

## PM+: Europe needs to put aside 'failed policies of past'

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Opinion Plus

As presidency candidates call for 'new start', very few concrete plans are being put forward on 'Europe's youth', says Patrik Kovács.



During the last few days the European citizens and stakeholders have had the opportunity to witness two debates between the candidates for the European commission presidency, with the first one taking place in Maastricht on 28 April and the second one at the European parliament in Brussels on 29 April.

Jean-Claude Juncker, Martin Schultz, Ska Keller and Guy Verhofstandt, the European parties' nominees for the presidency, presented their positions and appealed to the citizens of the union for a new start; at least most of them did.

The stakes were high and the expectations were even higher as the people of Europe waited to hear from these prospective leaders something that will give them hope for the future.

However, the outcome from the debates was that the European establishment is still chained to the

failed practices of the past dragging the people of Europe to the realities that they have created for them. There was no concrete plan, no inspiration, and no vision that could lead Europe to equal growth and prosperity for all.

The candidates appeared to either defend their past and failed policies, which lead Europe to where we currently stand, with the highest unemployment rates ever in its history and with near zero growth, or proclaim a general idea about what should be done to correct the present situation without providing a realistic plan on how to reach these targets.

Young people were at the centre of the debate with most of the questions focusing on youth employment. What came out of the debate was a strong support for youth employment but no specific plan as to how European policies can tackle this. Jean-Claude Juncker from his side pointed out what could be an indication of is to follow in the event that he takes over, that the European commission can do nothing on its own but it is something that member states have to deal with.

There was also a repeated proposal from all participants to the debate that a minimum wage should be established cross Europe. It is apparent that a minimum wage, which has to be sufficient so that every citizen will be able to afford a good living standard, is fundamental, but this has to be adjusted according to the socio economic data of every member state, with implying the final objective of reaching the same standards of living on every one of them.

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Job security is also very important and adequate European legislation providing the framework under which young people will be called to provide their services has to be defined. So that internships are not being abused and taking advantage of the young generations stops.

Young people should be the point of reference for every action and policy that the new presidency will be undertaking. The future of Europe lies with the youngest of our generations and this is the only way we will be able to achieve growth and development through innovation.

However, if we really want this to become the future reality of Europe we first need to put aside the failed policies of the past. We need new people in leadership, charismatic and visionary, able to anticipate and inspire.

As certified by a series of surveys and the work of youth supporting organisations, young people of Europe are the most able and interested to innovate and venture into the world of self-employment. They have the ability and willingness to create jobs for the masses of other young Europeans.

Finding a new way for developing Europe cannot be done without relying on youngsters and offering them an image of the future in which they are offered support and acknowledgement. Youth support and entrepreneurship development have to be assigned a concrete and emphatic role in the new policies of moving Europe forward.

## **About the author**

Patrik Kovács is president of the Young Entrepreneurs of the European Union (JEUNE)

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