as a peace project



L'Europe pour  
les citoyens

“Since the creation of the European Union, the European project has aimed to preserve and promote peace between the nations of the continent.

However last year a war has broken out between Ukraine and Russia, as Ukraine has suffered a Russian invasion. We have learned that it's possible to find alternatives and solutions to problems without going through wars and violence. Even if it's complicated, we can find other Peaceful solutions can be found for everyone to be able to live a peaceful life.

This requires continuing to strengthen and unify the European, in multiples areas. This also leads us to reflect on certain other points which could add to the global vision of what the Union could be like. We have therefore decided to write a new Schuman declaration in order to reflect on these points of improvement. It is this subject that we, the LEAP project participants, composed of citizens of different nationalities, Portuguese, Romanian, German and French, have thought about. We have written a new Schuman declaration including three main areas that matter to us as young European citizens: Education, Solidarity and political participation.

Education foundations needs to be changed from the roots, new generation's ways of thinking and acting evolve as their environment and the challenges it faces change. Therefore, educational approaches need to evolve as well and this is the first area we wish to address in this declaration. Young Europeans are the future, so as part of an Union, every country should strive towards more equal educational possibilities. This includes recognizing the worth of teachers, trainers and youth workers. The digital world is growing and evolving, which affects the lives of citizens, all EU citizens should be granted free and accessible digital literacy education. This brings us to the topic of informal education, non-formal education and the right to have access to education and training in all forms throughout one's life whether it be at a young age, middle age or as a senior. Vocational Education should also keep being developed, especially in areas that are a priority at a European level, such as the jobs related to the green deal.

Europe always has been on the forefront on an economic level and we have to keep guaranteeing that we do so without compromising on our social and human rights. As technology has become a part of daily life, the more important it becomes not to forget that some dangers may come from it if not used responsibly. Indeed, fake news, misinformation and disinformation are a source of danger that citizens should be educated to detect and fight. Finally we believe that Civic Education is key and should be implemented and reinforced in all EU countries for young citizens to feel prepared to enter adulthood not only in terms of values but also on actual skills and competence which are applied in daily life such as “How to do taxes”, “how to rent or buy a home” and so on.

As Young European Citizens, we wish to be part of a Union in which no distinction is made when an act of solidarity is needed. Solidarity is vast and should be applied to all aspects of life and should be stronger than profitability. Whether a country is in need of help, whether it be geographical near or far, whether it be an economic partner or political ally, we believe that the Union should help its people in need. No country, nor their citizens should be left behind when in need.

Solidarity applies to the environmental crisis and actions taken to combat it. The fight should not be the responsibility of some. We must be united as individuals, as well as on local, national and supra-national levels, in this fight which is the greatest challenge currently facing humankind. Mutual support in the common interest of living in a peaceful and thriving world should be our aim.

The final area we focused on is political participation. Nowadays, especially for young citizens, it is not only important to vote but also to practice other forms of political participation, such as participating in online petitions, and debating on social media. The full prevalence of this was seen during the war in Ukrainian, where regardless of it being an election time, we saw a huge political shift in the priorities of the people. The support for help to Ukrainian refugees and civilians, and to a lesser point the support for Ukrainian armed forces, was showcased on social media platforms, and not through a bill, a vote or an official petition. This showcased the importance of those tools for citizens to express their thoughts and for them to practice active citizenship and political participation. Forms of active citizenship and political participation include, but are not limited to:

- Youth forums, youth councils, debates at a high level of frequency and open to all willing to partake regardless of previous political participation, party affiliations and being part of a civil society as a consultative body for the executive power of which the decisions should be able to lead to public voting.
- Referendums, before an important decision is made, meaning that if a political decision has a particular impact on a specific group of people, they should have a chance to easily express how they feel about it, with this opinion having an actual impact.
- Feedback systems, including online forms, for citizens to be able to express how they feel about the decisions that affect them, allowing for more opportunities to express opinions, richer than a yes/no vote or picking between two candidates.

In order for this and all forms of political participation to work in a proper way, we must improve political literacy and make it easier for citizens to participate and think critically about the decision making processes, by measures such as, but not limited to:

Expanding Europe Direct, allowing it to be a tool to improve political literacy, especially with young people, as they are the future of Europe. Allowing to train youngsters to act as ambassadors of information in their local communities, in collaboration with Youth Information and Counseling institutions and organizations, national Youth institutes, and all those that are involved in bringing quality information to youngsters.

Including political literacy in school curriculums, while at the same time making it easier to understand the legislative and executive procedures, by doing “translations” of the decision making in a clear and youth friendly way, with examples that enable all, regardless of their age and academic background to understand the decisions that affect them, without being familiar with political slang, abbreviations, and complicated language. This would ease access to information and enable all citizens to think critically about topics of importance.

Including more representatives of youth at a local, regional, national, and European level, by including youngsters in the lists for the elections, for all the levels, lowering the required age, and the prejudice against decision makers of a younger age as it is shameful that in a big part of European countries, and in its institutions it is rare to see youngsters (up to 30 years old) at all which is not representative neither of the electors age groups or of their expressed needs and desires.

Facilitating partnership creation with relevant stakeholders, such as, but not limiting to the Council of Europe, and continuous Implementation of campaigns (such as the Democracy Here Now) to work with the youth in order to revitalize democracy. Democracy is at risk, especially considering the rise of political extremism, and the prevalence of populist and nationalistic agendas.

Recognizing of the importance of NGOs, Non-profits, civil movements, student associations, institutes, foundations, activists, among other civil society actors which have a key importance in the implementation of European policies, and the need of consulting them to be able to better legislate areas of their expertise.

Democracy and peace are not granted, 70 years ago Robert Schuman realized that. If we, as European Citizens do not want to suffer as previous generations have, and wish to avoid wars in Europe as Schuman also aimed to, then we must value active citizenship, education, and practice the solidarity. Concrete action was what Robert Schuman strived towards in his declaration and we follow this mindset as we believe citizens should use every tool available even create new ones in order to make sure our governments, executive branches, and legislators are as representative and accountable as possible.”

The LEAP Project participants young citizens of Europe



L'Europe pour  
les citoyens

