



EUROPEAN YOUNG LEADERS (EYL 40)  
DUBLIN SEMINAR

# The emperor has no clothes

AUTUMN 2023

The European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme led by Friends of Europe is a unique, inventive and multi-stakeholder programme that aims to promote a European identity by engaging the continent's most promising talents in initiatives that will shape Europe's future.

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# Introduction

Russia's bloody invasion of Europe's eastern frontiers and the rise of political extremism at home threaten the European Union's core democratic values. The planetary impacts of global warming are becoming ever clearer, triggering a chain of violent climate events. Poverty, strife and oppression in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are pushing migrants to flee in search of a better future.

**Faced with the unprecedented urgency of the challenges it faces, does Europe have the right tools to provide its citizens with the responses they need? Or does it risk having its pretensions exposed like Hans Christian Andersen's folktale emperor, who is left ambling naked and unequipped to deal with a world of dangers?**

Those questions formed the core of the seminar held in Dublin on 14-16 September 2023 as part of Friends of Europe's European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme, which gathered 40 precocious talents in politics, business,

technology, academia, journalism, human rights, health, education, environment protection, defence, culture, fashion and sport.

**Across three days of insightful and engaged debate, the young leaders exchanged ideas on the way ahead for Europe; highlighted the potential of innovative leadership; and sought concrete solutions to maximise the opportunities – and confront the challenges – facing the continent in the 2020s.**

Now in its second decade, the EYL40 programme builds bonds across nationalities, areas of expertise and political viewpoints. It enables young leaders to engage with decision-makers and gain an appreciation of leadership constraints and policy challenges.

The EYL40 programme aims to stimulate change through creative responses to Europe's challenges and through the leadership of inspirational role models who can rebuild ties between citizens and policymakers.



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11:30 — 12:30

PLENARY

## 10 policy choices for a Renewed Social Contract

1 <b>Harmonising incentives</b> Sandra Wainwright, Co-founder of Velocity Partners, Venture Capital and Board Advisor, and 2023 European Young Leader (EYL40)	2 <b>Digitalisation as an enabler</b> Liam O'Connell, Director of Digital and 2023 European Young Leader (EYL40)
3 <b>Skills education</b> Sinead Robins, Lead author and contributor, and 2023 European Young Leader (EYL40)	4 <b>Climate policy and the just transition</b> Liam O'Connell, Writer, Climate, Energy & Sustainability, Manager at Friends of Europe

1. Dinner at the Dublin Castle hosted by Minister of State **Sean Fleming**
2. **Aindrias de Staic**, Actor, Musician and Storyteller
3. EYL40 are inputting into the 10 policy choices for a renewed social contract for Europe
4. The importance of positive storytelling for social change workshop



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Activity 2: Action scenarios

Think of an action you took - or tried - for any reason but later thought of as being good for the climate. Write down an action in front of your group.

- How you acted
- The original reason
- The environmental expectation
- How it really went
- How you or others felt

Share 10 minutes to share the story in your table (10 min each)

Storytelling mission realised

Think of an action you took - or tried - for any reason but later thought of as being good for the climate. Write down an action in front of your group.

- How you acted
- The original reason
- The environmental expectation
- How it really went
- How you or others felt

Share 10 minutes to share the story in your table (10 min each)

# Recommendations

The autumn EYL40 seminar produced a range of ideas to be taken forward by the young leaders' network and discussed with European decision-makers. They included:

- **Ukraine's resistance is crucial to the defence of European values and Europe must stand firm in support of its struggle;** Europe should reject any international pressure for Ukraine to accept an unjust peace settlement; a 'Day for Ukraine' should be celebrated across the continent, permitting citizens to express solidarity and pressure politicians to bolster support.
- **All legislation must strike the right balance between protecting citizens and promoting innovation** to ensure Europe is not left behind in the development and application of the new technology.
- **Europe should secure reliable funding for the cultural sector,** considering the example of Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts and recognising the essential social and economic role artists play across the continent.
- **Politicians should raise the public profile of the European Space Agency,** generating public pride in an operation that plays a crucial role in areas such as enabling solutions for climate change, communications and early warning of disaster risks.
- **Banking restrictions that protect established players should be eased to allow for new market entrants that offer easy and cheap services,** notably to migrants, refugees and others who may have limited access to traditional banking services.
- **Schools and universities should encourage more creative thinking in STEM and business education** to facilitate out-of-the-box solutions and improve messaging on science and economic issues.
- **Cut red tape at European funding institutions to promote positive investment in innovation and social entrepreneurship,** increasing the competitiveness of new European businesses.
- **The European Commission should take a five-year break from proposing legislation and, instead, focus on improved execution of existing rules** to overcome a situation where patchy implementation by national authorities erodes the effectiveness of EU action.
- **Give citizens' assemblies a greater role in crafting policy changes,** particularly on environmental issues, to help ensure public participation and public support for the measures needed to tackle climate change and other environmental challenges.
- **Build greater gender balance within all levels of leadership.**
- **Campaigners should encourage action on climate change by constructing new narratives** based on human experiences rather than facts and stats.



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1. **Diarmuid Torney**, leader of the Children & Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss and DCU Associate Professor
2. **Geert Cami**, Co-Founder and Secretary General of Friends of Europe
3. Welcome of citizens and EYL40 by **John Doyle**, Dublin City University Vice-President for Research
4. **Nathalie Furrer**, Director at Friends of Europe



# Ukraine's war of values

Russia's war in Ukraine and the threat posed to Europe dominated opening sessions held at Dublin City University. **Oleksandra Matviichuk**, Head of Ukraine's Centre for Civil Liberties, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and 2023 EYL40, clearly laid out what is at stake.

**“This is not just a war between two states. This is a war between two systems, between authoritarianism and democracy,” she explained. “This war has no borders [...] This war is here. Putin declared war on the values which are the European hallmark.”**

**Oleksandra Matviichuk**, Head of Ukraine's Centre for Civil Liberties, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and 2023 EYL40

As Ukrainians pay the highest price to defend those values, the European Union has a duty to maintain and increase its support of their resistance.

“People right now are dying under the flag of Ukraine and the flag of the European Union,” Matviichuk told a public session of the EYL40 seminar, which was open to citizens. “It is not just a task for Ukraine to prove that Putin is wrong, it is a task for the EU itself.”

From the floor, one participant suggested the EU could organise a continent-wide ‘Day for Ukraine’, during which citizens could demonstrate their support and send a clear message to politicians on the necessity of maintaining backing for Ukraine's defences.

In a session that examined whether the 1990s peace process in Northern Ireland held lessons for today's conflict, participants cautioned against drawing parallels between two very different situations.

“What is going on in Ukraine at the moment is not the same,” noted Colum Eastwood, Member of the UK Parliament from Northern Ireland and 2017 EYL40. “It's an unjust occupation. It's brutal and it needs to be ended [...] It's important that we stand behind the people of Ukraine.”



**Colum Eastwood**, Member of Parliament, United Kingdom and 2017 EYL40; **Oleksandra Matviichuk**, Head of the Centre for Civil Liberties, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and 2023 EYL40

Outside powers must avoid pressuring Ukraine into accepting an unfair settlement, insisted **Jasminko Halilović**, Founder and CEO of the War Childhood Museum in Bosnia & Herzegovina and 2023 EYL40. “I am perhaps the most anti-war person that exists,” he said:

**“But maybe there is one thing that is worse than war: it's an unjust peace. If external actors broker an unjust peace, this will have generational consequences [...] a never-ending cycle of violence.”**

**Jasminko Halilović**, Founder and CEO of the War Childhood Museum in Bosnia & Herzegovina and 2023 EYL40

# Nothing compares to EU

Despite the success of the 1998 agreement in ending ‘The Troubles’, which killed over 3,500 people in Northern Ireland, speakers acknowledged that the region remains plagued by deep divisions, symbolised by ‘peace walls’ that – 25 years on – still separate Protestant and Catholic communities in Belfast and other cities.

“People have to be kept apart, still in 2023, in Belfast [...] People from outside are looking at [us] and they are probably thinking that we’re absolutely insane,” said **Leona O’Neill**, journalist and Lecturer at Ulster University.

**“Being part of a progressive liberal union, a social union, really helped. It transformed Ireland.”**

**Shona Murray**, European Affairs Correspondent at *Euronews and Independent.ie*

“There still is a dividing line in terms of our education,” added **Kate Fearon**, Deputy Director at the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and Founding Member of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition. “In peace processes, we always think in terms of good enough. There’s never going to be a perfect process.”



**Mary Robinson**, former President of Ireland, Chair of The Elders, and Honorary co-president of the Africa Europe Foundation; **Mary Fitzgerald**, Non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, senior fellow for Women, Peace and Security at Friends of Europe

The United Kingdom’s decision to leave the EU has been like “a bomb going off in people’s living rooms”, warned O’Neill, reviving identity issues and casting doubt on Northern Ireland’s relations with the Republic of Ireland and mainland UK.

“The conflict is never truly over, you might have a peace agreement, but Northern Ireland still remains very divided today,” added **Mary Fitzgerald**, Non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, Trustee and Senior Fellow for Women, Peace and Security at Friends of Europe, and 2013 EYL40. “Brexit has thrown the future of Northern Ireland, the future of the island of Ireland, up in the air all over again.”

As 2023 marks 50 years since Ireland joined the EU, several speakers stressed the positive impact of membership, from reducing trade dependence on the UK, to pushing progress on women’s rights, modernising the economy and reinforcing Dublin’s voice in the world.

**“Without the help of fellow members, we would have suffered enormously, and it will never be forgotten from Ireland’s point of view as a small nation”**

**Sean Fleming**, Minister of State at Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs

“Ireland has been utterly transformed by EU membership,” recognised **Shona Murray**, European Affairs Correspondent at *Euronews and Independent.ie*. “Being part of a progressive liberal union, a social union, really helped. It transformed Ireland.”

**Sean Fleming**, Minister of State at Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs, recalled how solidarity from EU partners helped Ireland minimise the impact of Brexit.

“Without the help of fellow members, we would have suffered enormously, and it will never be forgotten from Ireland’s point of view as a small nation,” Fleming told the young leaders over dinner in Dublin Castle. “You saved us at a time of potential difficulty.”

# Time for change

Given those positive contributions, it was little surprise that a snap poll conducted during the seminar's open public session, entitled 'What has the EU ever done for us?', found Dubliners expressing strong support for Europe. Trust in European policymakers far outstripped that for national or local governments.

"The EU is probably the best thing that could happen to me because it gave me so many opportunities," said a young woman from Slovakia currently working in the Irish capital. "It's the best opportunity that I could be given."

However, a fellow Slovak lamented that the joy and enthusiasm that accompanied EU accession have flagged now that the benefits of Europe are taken for granted, and citizens still have to deal with the hard realities of everyday life.

EU opinion polls reflect mounting backing for nationalist politicians, xenophobes and Europe-bashing extremists – all of which bodes ill for the European Parliament elections scheduled in June 2024, unless centrist parties can do a better job explaining Europe's positives and the dangers of the alternatives.

"The European Union remains the most successful political project in human history," said **Federico Fabbrini**, Full Professor at Dublin City University (DCU), Founding Director of the Brexit Institute and 2022 EYL40. "Recent efforts to pull out of the European Union have proved to be a spectacular failure, as we have seen with the experience of Brexit."

**"The European Union remains the most successful political project in human history"**

**Federico Fabbrini**, Full Professor at Dublin City University (DCU), Founding Director of the Brexit Institute and 2022 EYL40

Fabbrini was among many who underscored the need for reforms and policy changes that can re-dynamise the EU, equipping it to tackle current challenges and inspire voters to support progressive policies anchored in the key values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

"We do need a positive, forward-leading agenda that will deal with those challenges," said **John Doyle**, Vice-President for Research at DCU. "Europe has [...] to work together. It has the capacity to work together and be powerful leader on the world stage."



**Federico Fabbrini**, Full Professor at Dublin City University (DCU), Founding Director of the Brexit Institute and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40); **Oleksandra Matviichuk**, Head of the Centre for Civil Liberties, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and 2023 EYL40



From left to right:

1. **Rim-Sarah Alouane**, Legal scholar and commentator, and 2023 EYL40; **Kamilla Sultanova**, Diversity and Inclusion Expert at ConnectUz
2. **Jaromil Roio**, Founder of Dyne.org Foundation and 2013 EYL40 briefing on AI ethics
3. **Angela Dorgan**, CEO of First Music Contact



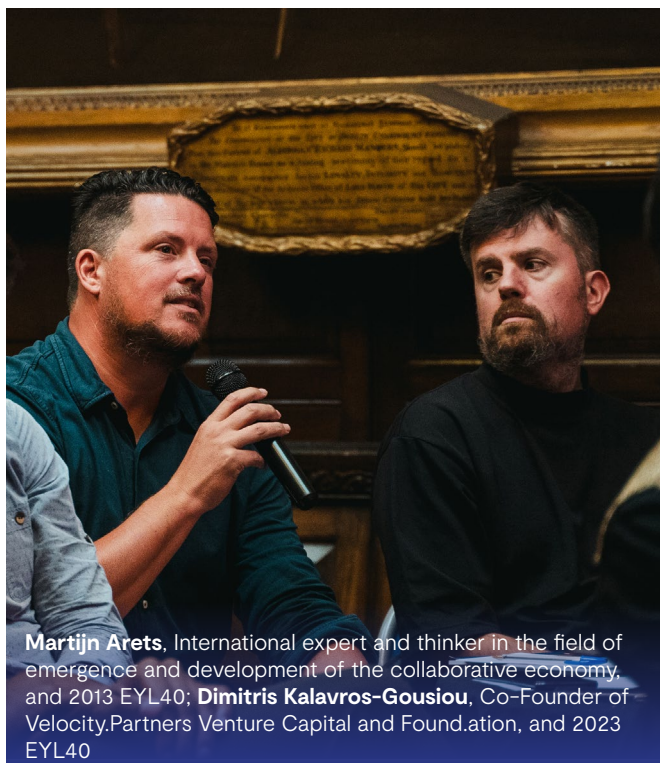
# A Renewed Social Contract

Friends of Europe's Renewed Social Contract initiative aims to promote those positive changes by developing new forms of leadership; challenging inequalities of opportunity; bolstering the green transition; reframing Europe's world role; and regenerating democracy.

It is crafting 10 policy options to be refined at the Brussels State of Europe high-level roundtable in November and disseminated ahead of next year's European elections.

They aim to redefine relations between government, business, civil society and the public to ensure that Europe can maintain a positive place in the world while providing adequate responses to the challenges facing its citizens.

"We are likely to see an incredible storm in the next 12 months that may shift us to the [extreme] right," cautioned **Dharmendra Kanani**, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Spokesperson at Friends of Europe. "We believe it will be very important for Europe to have a different settlement between public, private and civil society sectors."



**Martijn Arets**, International expert and thinker in the field of emergence and development of the collaborative economy, and 2013 EYL40; **Dimitris Kalavros-Gousiou**, Co-Founder of Velocity.Partners Venture Capital and Foundation, and 2023 EYL40

In a series of roundtable meetings, the young leaders brainstormed on issues and initiatives that can reconnect European institutions to citizens and endow the EU with policies adapted to the fast-changing technological, geopolitical and socio-economic landscape. One key theme is developing more inclusive ways of practising politics, giving voters a direct role and avoiding party-imposed gridlock that holds up policy developments in areas such as climate change and social equality.

Ideas included expanding the role of citizens' assemblies to influence policy changes, particularly in the areas of environmental concern; ensuring banks positively impact the green and digital transition; and providing financial stability for the cultural sector, for example, with Ireland's pilot scheme offering a secure income for artists, which could be a test case for wider applications of universal income ideas.

**"The EU [...] has provided a framework, a blueprint of how to deal with diversity."**

**Kensika Monshengwo**, Intercultural Training Coordinator at the Immigrant Council of Ireland

Leaders huddled to devise tangible Renewed Social Contract recommendations in areas such as digitalisation, civic education, the just transition to a green future and maximising the impact of sustainable investment.

"Channelling the right investments into the right policies is crucial for achieving meaningful and lasting change in various aspects of society, economy and the environment," outlined **Dimitris Kalavros-Gousiou**, Co-Founder of Velocity.Partners Venture Capital and Foundation, and 2023 EYL40. "It is essential for governments, organisations and individuals to carefully allocate resources to initiatives that align with their objectives and have a positive impact."

Young leaders also exchanged ideas in peer-learning roundtables on the value of poetry to European culture; the potential of hyperloop-inspired high-speed trains;

AI's impact on the publishing industry; and the use of fintech to empower migrants and refugees who are often shut out of conventional banking structures.

"If you don't have a bank account, you are not part of the social contract," said **Daumantas Dvilinskas**, Co-Founder and CEO of TransferGo and 2023 EYL40.

The Renewed Social Contract must enhance diversity and protect the rights of migrants and minorities. "Within the EU, we are already in a multi-ethnic society," stated **Kensika Monshengwo**, Intercultural Training Coordinator at the Immigrant Council of Ireland. "The EU [...] has provided a framework, a blueprint of how to deal with diversity." However, it needs to do more to welcome migrants and refugees and improve awareness of minority concerns."

The demographic pressures stemming from Europe's low birth rates and ageing population are heightening the need for a new approach to migration, participants noted.

Since trust is key to any new social contract, it is essential to expand corporate social responsibility, making sure business can be held to account and play a more constructive societal role.

That idea was expounded by **Mark MacGann**, Founder of Moonshot Ventures and the whistleblower behind the Uber Files investigation into lobbying and corporate practices. "There has to be a category of citizens within companies. The tech sector is perhaps a good laboratory for that, where people are encouraged to come forward," he said.

The range of civil society players, notably those supporting media plurality and corporate transparency, should be brought into a new social architecture that holds companies to account. "There is a whole structure out there," MacGann added. "It is another entity that should be in the room when you talk about a Renewed Social Contract."



**Mark MacGann**, Founder of Moonshot Ventures also known as "the Uber Files whistleblower"; **Mary Fitzgerald**, Non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, senior fellow for Women, Peace and Security at Friends of Europe



From left to right:

1. **Katarina Unger**, Founder and CEO of Livin Farms and 2023 EYL40
2. **Dharmendra Kanani**, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Spokesperson at Friends of Europe; **Dragoş Tudorache**, Chair of the European Parliament Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age
3. **Daumantas Dvilinskas**, Co-Founder and CEO of TransferGo and 2023 EYL40
4. **Jasminko Halilović**, Founder and CEO of the War Childhood Museum and 2023 EYL40
5. **Monika Herceg**, Writer, editor and 2023 EYL40





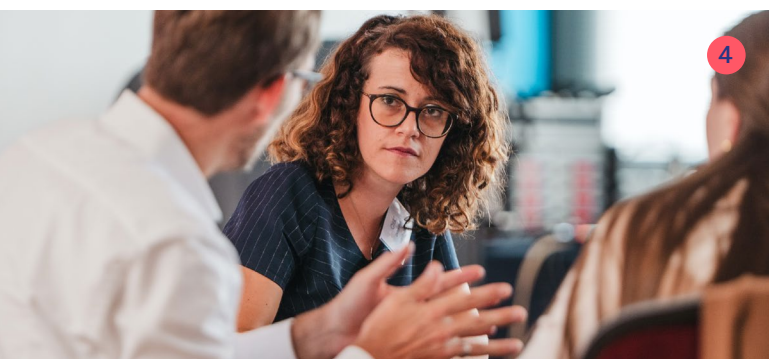
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*From left to right:*

1. **Angela Dorgan**, CEO of First Music Contact and until recently chair of the National Campaign for the Arts
2. **Matthew Caruana Galizia**, Investigative Journalist and Lead Engineer for the Paradise Papers Investigation and 2020–2021 EYL40
3. **Giulia Bonfà**, Lieutenant Commander in the Italian Navy and 2023 EYL40; **Valentina Diouf**, Professional Athlete and 2022 EYL40; **Claudia Vitolo**, Earth Observation Digital Twin Earth Applications Scientist, European Space Agency (ESA)
4. **Christy Petit**, Assistant Professor at Dublin City University and Deputy Director of the DCU Brexit Institute
5. **Mathilde Reumaux**, EU Relations Coordinator, European Space Agency (ESA); **Edvard Glücksman**, Senior Lecturer at the University of Exeter Business School and 2015–2016 EYL40



# Quo vadis, AI?

Likewise, citizens must be reassured about new scientific developments playing an ever-greater role in their lives, from AI in healthcare, security and education, to the opportunities provided by space-based technologies.

“It is clear we are at the beginning of an extraordinary period where AI is going to truly revolutionise many of our lives,” contented **Ryan Meade**, Public Policy and Government Relations Manager at Google Ireland. He borrowed a quote from Google’s CEO Sundar Pichai: “AI is too important not to regulate and too important not to regulate well.”

**“We need to talk about the positives of AI and how we ensure we regulate for the positives,”**

**Malcolm Byrne**, Irish Senator for the Cultural and Educational Panel and 2014 EYL40

At the heart of Europe’s effort to regulate AI is **Dragoş Tudorache**, Chair of the European Parliament’s Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA), who briefed the young leaders on the Parliament’s impending legislation designed to guarantee AI is applied responsibly.

“There needs to be a duty of care in how applications of AI in the healthcare sector are being designed, and that’s what the act is doing,” he said.

“We in Europe are leading globally on what is being done on AI, and the standards that we are going to insert in this sector will become the global standard,” Tudorache asserted.

As the world’s first comprehensive AI law, the European act will have enormous repercussions. It must balance the opportunities and risks associated with technologies in which non-European innovators – notably in the United States and China – currently have an edge.

“We need to talk about the positives of AI and how we ensure we regulate for the positives,” said **Malcolm**



**Vlad Voiculescu**, Co-Founder of Magicamp and former health minister in Romania; **Loubna Bouarfa**, Founder and CEO, OKRA Technologies and 2022 EYL40

**Byrne**, Irish Senator for the Cultural and Educational Panel and 2014 EYL40. “The AI Act is probably going to be the most significant piece of legislation that the EU will implement this decade.”

Speakers suggested that AI would increasingly play a ‘co-pilot’ healthcare role. Physicians will continue to make key decisions with machines providing facilities for better and faster diagnostics. “It is not possible that a machine, no matter how smart or sophisticated, takes those decisions alone,” said Tudorache. “It can recommend, it can read and evaluate data [...] faster than any human can do, absolutely, but at the end of the day, it will be the doctor who will be bearing the responsibility.”

**“We united the currency. We unified our open borders. We can do the same in healthcare.”**

**Loubna Bouarfa**, CEO and Founder OKRA.ai, an AI company for life sciences, and 2022 EYL40

Nevertheless, it is time for humans to start shedding some of their distrust of machines, said **Loubna Bouarfa**, CEO and Founder OKRA.ai, an AI company for life sciences, and 2022 EYL40.

## “My challenge for the next Commission president would be to stop legislating for a mandate,”

**Dragos Tudorache**, Chair of the European Parliament Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA)

“We are already trusting a doctor who doesn’t know our history,” she said. “This AI system will have the history, not only ours, but of all other patients, and will be providing us with [...] a recommendation based on all that evidence [...] that will be, from an evidence point of view, much more accurate than going to see a doctor.”

To avoid becoming dominated by outside players – as happened in earlier tech revolutions – Europe has to empower itself with the right regulation, cooperation and investment to promote domestic AI solutions in key areas such as healthcare, Bouarfa insisted.

“We united the currency. We unified our open borders. We can do the same in healthcare. We have the advantage that we have data sovereignty in healthcare and our public healthcare systems are strong in Europe,” she told the group. “We can get there if we want, but we do need to make hard choices.”

While it is clear that AI can play a positive function in strengthening Europe’s beleaguered healthcare systems, regulation has to strike the right balance between promoting innovation for good and ensuring technology does not undermine patient’s interests.

“Digital healthcare is part of the solution; there is no way around it and there are great opportunities there,” noted **Vlad Voiculescu**, social entrepreneur, patient advocate, former Romanian health minister and 2020–21 EYL40.

However, the risks cannot be ignored. “It can be like a Dr Frankenstein creature, AI, right?” Voiculescu asked. “A creature can drown a child without knowing what it actually does because it doesn’t have a moral conscience [...] that’s [the European Parliament’s] job to regulate that, to make sure that things are not going in the wrong direction.”

Any regulation has to be backed with effective implementation, argued **Martijn Arets**, international expert and thinker in the field of emergence and development of the collaborative economy, and 2013 EYL40. “If you don’t enforce the regulation, it will be quite worthless,” he said.

Tudorache agreed, suggesting a five-year break on new legislation to focus on the implementation of existing rules. “My challenge for the next Commission president would be to stop legislating for a mandate,” he suggested. “Focus the entire mandate on execution on implementing what they have [already] done.”

Beyond healthcare, AI is also playing an innovative role in developing digital twin Earth applications, creating computerised replicas of the planet that can harness the power of satellite observation to monitor climate change effects, predict natural events and accelerate life-saving decision-making.

“We can really try and understand better where climate change is taking us to and how we can deal with it,” said **Claudia Vitolo**, Earth Observation Digital Twin Earth Applications Scientist at the European Space Agency (ESA). “We have very exciting advances.”

Using AI technology, such models can give results on key Earth data in a fraction of the time needed in traditional research.

Such technological prowess could help change the paradigm in coping with climate change. “The ambition is to make this a tool to support the green and digital transition, not only in Europe but in the whole world,” Vitolo told the young leaders. “It is a tool that can help every single citizen.”



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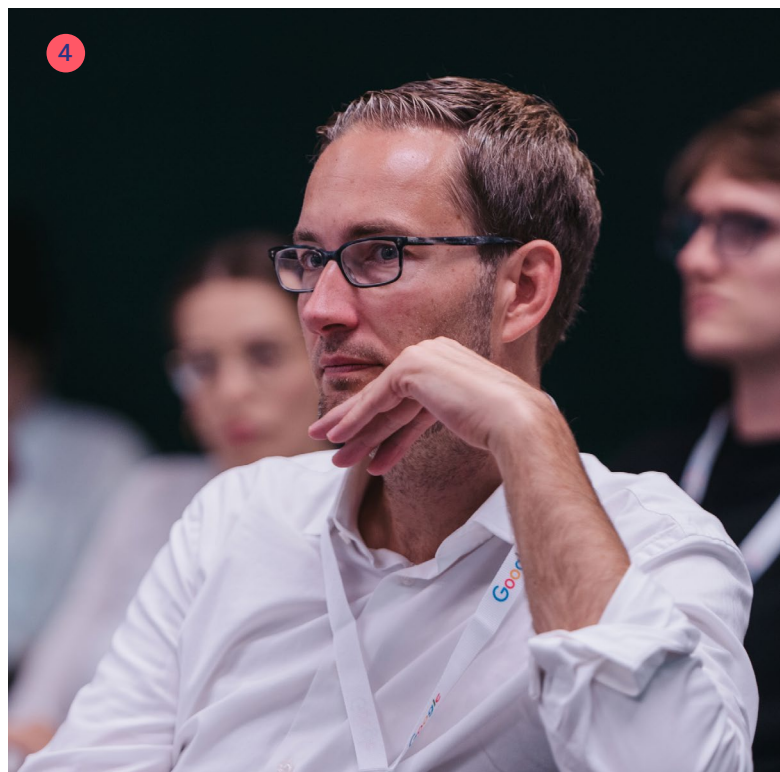
1. 83% of citizens asked would like to be more involved in the EU's decision making
2. **Kris De Meyer**, Neuroscientist and Director, University College London Climate Action Unit; **Daniel Jonusas**, University College London
3. **Francesca Cavallo**, Bestselling author of 'Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls', Founder & CEO of Undercats and 2019 EYL40
4. **Markus Freiburg**, Founder & CEO of Financing Agency for Social Entrepreneurship (FASE) and 2017 EYL40



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# Changing the narrative

Vitolo showed a video using space-based observation to show the impact of global warming in Antarctica – the type of hard-hitting storytelling that is needed to bring home to citizens the imminent dangers posed by climate change and need for all of us to act.

The necessity of compelling narratives to convey the urgency of climate action was underlined by **Bella Lack**, author of ‘Children of the Anthropocene’.

“Unless most of you have pored over climate models [...] It’s unlikely you can visualise this outcome and truly imagine the severity of what’s to come,” said Lack, an environmental activist since the age of 12.

In words and images, she has chronicled the lives of people on the frontline of the environmental crisis, from a young boy fighting an endless battle to free his village on the coast near Mumbai from wave-borne plastic waste, to the mother of a child killed by air pollution in south London, to Timothy, a Malaysian grandfather, increasingly alone on a sinking Malaysian island.

“The environment crisis is one of overconsumption, carbon emissions and corporate greed, but it’s also a crisis of miscommunication,” Lack explained. “As this crisis worsens, we must stop communicating the climate crisis with only facts and stats; instead, we use stories like Timothy’s that touch people’s hearts.”

**“Unless most of you have pored over climate models [...] It’s unlikely you can visualise this outcome and truly imagine the severity of what’s to come,”**

**Bella Lack**, author of ‘Children of the Anthropocene’

Rather than telling scare stories, climate activists need to win over fellow citizens by showing how their actions can contribute to a better world.

“Give people agency, rather than apathy,” urged the 20-year-old campaigner. “We don’t want to frighten them into action. We really want to provide a vision of a better world.”

Crafting those narratives could be helped by introducing more creativity into the education system, particularly in science and business, drafting imaginative minds into policymaking.

“Creativity gets drilled out of young people at an early age,” bemoaned **Edvard Glücksman**, Senior Lecturer at the University of Exeter Business School and 2015–2016 EYL40. “What we’ve lost is that individually, where you’d be better at STEM and you’d be better in the world of business if you also have that side of things.”

“We don’t have a plan for involving professional storytellers into these things,” added **Francesca Cavallo**, best-selling author of ‘Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls’, Founder and CEO of Undercats and 2019 EYL40.

Summing up, Lack pointed to the way forward. “We are at a time now where we need people to feel rage, insatiable curiosity, a desire for change, hope and the ability – most importantly – to imagine a world slightly different and slightly better than the one where we are today.”

**Kris De Meyer**, neuroscientist and Director of the Climate Action Unit at University College London, offered the young leaders practical advice on how to develop narratives for persuading citizens to translate their concern over the environment into action.

“We need to start telling stories of many different kinds of climate action to inspire positive societal change,” he told the group. “Don’t focus on getting people to care more, help them to discover how to do something.”

Simple narratives can be the most effective. Telling action-based stories that point the way to change, De Meyer explained. “Hansel and Gretel should be the blueprint of how we are telling our climate story,” he said, ensuring that the Brothers Grimm were not forgotten in a seminar taking its title from Hans Cristian Andersen.

In small groups, young leaders were encouraged to share personal stories of how they were inspired to tackle an environmental issue, with the most compelling told to the whole team.

**“We need to start telling stories of many different kinds of climate action to inspire positive societal change,” he told the group. “Don’t focus on getting people to care more, help them to discover how to do something.”**

**Kris De Meyer**, neuroscientist and Director of the Climate Action Unit at University College London

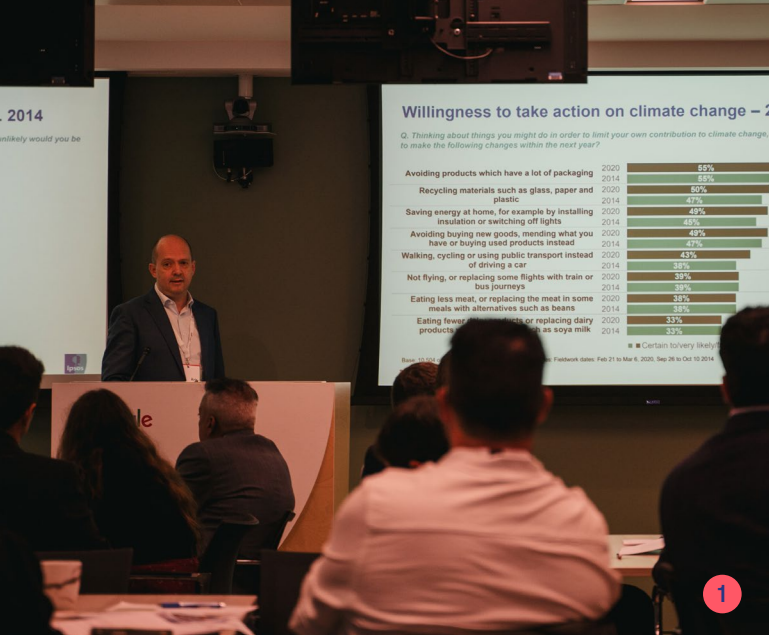
**Camilla Appelgren**, Chief Patrolling Ranger at the Heritage Parks Foundation in Malta and 2023 EYL40, recalled how she was motivated to protect Malta’s wildlife after witnessing illegal hunters killing birds. She discovered action could be more effective if she worked with registered hunters to target poachers. “If I want to change anything, I need to speak to the offenders, not the converted,” she said.

Having been converted to vegetarianism by a former partner, **Misbah Khan**, Member of the Bundestag in Germany and 2023 EYL40, explained how she triggered a kind of ‘pyramid scheme’ persuading other people in her life to give up meat too.

**Wietse van der Werf**, Founder and CEO of the Sea Ranger Service in the Netherlands and 2020–2021 EYL40, described how a collaborative scheme with scientists got off to a shaky start but ended up developing the world’s largest seagrass restoration project. “We all need each other. Only together, really collaborating, can we tackle the climate crisis.”

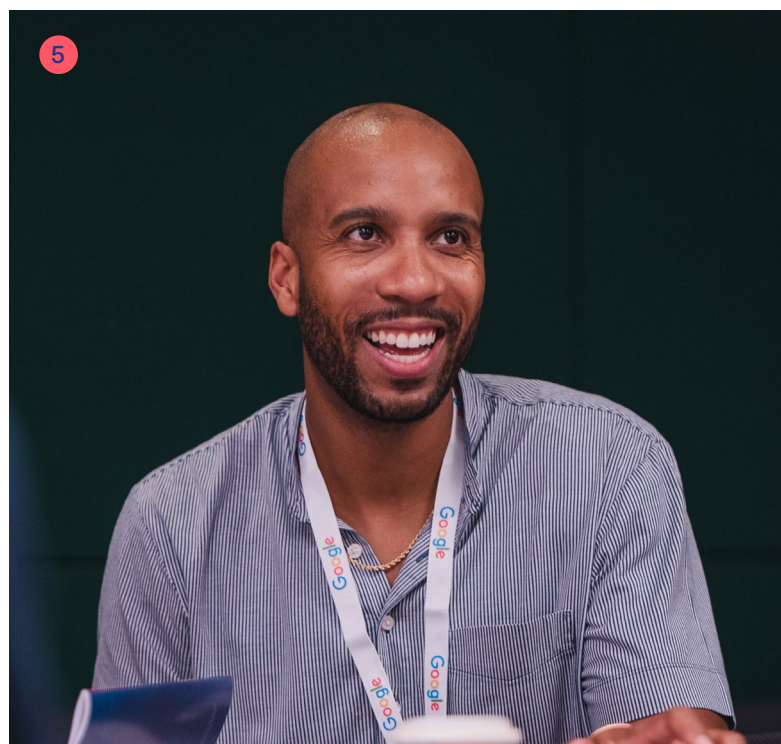


**Bella Lack**, Youth Ambassador and author of *‘Storytelling will save the Earth’* and *‘Children of the Anthropocene’*



From left to right:

1. **Kris De Meyer**, Neuroscientist and Director of the Climate Action Unit at University College London
2. **Ibrahim Ahmed**, Founder of the Ibrahim Foundation and 2023 EYL40
3. **Luke Graham**, Special Advisor on the Union to the UK Government and 2019 EYL40; **Camilla Appelgren**, Chief Patrolling Ranger at the Heritage Parks Federation and 2023 EYL40;
4. **Nicolas Brien**, Chairman of the European Startup Network and 2022 EYL40
5. **Thomas Harwell**, Head of Diversity Recruiting, EMEA, Google





*From left to right:*

1. **Eileen Culloty**, Assistant Professor at Dublin City University
2. **Olga Richterová**, Deputy Speaker of the Czech Chamber of Deputies and 2023 EYL40
3. **Laurent Hublet**, Co-Founder and Managing Director of BeCentral and 2023
4. **Oana-Silvia Toiu**, Chair of the Committee on Youth and Sports, Chamber of Deputies of Romania and 2023 EYL40
5. **Tijana Tamburic**, Co-Founder of Female Narratives and 2023 EYL40

## In conclusion

As with every EYL40 seminar, the Dublin meeting went beyond debates on the challenges and opportunities facing Europe to advocate for new forms of leadership and build the ties of friendship that underpin the expanding EYL40 network.

**“Europe [is] a region in a world that’s so much bigger and so much more disadvantaged. I realised that my region is quite a privileged region, and with privilege comes responsibility.”**

**Mary Robinson**, former president of Ireland, Chair of The Elders and Honorary Co-President of the Africa Europe Foundation (AEF)

“I am truly amazed by the depth and breadth of knowledge shared during the forum and the valuable lessons I’ve learned,” posted **Rim-Sarah Alouane**, legal scholar and commentator, and 2023 EYL40. “I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to meet such amazing people. The friendships forged during the programme are priceless and I look forward to nurturing these connections in the future.”

Despite the ‘complicated cocktail of challenges’ confronting Europe, **Geert Cami**, Co-Founder and Secretary-General of Friends of Europe, expressed hope that the unity, proficiency and diversity represented in the EYL40 reflects an upward trend of awareness and activism in wider European society.

“The good news is that we have really a growing and considerable group of people in society [...] who are accepting that we cannot continue as we are now with business as usual,” he said. “We have to find new ways to collaborate to tackle the challenges of the 21st century.”

That guarded optimism was mirrored in the words of **Mary Robinson**, former president of Ireland, Chair of The Elders and Honorary Co-President of the Africa Europe Foundation (AEF), who conversed with the young leaders over dinner at Dublin Castle.

Robinson hailed the positive impact of EU membership on Ireland over the past half-century but cautioned that the Union must avoid backtracking on climate ambitions and not turn its back on the wider world.

“Europe [is] a region in a world that’s so much bigger and so much more disadvantaged,” she said. “I realised that my region is quite a privileged region, and with privilege comes responsibility.”

Robinson expressed hope a new generation of leaders could realise her vision of better times ahead, with countries powered by clean energy, development easing hardship in Africa and women playing a greater role at all levels of society.

**“I have to think that our best times are ahead of us, difficult as it may be in the slightly complicated reality that we’re in.”**

**Mary Robinson**





*From left to right:*

1. **Giulia Gouet**, Programme Officer at Friends of Europe; **Ringailė Trakymaitė**, Senior Programme Expert at Friends of Europe
2. **Marija Vuković**, Olympic athlete and 2023 EYL40
3. **Darya Yegorina**, Founder & Board Member of CleverBooks and 2020-2021 EYL40
4. **Fabio Mancini**, Supermodel and 2023 EYL40
5. **Pawel Radziszewski**, Co-founder and Chief Technology Officer of Nevomo and 2023 EYL40
6. **Luke O'Callaghan-White**, **Climate**, Energy & Sustainability Manager at Friends of Europe





*From left to right:*

1. **Misbah Khan**, Member of the Bundestag and 2023 EYL40; **Tijana Tamburic**, Co-Founder of Female Narratives and 2023 EYL40; **Aranca Martínez Fernández**, Founder of It-will be.org, Co-Founder and CEO of The Common Good Chain and 2022 EYL40
2. **Cezary Tomczyk**, Member of the Polish Parliament and 2017 EYL40
3. Northern Ireland panel
4. **Julian Kostov**, Founder and CEO of JupiterLights Media and 2023 EYL40

# About the EYL40 programme

The European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme led by Friends of Europe is a unique, inventive and multi-stakeholder programme that aims to promote a European identity by engaging the continent's most promising talents in initiatives that will shape Europe's future.

The European Young Leaders represent a promising European leadership from all over the continent and with a wide variety of backgrounds including politics, business, civil society, academia, arts, science and the media. From trailblazing biochemists to budding political leaders, and from dot-com entrepreneurs to NGO 'stars' who are shaping the social and environmental policies of tomorrow, the European Young Leaders are a unique community that crafts innovative responses to European challenges and positively affects the lives of future generations.

Every year, they meet during two 3-day seminars that take place in symbolic European cities, joined by decision-makers, stakeholders and key European actors, to discuss issues of common concern and develop concrete proposals and recommendations to tackle the challenges facing Europe and its citizens.

The relaxed tone and out-of-the-box nature of the EYL40 programme have brought about salient and open discussions that have facilitated the development of a strong network of committed Europeans.

This programme also turns ideas into actions. That means ongoing interactions between the young leaders, alumni and experts boost innovative ideas and in turn have a bigger impact on the European stage by pushing forward projects that matter to the community.

The 2017 Autumn seminar in Tallinn also increased the programme's outreach by inviting North American and Middle East and North African (MENA) Young Leaders to join the discussions for the first time. The aim is to create synergies, promote structural dialogue and foster better mutual understanding between established leaders from the three regions and develop an inter-regional, multidisciplinary network of alumni to support the leaders of tomorrow.

Young leaders of the Western Balkan region are also included in the European yearly class and in response to the current situation, Friends of Europe has opened up the programme to Ukraine as of 2023.



*From left to right:*

- 1. Wietse van der Werf**, Founder & CEO of Sea Ranger Service and 2020-2021 EYL40
- 2. Gauthier van Malderen**, Founder and CEO of Perlego and 2023 EYL40



# List of participants

## **Ifrah Ahmed**

Founder, Ifrah Foundation, Ireland,  
European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Rim-Sarah Alouane**

Legal Scholar and PhD Candidate in  
Comparative Law, University Toulouse-  
Capitole, France, European Young Leader  
(EYL40)

## **Paul Ames**

Journalist, Portugal

## **Camilla Appelgren**

Chief Patrolling Ranger, Malta Ranger Unit,  
Malta, European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Martijn Arets**

International and independent platform  
expert, The Netherlands, European Young  
Leader (EYL40)

## **Kevin Bakhurst**

Director-General, RTE TV, Ireland

## **Cathal Berry**

Member, Independent, National Parliament  
(Dáil Éireann) Committee on Foreign Affairs  
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## **Giulia Bonfa**

Lieutenant Commander, Italian Navy, Italy,  
European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Loubna Bouarfa**

CEO and founder, OKRA.ai, United  
Kingdom, European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Mario Brandenburg**

Parliamentary State Secretary to the  
Federal Minister of Education and  
Research, Germany, Germany, European  
Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Nicolas Brien**

Chairman, European Startup Network,  
France, European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Malcolm Byrne**

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## **Geert Cami**

Co-founder and Secretary General, Friends  
of Europe

## **Matt Carthy**

Member, Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs  
& Defence, National Parliament (Dáil  
Éireann) Committee on Foreign Affairs and  
Defence, Ireland

## **Matthew Caruana Galizia**

Investigative Journalist and Director, The  
Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, Malta,  
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## **Francesca Cavallo**

Chief Creative Officer, Undercats Media  
Co-creator of Good Night Stories for Rebel  
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## **Anders Rødtnæs Bæksgaard Christensen**

Political Editor, Politiken, Denmark,  
European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Maeve Collins**

Director General, EU Division, Department  
of Foreign Affairs, Ireland

## **Pat Cox**

President of the European Parliament  
(2002-2004), Trustee of Friends of Europe

## **Eileen Culloty**

Assistant Professor, School of  
Communications, Dublin City University,  
Ireland

## **Kris De Meyer**

Neuroscientist and Director, University  
College London Climate Action Unit,  
United Kingdom

## **Aindrias de Staic**

Actor, Musician and Storyteller

## **Eoin Delaney**

Special Adviser to Minister Fleming,  
Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland

## **Valentina Diouf**

Athlete, Professional Volleyball Player, Italy,  
European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Angela Dorgan**

CEO, First Music Contact, Ireland

## **John Doyle**

Vice-President for Research, Dublin City  
University, Ireland

## **Francis Noel Duffy**

Member, Spokesperson for Housing,  
National Parliament (Oireachtas), Ireland  
Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and  
Employment, Ireland

## **Daumantas Dvilinskas**

Co-Founder and CEO, TransferGo, United  
Kingdom, European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Colum Eastwood**

Member of Parliament, House of  
Commons, United Kingdom, European  
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## **Kate Fearon**

Deputy Director OSCE Conflict Prevention  
Centre, Organization for Security and  
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## **Mary Fitzgerald**

Non-resident scholar, Middle East Institute,  
United States of America, European Young  
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**Thomas Harwell**

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Co-Founder and General Partner, Velocity Partners, Greece, European Young Leader (EYL40)

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**Julian Kostov**

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**Bella Lack**

Youth Ambassador and author of "Storytelling will save the earth and Children of the anthropocene", United Kingdom

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Head of Strategy and M&A, ESCO Slovensko, former Slovak Finance State Secretary, Slovakia, European Young Leader (EYL40)

**Bernard Mallee**

Director, International Policy Communications, Bristol Myers Squibb

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Italian Supermodel, European Young Leader (EYL40)

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**Kennedy O'Brien**

Government Affairs and Public Policy Manager, Google Ireland Ads Quality Operations

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**Emer O'Connell**

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**Cezary Tomczyk**

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Earth Observation Digital Twin Earth Applications Scientist, European Space Agency (ESA), France

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