

Young politicians in the driving seat

Written by Lukas Mandl on 12 December 2018 in Opinion
Opinion

Young policy makers and business leaders must be brought together and empowered to strengthen European integration and cooperation, writes Lukas Mandl MEP.



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"It's the economy, stupid." I was recently reminded of this quote - which originates from Bill Clinton strategist James Carville - by EU40's Adam Mouchtar during the Young Parliamentarians Forum in Vienna in November.

Under the title "Young Members of Parliament meet young Austrian business leaders", EU40 and the Young Industry Association Austria gathered together more than 70 Members of Parliament and business representatives in the Austrian capital.

During the stakeholders discussions and meetings, two things became clear. First, that the European

economy is a vital topic for many young politicians; second, that the single market is still one of the most potent driving forces of European integration and cooperation.

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I am grateful for the opportunity to have been one of the founders of this initiative. It was explicitly geared at connecting young policy makers and stakeholders, who enthusiastically used the Forum as a platform for networking and exchanging ideas.

A highlight was when Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz warmly welcomed the delegation at the Federal Chancellery.

In his opening speech, he said how pleased he was to see so many European politicians and business leaders of this generation. The last election had brought many more young parliamentarians into the Austrian Parliament.

Chancellor Kurz is keen to welcome more young MPs in the future. He reaffirmed his support for EU40's core philosophy, that cross-party collaboration for the greater political good is easier for young MPs to make a reality; they will most likely remain politically active when the effects of implemented laws become tangible.

"We need to empower young politicians and entrepreneurs to shape the future of the European Union and confront short-term populism with a sustainable and ambitious vision"

He went on to explain how Brexit, and the negotiations surrounding it, have shown the extent to which future generations will be affected by decisions made by a majority that will no longer represent them and who in many cases will not have to live with the consequences of their decisions.

Indeed, we need to empower young politicians and entrepreneurs to shape the future of the European Union and confront short-term populism with a sustainable and ambitious vision.

To achieve this, we have to reach more young voters, who are increasingly passive in their political activity.

One successful formula has been the European shared economy and common market. Since its foundation, the single market has proven a unifying force, connecting people and companies all around Europe. It has fostered knowledge exchange and brought Member States closer together.

Chancellor Kurz therefore welcomed the EU40's initiative of exposing young MPs from across the continent to relevant young business leaders.

As the Austrian EU Council Presidency comes to an end next month, EU40 once again had the invaluable idea of connecting the right people at the right moment.

I am honoured to join the ranks of EU40 alumni such as Alexander Stubb and Manfred Weber in supporting a new vision for Europe.

We need as many meeting platforms as possible - like the EU40 Young Parliamentarians Forum - and I encourage others to follow this example.

About the author

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