#Topics

Valencia 2019

The 90th International Session of the European Youth Parliament
Committee Topics

**AFET: EU in Space**  
**Committee on Foreign Affairs**

“To infinity and beyond: Following the publication of the Space Strategy for Europe in 2016 and the promise of funding for space programmes under the new long-term budget, how can the EU take a scientific and governing lead when it comes to exploring a global framework for the use of space technology?”

**Rationale**

With the 2016 EU space strategy in place, Multi-Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 providing new funding, and the success of several space missions such as Rosetta, the EU is set to take the next steps when it comes to space policy. However, global competition in space technology is increasing with new entrants, especially from the private sector, along with a record number of objects in orbit, which is testing the limits of the United Nations (UN) conventions governing space, potentially hindering the EU from becoming a leader in the field of space technology. Furthermore, the International Space Station is set to close in the upcoming decade without a replacement, marking the end of an important part of international cooperation in space, thus raising the need for the EU to become a leader in space technology in order to pioneer a global framework for its use.

**DROI 1: Refugees**  
**Committee on Human Rights 1**

“Breaking the Dublin deadlock: While talks between Member States on reforming the Dublin system remain deadlocked, the European Court of Justice has ruled that poor living conditions should not be grounds to prevent the relocation of refugees. How should the EU respond to continued calls for reform of the asylum system, given the human rights concerns arising from current policy?”

Topics drafted and developed by the Academic Team of Valencia 2019 IS

Rationale

Every single asylum application lodged within EU territory needs to be examined and each EU Member State must be able to determine if and when it is responsible for handling an asylum claim. This objective is met through the Dublin system, which ensures quick access to asylum procedures and the examination of an application on the merits by a single, clearly determined Member State. However, in practice, the system is not so simple, with human rights concerns being at the forefront of the call for reform and with refugees continuously attempting to relocate from their country of entrance to another Member State.

Human rights concerns as a term can be considered to cover a wide range of issues. In many cases (e.g. Greece, Bulgaria, Ireland) even excessive bureaucracy/procedural burdens can be considered as a violation of basic human rights of asylum seekers when it comes to acquiring their necessary documents. At the same time, human rights violations can include poor living conditions, violence on behalf of police and other authorities, lack of communication with family members and so on. Rather than approaching and solving all the separate issues and violations individually, the Committee on Human Rights I will aim at actually focusing on the root of the problem through examining the existing issues of the Dublin Regulation and its legally based reform.

Rationale

In 2014, the UNHCR launched the #IBelong campaign, global action to end statelessness in 10 years, the prevention and resolution of childhood statelessness being one of the key goals. The agency estimates there to be at least 10 million stateless people around the world, of which at least 600,000 reside in Europe. An estimated 70,000 children are born into statelessness each year, meaning that the number of new cases of children born stateless is higher than the number of existing cases of statelessness that were resolved. Statelessness hampers a child’s access to fundamental rights such as healthcare and education. This is the result of gaps in national citizenship legislation across the EU, migration, and the emergence of new states and borders. Structural change is needed for a meaningful reduction of child statelessness.

The problem addressed in this topic is firstly the fact that children are stateless, and then that they are more vulnerable because of this. This topic will focus first on the situation of statelessness itself, and then on dealing with the problems deriving from statelessness.
ECON 1: Financial Literacy and Pensions  
Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs 1

“Me, my pension, and I: With legislation on the Pan-European Personal Pension Product (PEPP) laying the foundation for easier cross-border retirement savings, what should the EU do to increase financial literacy among young people to ensure they benefit from such initiatives and are better equipped to save and invest for retirement, with a long term perspective and in a sustainable way?”

Rationale

With the mobility of workers increasing constantly, individual national pension schemes do not provide the ideal retirement system for people who have worked in many different countries across the EU. The EU is tackling this problem by having just finalised the Pan-European Pension Product (PEPP) legislation, and is hoping for such products to be on the market within the next year. At the same time, young people often struggle with bigger financial decisions, especially if their benefit lies far ahead in the future. ECON I will discuss how young people, who aspire to work across different EU countries, can best make use of such products, and how the EU can help young people with their pension savings and with financial decisions that require thinking far into the future. Additionally, with young people taking a visible interest in tackling climate change, the topic will also touch upon the information and choices young people may wish to have with regards to how their future pension savings are being invested by funds and whether this investment is going towards sustainable causes. Another aspect of the topic concerns the changing demographics on the continent, with an ageing population putting additional strain on state pension systems. This will lead to demand for a larger role for second and third pillar pension schemes and the topic will therefore also touch on what young people expect from the pension systems of the future, given these will need to look different to that of the ones offered to older generations to remain sustainable.

ECON 2: 20 years Euro – Challenges and Perspectives  
Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs 2

“Euro turns 20: While the euro celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, aspects of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) still remain incomplete. With the Commission’s stated ambition of finalising the work by 2025, what further steps should the EU take to ensure a robust governance structure for the euro area?”

Rationale

Obstacles that have prevented Member States completing the third pillar of the banking union are synonymous with criticisms that sceptics of the euro have held since its conception: improper risk-sharing; restrictions on sovereign policy; as well as a lack of democratic oversight and accountability. ECON II intends to
reflect on the past 20 years of the euro, considering its successes and shortcomings, along with the current opportunities to advance its political and economic goals. Ultimately, the committee will examine proposals that will further the main aims of the single-currency project whilst considering ideas surrounding sustainable governance practices that work for the euro and those who use it.

ECON 3: Green Finance
Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs 3

“Green investment gap: It is estimated that in Europe alone an additional €180bn in private investment will be needed yearly to meet the goals set out in the Paris Agreement. How should the EU seek to bridge this investment gap and use the financial system as a tool to reach its climate targets?”

Rationale

Following the IPCC report and the phenomena behind Greta Thunberg, the constant pressure on policymakers to create legislation to tackle climate change has shown us that the Paris Agreement, 2030 and 2050 climate and energy targets of the European Union really need to be more than papers to sign and goals to meet. However, the cost of transitioning to green measures are considered to hit especially hard on the middle- and lower-income groups. ENVI I will focus on finding a balance between creating effective climate and energy legislation and fair and manageable transition towards a green economy for all socio-economic groups.

EMPL: Digitalisation
Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

“A new social contract: Following on from the publication of the High-Level Expert Group report into the digital transformation of EU labour markets, how should the completion of the European Pillar of Social Rights take into account the changing nature of work?”

Rationale

This topic will explore how workers' rights are affected by the current digital transformation in the labour market. There is a shift in how we do things with new technologies and digital trends transforming the way businesses operate and resulting in the prevalence of new business models. The recently published report of the High-Level Expert Group on the Impact of the Digital Transformation on EU Labour Markets, addresses the need for a skilled workforce supporting digitalisation and recommends how this can be achieved. Among the recommendations in the report, is the aim to reduce structural skill gaps, especially for women
in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), for workers at risk of automation and for the low-skilled work force. It also looks at upskilling and helping workers acquire the relevant skills they will need throughout their careers in order to keep up with rapidly transforming labour markets. Furthermore, the topic also explores the fact that new labour relations should intensify and better organise dialogue between workers and social partners, especially in the platform economy. The topic should examine how some of these aims can be achieved in practice.

**ENVI 1: Clear Planet for All**

*Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety 1*

“Green planet for all: As students and civil society movements march for a more ambitious climate policy, the ‘gilets jaunes’ (yellow vests) movement illustrates a growing discontent among those who feel constrained in their mobility and budget by ‘green’ regulation. How should the EU look to achieve its 2030 and 2050 climate and energy targets while ensuring the transition is fair and manageable for all socio-economic groups?”

**Rationale**

Following the IPCC report and the phenomena behind Greta Thunberg, the constant pressure on policymakers to create legislation to tackle climate change has shown us that the Paris Agreement, 2030 and 2050 climate and energy targets of the European Union really need to be more than papers to sign and goals to meet. However, the cost of transitioning to green measures are considered to hit especially hard on the middle- and lower-income groups. ENVI I will focus on finding a balance between creating effective climate and energy legislation and fair and manageable transition towards a green economy for all socio-economic groups.

**ENVI 2: Antimicrobial resistance and antibiotics overuse**

*Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety 2*

“Be careful what you medicate for: With antimicrobial resistance (AMR) being responsible for an estimated 33,000 deaths per year in Europe, how should Member States and the EU respond to the overuse of antibiotics?”

**Rationale**

Modern society is heavily reliant on antibiotics to treat many different diseases and ensure a stable food production. Unfortunately, more and more strains of bacteria are developing resistance towards many antibiotics mainly due to overuse. Adding to the problem, the rate of which new antibiotics are discovered is unable to keep up with the growing AMR. If the current trend continues, there might no longer be an effective
treatment of infections in humans. It is already estimated that AMR is responsible for 33,000 deaths per year in the EU and 1.5 billion euro in healthcare cost and productivity losses. How can the EU decrease antibiotics overuse? What can the EU do to combat the growing trend of AMR?

**IMCO: Horizon Europe Innovation vs Precautionary Principle**

**Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection**

“Precautionary vs innovation principle: With some businesses calling for Horizon Europe to move away from the precautionary principle to the innovation principle, how should the EU look to balance stimulating market and scientific innovation while ensuring consumers remain protected?”

**Rationale**

This topic will be centred around the tempo and safety with which present and future technology-focused regulations are implemented into EU legislation. Guided by the long-established Precautionary Principle and ignited by the recent plans surrounding the Innovation Principle for the Horizon Europe research programme, this clash of concepts questions the stance the EU should take in regards to development: being precautious or innovative.

Among other issues, discussions will be targeted at the safety concerns and ultimate value of technologies ranging from autonomous vehicles and artificial intelligence to updated chemicals and pesticides. With the main task of finding an equilibrium between scientific innovation, internal market ambitions and, most importantly, consumer protection, IMCO will set sail on a quest for shifting European innovation in the right gear for years to come.

**INTA: EU-US trade relationship**

**Committee on International Trade**

“TTIP repeat or clean slate: With the Council having adopted two new mandates for the European Commission to begin negotiating a trade agreement with the US, how should the EU approach the negotiations to avoid talks breaking down while not compromising its commitment to the multilateral rules-based system?”

**Rationale**

While the new mandate for the European Commission to discuss a limited trade deal with the US has now been approved by the Council, the content of the new EU-US deal remains a contested issue. Following the provisions of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with its implications on food standards, environmental safety and threat to the EU internal market, the deal was suspended in 2017 after
a wide public and parliamentary opposition across Member States. The two new mandates cover a trade agreement limited to the elimination of tariffs for industrial goods (excluding agricultural goods) and an agreement on a conformity assessment that would have as its objective to remove non-tariff barriers also referred to as ‘regulatory cooperation’. This concept has been heavily criticised by MEPs, syndicates, experts of environmental policies and journalists on the argument that it undermines the EU environmental, market standards in favour of the US Multinational Corporations and products with lower standards than seen in the EU.

Before the conclusion of an eventual deal, the European Parliament will need to give its consent. The Parliament has already once rejected negotiations based on the mandate on 24 March 2019. They have concerns relating particularly to the environmental aspects of the agreement and have also criticised the Council and Commission for trying to avoid a transparent debate. The lack of full transparency in the negotiation process has also sparked criticism from the European Ombudsman and several MEPs, who have highlighted the need for transparency as a main tool to prevent an unfair trade deal for European citizens, markets and the environment. The committee will look at how negotiations can be conducted within the framework of the new mandate, and how the concerns of citizens and politicians can be taken into account.

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**ITRE 1: Digitalisation of the Energy Sector**

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

“Digitalising Energy: To meet the rising demand for energy while still reaching emission reduction targets, technological innovation in the energy sector will be needed. How should the EU encourage digitalisation of the energy sector while preserving the cyber resilience of vital infrastructure?”

**Rationale**

As part of its plans to meet the 2020 and 2030 climate goals, the European Union has committed to further digitalisation of the energy sector to promote the more efficient usage and production of – ideally renewable – energy. Some of the infrastructure the EU has been supporting includes smart grids, energy silos, and the creation of a multi-directional digital energy system. The hope is that the ability to manage energy flow and also store energy will greatly improve wastage of energy and empower consumers of this energy to take their sustainability into their own hands.

However, the development of this infrastructure also has its problems: with more of a reliance on digital systems for the management of our energy comes a heightened risk of cyber attacks such as the 2016 Ukraine
Grid Attack, which caused more than 225,000 outages. The discussion of this topic will hopefully result in ideas aiming to foster the development of this exciting new digital frontier, whilst also considering the prevention of the risks that come with it. The Committee will also discuss how to find a cost-effective ways to transmit and store electrical energy at a large scale and to what extent and how the carbon-free mobility should be supported.

### ITRE 2: Relationship between Science and Society
Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

“Science and society: With citizen science listed as a key policy orientation under the current Horizon 2020 Work Programme for ‘Science with and for Society’ (SwafS), what should the shape of civic participation in science be at the European, national and local level, and how can it be best implemented?”

**Rationale**

Multi-actor and public engagement in science and technology is one of the most important aspects in implementing Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) - a scientific approach whereby the EU hopes to best assess all potential implications of scientific research for society, as well as fittingly anticipate and consider societal expectations relevant to scientific innovation. In that respect, citizen science, a concept which the European Commission defines as the non-professional involvement of volunteers in the scientific process, is of special interest, though still largely unexplored grounds, therefore involving a certain amount of structural and substantial challenges.

In a broad sense, and because there is not yet any thorough structural framework at an EU level, committee discussions will focus firstly on vision building, and themes such as who can be citizen scientists, and to what extent citizen science can contribute to scientific excellence and economy. More generally, the committee will have to contemplate what aims it envisions citizen science to achieve and how it believes citizen science should be shaped and how its potential should be best utilised. Further questions will then relate to choosing optimal methodologies for carrying out citizen science initiatives, coordinating from local to global efforts, and fostering science literacy through formal and informal education regardless of age, gender and socio-economic background.

### ITRE 3: Artificial Intelligence
Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

“The Digital Mind: As the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for neuroscience continues to be explored, concerns still remain on the implications for privacy, liability, consent, agency, identity, augmentation and bias. How should the EU look to develop ethical guidelines into policy to address the possible human rights implications of such technological developments?”
Rationale

Based on the challenges that artificial intelligence and new technologies represent regarding human rights, this topic will explore how the EU can ensure an appropriate ethical and legal framework in creating trustworthy AI, whilst protecting human rights. The European Commission has recently identified the seven essentials of trustworthy AI, namely: human agency and oversight; robustness and safety; privacy and data governance; transparency; diversity, non-discrimination and fairness; societal and environmental well-being; and accountability. As Europe tries to position itself at the forefront of technology regulation, this topic will answer such questions as: how can the European Union create more comprehensive AI mapping, update existing legislation, evaluate current enforcement mechanisms and establish new consumer rights in regards to AI?

LIBE: Privacy and Regulating Big Tech

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

“It’s my data: Following on from the Cambridge Analytica scandal exposing the extent of commercialisation of personal data by technology giants such as Facebook, how should the EU look to respond to the remaining gaps in the system to protect its “people first” approach to data and privacy?”

Rationale

In today’s society, we each have a digital replica. We create a huge amount of data with every move and every interaction with each of our devices; generating about 2.5 quintillion (a million trillion) bytes of data per day; according to a study by Engadget UK. Even with the GDPR legislation now in place, Politico has reported on 25 April that in Ireland alone 1,928 complaints of data privacy violations have been lodged, with Irish authorities reportedly not having taken action on any of these cases. Our personal data is no longer just a means of identification, but has now gained commercial value, resulting in causes for misuse and data violations. This topic will address the challenges associated with regulating big tech and will focus on giving citizens ownership over their own data and rights in the digital world.
The Schwarzkopf Foundation is the international umbrella organisation of the European Youth Parliament (EYP). EYP España is a National Committee in the EYP network.