Young People and the EU

What are the challenges young people face?

In general, young people's **trust of public institutions** at all levels is falling. In addition, whilst young people generally support the EU, there are **increasing levels of Euro-scepticism** within society

Many young people in the consultation reported having **low levels of knowledge of the EU** and its functions, and feel that they **do not receive enough information** about it or how citizens can participate in it. Some consultation reports identified that when national media speak about the EU, the messages they convey can very often biased which can contribute to an increase euro-scepticism. On the other side, young people feel they receive little accessible information directly from EU institutions about the concrete impact of EU decisions on their everyday lives. This has created the image of the EU and "**mythical Brussels**" as an **"apparatus" that is far away** from the lives of the citizens and that regulates only very abstract subjects, sometimes lacking in transparency.

At the same time, some consultation reports voiced young people's call for **reform of EU institutions** and for changes in its relationship with both citizens and member states. However, there was **no clear consensus on the direction of reform** and country reports had very different perspectives. One consistent message was the desire to **promote and strengthen democratic representation**.

What is young people's vision for the future?

Young people in the consultation would like EU institutions and their representatives, such as M.E.P.s, to **feel more familiar to them.** Citizens should be fully aware of the opportunities that the EU is enabling for them and to their countries. There is a sense the **EU needs to feel linked directly to young people's lives** and their activities on a local and regional level. At the same time, young people should be able to see the bigger picture of the EU and the common ground that exists across the union as a cohesive element.

Young people wish to receive **more positive factual reports** and information about the EU directly from the EU institutions, or a media industry based around them. Many working groups referred to the desire for **continuous** updates delivered through **channels that young people use**. These should be "not in form of documents and strategies" and convey information about EU principles, functioning, the outcomes of decisions, and EU processes.

Some young people feel that promoting democracy and transparency within the EU may also require **reforms in relation to democratic processes**, such as strengthening the European Parliament, or other mechanisms to more directly engage young people in EU institutions. It is hoped that increased publicity, transparency and democracy will lead to a **reduction in Euroscepticism.**

What solutions did young people propose in the consultation?
Solutions suggested in the consultation were:

- **Improving publicity from the EU**. This was said to require use of youth friendly language, and media and online channels that young people use. Innovative online tools such as mobile applications and websites could also enable dialogue directly between young people and institutions.

- Providing **more formal and non-formal education on the EU**. This could be delivered in schools, youth settings or through online courses. It may also require **better training for educators.**

- Developing programs for young people to **attend events or visits** to European institutions e.g. summer schools, internships, visits to MEPs offices.

- Increasing the **visibility of EU youth programmes** such as Erasmus+ or the Youth Guarantee.

- **Increasing participation** of young people within EU decisions making, e.g. by strengthening the European Youth Parliament, the Structured Dialogue process, or establish stronger processes for representing young people within the EU institutions.

- Creating **stronger links between MEPs and young people**, and increasing the influence of the European Parliament.

- **Increasing cooperation between EU institutions and youth civil society**, to encourage youth civil society to promote the EU at local level, for instance through peer to peer education or EU young ambassadors

Structured Dialogue Cycle VI Thematic report (please consult the Introduction document to the Final Reports for the methodology)
Authors: Dan Moxon and Ondrej Barta from The Pool of European Youth Researchers

The Survey Data

How important is this issue to young people?

This issue ranks fourteenth and nineteenth (the last) among the priorities, as rated by the young people. It has been measured by two separate items: item focusing on developing understanding of how the EU works among young people ranked fourteenth among priorities of the young people; and item focusing on the general support of the EU by the young people ranked last (nineteenth) as rated by young people.
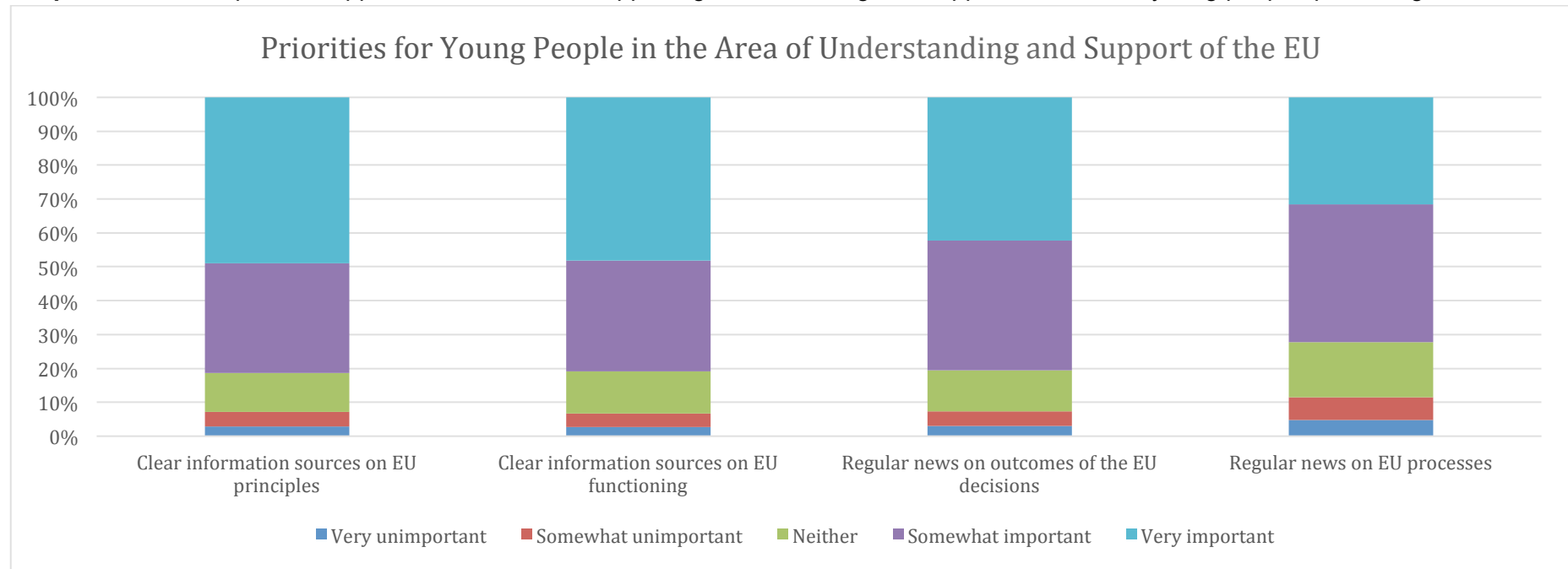
What are the priorities for young people?

Findings suggest that information on both the general level (principles and rules of operations) and concrete matters (news on decisions and processes) are needed by the young people.[1]

The detailed graph below shows that information on general principles and rules of operation as well as on decisions of the EU are the most important, with processes of the EU being slightly in the background of the young people´s attention.

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[1] The item read: "How important are the following options to you when trying to get a better understanding of the EU (e.g. institutions of the EU, the overall functioning, current EU affairs, etc.)?"

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Graph: The most important support mechanisms for supporting understanding and support of the EU in young people; percentages.

Priorities for Young People in the Area of Understanding and Support of the EU

Where does this report come from?
This report is based on responses to consultation question *What needs to change so that more young people fully understand and support the EU and its institutions?'.* This question was developed from harvesting tools submitted at the first conference.