

European
Universities
Community

The voice of European Students

#ESA24
3rd Edition



EUROPEAN STUDENT ASSEMBLY

HANDBOOK

www.euc-initiative.com



Université
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Deutsch-Französische
Hochschule



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Think before you print.

PROJECT

What is the European Student Assembly?

The **European Student Assembly (ESA)** is a grassroots project that gathers each year more than 220 students from the European Universities Alliances (EUAs) to debate current issues, draft policy recommendations on the future of Europe and advocate them among stakeholders and decision-makers.

One of the flagship projects of the European Universities Community (EUC), co-funded by the European Union, the ESA is entirely designed and implemented by **a steering committee composed of students and academic staff members** from different higher education institutions in Europe.

Objectives

- **Voicing the opinion of EUA students** from different countries, backgrounds, fields and levels of study, all recruited for their engagement and motivation.
- **Fostering the participation of students within EUAs** while reinforcing collaboration between them and increasing the impact and visibility of the EUA initiative.
- **Advocating deliberative processes** as a way to regenerate European democracy and to reduce the gap between citizens and decision-makers.
- **Encourage students to get involved in European politics** at local, national and European level and increase their participation in European democratic processes.

Expected outcomes

The participants of the ESA 2024 will produce a **collection of policy recommendations on 11 debating topics**.

The Assembly itself will be followed by a series of **dissemination events gathering stakeholders and decision-makers** where students will advocate and disseminate their policy recommendations among various actors at different government levels, companies, NGOs, who are active in the European political life.

Debating topics *(detailed from page 10 and onwards)*

- Panel 1 - **European election year**. How to tackle the lack of (and dis-) information and encourage citizens' engagement in the upcoming elections?
- Panel 2 - **Greener is better**. How can the EU establish a responsible growth in the context of climate change?
- Panel 3 - **Cohesion through budget policies**. How can the EU budget policy take part in strengthening cohesion amongst its Member States?
- Panel 4 - **Seeking a better future in the EU**. What strategy should the EU adopt to guarantee a treatment with dignity of migrants from outside of the Union?
- Panel 5 - **EU in the world**. How can the EU be a more responsible actor in globalisation through its leadership?
- Panel 6 - **EU Artificial Intelligence Act**. What strategies could be implemented to maximise the benefits of AI while addressing its challenges?
- Panel 7 - **European heritage**. How can the EU effectively coordinate with institutions the promotion of its heritage and ensure access to culture to all?
- Panel 8 - **Cure of the future**. What approach should the EU adopt regarding health and more particularly the advancements of biomedicine?
- Panel 9 - **A place for everyone**. How can higher education institutions be a place of opportunities for all?
- Panel 10 - **EU of tomorrow**. How can the EU secure a safe and well guided enlargement in the upcoming years?
- Panel 11 - **Addressing euroscepticism**. How to build a stronger and more united EU in the face of the rise of euroscepticism?

CONTEXT

From the Conference on the Future of Europe...

Jointly organised by students and faculty members, the inaugural session of the European Student Assembly gathered **275 students from 38 EUAs** in Strasbourg in March 2022.

The initiative took place in the context of the **Conference on the Future of Europe** (CoFoE) launched jointly by the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission on Europe Day 2021, in Strasbourg. The CoFoE was meant for citizens and organisations all over Europe to express recommendations on the future of the Union. The ESA participants debated and produced 89 policy proposals that were submitted on the platform of the CoFoE and discussed with Members of the European Parliament, representatives from the European Commission and other stakeholders.

The second edition (#ESA23) took place from March 2023, with **230 students from 44 EUAs** drafting 75 policy recommendations on 10 topics related to the strategic autonomy of the EU (<https://eucinitiative.wordpress.com/esa23-the-second-edition-of-the-european-student-assembly/>).

...to #ESA24

EUC is now co-funded by the **Erasmus + project EUC VOICES**. The main focus of this project is active European citizenship which is implemented through 3 main activities: European Student Assembly, Ambassadors Forum and EUC Alumni Network. It is launching the **third edition (#ESA24)** that will bring a new generation of EUAs students together. Central to this year's edition are the **European elections of June 2024**, with debates and drafting policy recommendations on **11 topics** related to the future of Europe that are essential to students. This **several months project** will culminate with a deliberative Assembly gathering **at the European Parliament** in Strasbourg **from 10 to 12 April 2024**. Dissemination events will be organised during the following weeks.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The preparation phase

From late January to early April 2024, the **selected students will work remotely with other members of the same panel** to deepen their understanding of their chosen topic and start drafting policy recommendations. They will meet experts and follow online training on policy drafting and moderation. They will analyse the political and legal context, identify the main challenges raised by the topic and decide the priorities they wish to deal with. They will be responsible for proposing concrete solutions to these challenges, to be implemented by stakeholders at various decision levels.

The Assembly in Strasbourg

Students from dozens of countries will then gather for a European-wide democratic exercise when the **European Student Assembly will meet in person in Strasbourg in the very premises of the European Parliament.**

During 3 days they will discuss and finalise their policy recommendations with members of their panel. They will also hear from other panels' discussions and debate. They will finally **vote** on all policy recommendations prepared in a plenary session and participate to dissemination activities afterwards.

ESA does not charge any participation cost. Meals will be provided for free as well as accommodation for three nights in a youth hostel. The reimbursement of travel costs is at the discretion of the European Universities Alliances.

The dissemination phase

After the gathering of the Assembly, students will continue to work in team for the **advocacy** and **dissemination** of their proposals.

After the 2022 and 2023 edition, willing students had the opportunity to **meet with Members of the European Parliament and representatives from the European Commission**. They participated in major stakeholders events such as the Vivatech Conference in Paris.

In 2024, a series of dissemination events will be organised to promote the results of the Assembly among citizens and stakeholders at various decision levels: citizens' consultations, elected representatives, companies, NGOs, etc.

The role of participants and coordinators

Panel participants will take part in online meetings with experts and other members of their panel as well as training sessions. They will contribute to the discussion and the drafting of policy recommendations. In Strasbourg, they will debate and vote. Each participant is expected to attend **at least half of the meetings** in order to ensure the continuity of the panel discussions.

Each panel will be supported by **2 panel coordinators** - also students. They will monitor the progress and lead the work of their panel, plan and animate meetings, and support the drafting of proposals. During the on-site gathering, **they will moderate the debate between panel members and present the result of the panel's work**. They will contribute to dissemination activities.

Each participant and panel coordinator will receive a certificate of participation after completion of the project.

HOW TO APPLY?

Applications are **open from 28 September 2023 at 12:00 (UTC+1) to 5 November 2023 at 23:59 (UTC+1)** on the EUC website: <https://eucinitiative.wordpress.com/esa24-application/>

Eligibility

- Applications are open to students from all genders, nationalities, fields and levels of study from Bachelor to PhD.
- Before applying, please check that your higher education institution is involved in one of the 50 existing EUAs:
 - <https://education.ec.europa.eu/fr/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative/map>
- Students who did not participate in previous editions of ESA may apply as participant and/or panel coordinator.
- Students who participated in previous editions of ESA may only apply as panel coordinators. Former coordinators cannot apply anymore.
- Members of the faculty are not eligible except for PhD candidate.

Selection process and criteria

The selection will be **conducted jointly by the ESA Selection Committee and the EUAs**. The selection process have been designed to ensure a fair, inclusive and transparent process.

The selection of participants will lay the stress on their **interest for European politics, culture and society**, on their **motivation** to participate in an intercultural event, to **defend their opinion** and **have an impact on their community**, as well as their level of excellence. The selection of panel coordinators will focus on the candidates' motivation and former experiences as group leaders in similar initiatives.

TIMELINE

28 September 2023

Opening of the application platform

**11 October 2023
(6:30 pm UTC+1)**

Info session dedicated to candidates

**5 November 2023
(11:59 pm UTC+1)**

Closing of the application platform

15 December 2023

Coordinators selection results

10 January 2024

Coordinators onboarding sessions

15 January 2024

Participants selection results

24 January 2024

Participants onboarding session

Jan. - April 2024

Online preparation phase

10 - 12 April 2024

European Student Assembly at the
European Parliament in Strasbourg

DEBATING TOPICS

2024 is an **election year** for Europe. The ESA Steering committee designed **11 topics on the future of Europe** that are central to students. The goals of the panel works are to **get more familiar with European politics** and its main policy issues, **discuss with students coming from all disciplines** and different European countries, and **express your citizen voice**. Topics were defined to provide a frame not an exhaustive direction.

Panel 1 – European election year. How to tackle the lack of (and dis-) information and encourage citizens' engagement in the upcoming elections?

2024 is an election year for the European Union. The citizens of Europe will have to vote for who they want as representative within the European Parliament. **This election is vital as it legitimises the European Parliament and allows for Europeans to have a say in EU politics.** These elections sadly suffer from a lack of voter turnout. Since 1979, the more the European Parliament got power, the lower the turnout at the European elections across the EU, with the exception of 2019 when a slightly higher turnout was observed. In addition to this, great disparities can be noted (Belgium had a 88% turnout in 2019, compared to barely 22% for Slovakia). This panel will therefore try to **focus on engaging European citizens from all countries and allow them to truly take part in the democratic process**, e.g. via the organisation of discussions and the drafting of recommendations, such as ESA has done. This also means that there needs to be measures regarding the growing amount of disinformation and other forms of interference in elections. More generally, there is a **lack of information and a complexity in understanding what the EU does** that needs to be addressed. This equal access to information is paramount to a healthy democratic Europe, as it allows every citizen to make an informed decision.

Panel 2 – Greener is better. How can the EU establish a responsible growth in the context of climate change?

With the unprecedented challenges that climate change poses, **the European Union is in dire need of adaptation.** The Green Deal has set a European legislative framework towards the green transition that is currently getting implemented. Recently, several policy proposals under the Green Deal, such as the law on the restoration of nature, have been much debated or even put under question, with the risk of losing ambition and coherence. **This panel aims at offering a social and societal impact measurement that would entertain the idea of a more responsible Europe** in terms of reduction of carbon emissions and waste production. This would lead to defining proposals and designing solutions on different subjects related to climate change, from the learners and consumers, private and public sector alike, as well as at different levels, from the regional to the supranational one. In addition, proposals and solutions shall take into consideration how these issues are dealt by the US, China, India etc. Experiences from Summer 2023, with high levels of temperatures, floods and fires all over the continent, may be a starting point of reflection on the topic of natural risk management in relation to climate change. Finally, the question arises of whether to keep a steady economic growth while simultaneously aiming at reducing our global emissions and waste.

Panel 3 – Cohesion through budget policies. How can the EU budget policy take part in strengthening cohesion amongst its Member States ?

The European Union has committed, with the massive public-investment programme named **Next Generation EU**, to support the economic and social recovery post-Covid and the opening of new markets led by the green and digital transition. The programme is based on the emission of EU debt which requires significant resources to be repaid from the EU budget. **Solidarity** shall remain a key driver of the European union and the budget is an essential part of it. With new economic and social tensions rising from the consequences of the war in Ukraine and from accelerated inflation, and based on the common concern of increasing Europe's strategic autonomy, new expenses are currently discussed. The question of **what goals should the European budget achieve to foster cohesion, what measures should be taken and how they should be financed in the frame of the current MFF review**, is on the table of this panel.

Panel 4 – Seeking a better future in the EU. What strategy should the EU adopt to guarantee a treatment with dignity of migrants from outside of the Union?

The condition of migrants and asylum-seekers coming to Europe has been at the heart of debates for many years. The recent tragic sinking of a boat carrying over 400 migrants is a striking example of why the EU needs to act fast, with humanity, to turn this situation around. Different debates are taking place in Europe about migration control and the strengthening of the EU's external borders but also the need for deeper solidarity between all Member States to ensure a fair share of responsibilities. Other debates focus on the conditions of entry (skilled workers, asylum-seekers, etc) and the need for new processes to enter legally. In addition, **there needs to be improvement regarding the detention conditions of those who arrived illegally.** Moreover, welcoming them is not the only issue at hand. There is also the question of their situation once they have been allowed to stay in the country. Indeed, **migrants face discrimination and see their rights infringed on a regular basis.** The work of this panel will be to propose policies that would ensure that the safety and rights of migrants and asylum-seekers are protected throughout Europe.

Panel 5 – EU in the World. How can the EU be a more responsible actor in globalisation through its leadership?

As we live in an ever-more globalised world, new challenges arise every day. This new conception of **the international society pushes the European Union to open itself in order to affirm its role in our current world.** It has become more and more evident with the creation of numerous **trade deals**, notably with the **Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement** with Canada or the currently discussed **EU-MERCOSUR deal**. While these new deals open doors for the EU, they also raise questions as to the integrity of the fundamental values of the Union, such as human rights, environmental protection, and social values. **The European Commission recently proposed the Global Gateway strategy to contribute to the UN SDGs.** This panel aims to propose European solutions to ensure that these challenges become opportunities for the European Union's leadership and not set-backs for Europe.

Panel 6 – EU Artificial Intelligence Act. What strategies could be implemented to maximise the benefits of AI while addressing its challenges?

With the fast-growing rise of Artificial intelligence (**AI**) and the increase of its demand at all levels, the European Union has to act fast in order to navigate this unprecedented challenge. As the **Artificial Intelligence Act** is on the way, concerns regarding its framework have risen. Specialists are afraid of the existence of loopholes in the current act and wish to better it. The official communication around the act states that **“These shortcomings limit the Act’s ability to ensure that AI remains a force for good in [our] life”**. This panel will propose solutions for the development of AI in various sectors and from the point of view of the **consumers in Europe, namely what they consider as being beneficial and not putting at risk their way of life or the economy**, in order to adapt to the changing new world.

Panel 7 – European heritage. How can the EU effectively coordinate with institutions the promotion of its heritage and ensure access to culture to all?

The promotion of European heritage is a long and steady process, not just a valuable celebration across Europe for some days each month of September. It certainly **highlights at best the cultural diversity of Europe**, which is our common treasure and gives the opportunity to discover and open up to one another's culture. Multiple actions have already been taken at the European level in order to ensure this promotion (for example the nomination of European capitals every year), but it is insufficient if not accompanied by more preservation and access to it. This panel aims at **proposing solutions that make the promotion of European heritage**, be it tangible (for example classified monuments) or intangible (for example regional cultures/ food), a central piece of our economic and social recovery, and brings all people together by experiencing it.

Panel 8 – Cure of the future. What approach should the EU adopt regarding health and more particularly the advancements of biomedicine?

Without any warning, with the Covid-19 pandemic, **health has become a central issue to be dealt at EU level**: vaccines, medical equipment and medicines more generally have become central to EU decisions in recent years. It is a new EU competence, to be assessed according to recent development (e.g., European health data space). From a more structural point of view, **the European population on average is ageing with more needs for medical care**. In this context, **biomedicine** is a field that is rapidly growing. This growth represents a great opportunity for scientific, medical and human advancement, which is why it needs to be regulated in order to guarantee its well-use and build trust. This panel aims at considering all these developments and proposing solutions, such as **creating a legal framework that would allow for biomedical advancements to thrive**, all while ensuring that they are created and used with respect to ethics and fundamental rights of all people.

Panel 9 – A place for everyone. How can higher education institutions be a place of opportunities for all?

With an ever-growing amount of young people attending higher education such as students and trainees, **these institutions must adapt themselves to the people they are accommodating**. Many young people view them as platforms that will help them shape their future and it is important for higher education institutions to meet these standards that can take multiple forms. For some, these opportunities will reside in their social well-being as refugees or students from marginalised communities. **The question of access to higher education to all is intrinsically linked to how it can be a place of fulfilment**. Undoubtedly, fostering a climate of welcomeness and integration through financial or psychological support and a better accessibility within these institutions is crucial, as it sets the foundation for students to embark on a successful journey into adulthood. Another path to success and opportunities can also be met through their professional aspirations, for instance youth entrepreneurship.

Panel 10 – EU of tomorrow. How can the EU secure a safe and well guided enlargement in the upcoming years?

The European Union is a unique example of **transnational reconciliation** through a tight union. The Union has brought **cohesion** and **solidarity** between Member States, while **maintaining peace in most part of the European continent since the end of World War II**. During the years, it has grown from six founding States to 27 Member States with over 24 official languages. However, the vote on Brexit truly opened a new era as it showed the possibility for the Union to become smaller instead of larger. **The recent geopolitical events are a danger for the peace and stability of the continent**. As highlighted during the Annual State of the European Union by the President of the European Commission, the future of Ukraine, the Western Balkans and Moldova resides in our Union. In candidate countries, it incarnates the dreams of the youth. For Member States, enlargement means preparation so that the union can be successfully completed. The aim of this panel is to make recommendations to prepare and accompany candidate countries through the integration process while taking into consideration the challenges and benefits that come with it.

Panel 11 – Addressing euroscepticism. How to build a stronger, more united EU in the face of the rise of euroscepticism?

The **rise of euroscepticism** is a growing concern inside the European Union, potentially weakening it from within. **Eurosceptics worry that integration undermines their national sovereignty**, they question the democratic legitimacy and lack of transparency of the institutions, and weaponize the high levels of immigration to fuel the eurosceptic sentiment. This discourse led to Brexit and is now mainly used by populist movements that are on the rise in the continent, challenging its unity. **Building trust towards the institutions and promoting informed citizenship amongst European citizens seem key to face this challenge**. In addition, in the wake of the successive economic and social crises Europe has been facing, many European people, citizens and policy-makers alike, have been calling for more social equality and solidarity in Europe. This panel will focus on proposing concrete policies aiming at countering the eurosceptic sentiment and fostering unity in the EU.

EUC VOICES PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

Full Partners: Université de Strasbourg (EPICUR), Universitatea Tehnica Cluj-Napoca (Eut+), Szkoła Główna Handlowa w Warszawie (CIVICA), Maximilians Universität Würzburg (CHARM-EU), Università Degli Studi di Torino (UNITA), Stichting NHL Stenden Hogeschool (RUN-EU) and Erasmus Student Network

Associated Partners: Eötvös Loránd University (CHARM-EU), Université Franco-Italienne (UFI), Université Franco-Allemande (UFA), FOREU1, FOREU2, Tech. Higher Ed. Association of Ireland (THEA)

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