



PRESS RELEASE

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3.000 young people at YO!Fest 2017 in Maastricht

Today 3,000 young people from all over Europe gather in Maastricht, Netherlands for the YO!Fest 2017. Exactly 25 years after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the European project is facing multiple challenges. For one day, young people have the opportunity to reinvent and rethink the models we live in.

The YO!Fest is the annual political, musical, youth-led festival of the European Youth Forum. For its 8th edition, it takes place in the framework of the programme of *Europe Calling!* and is organised together with the City of Maastricht and the Province of Limburg.

Young people must have more opportunities to express their concerns and raise their voices on the issues that matter to them. YO!Fest is a unique event that provides thousands of young people with the space to directly engage with decision-makers through more than 150 activities, from conferences to interactive workshops, thought-provoking debates and discussions, and to “#YouthUp” Europe, making it a better place for young people.

This year, the YO!Fest is built around 6 core themes: Rights, Peace, Participation, Sustainability, Inclusion and Health. Ideas raised throughout the day will be discussed in a giant plenary bringing together more than 1500 young people and some high level speakers such as MEPs Marietje Schaake, Brando Benifei, Svetoslav Malinov, and Alaa Murabit, global Sustainable Development Goals advocate. The outcomes of YO!Fest will feed into a Youth Forum position on the future of Europe, and support our advocacy in the run-up to the 2019 European Elections.

This year, the Youth Forum is extremely honored by the presence of the President of Germany, Joachim Gauck, at the YO!Fest.

In addition to engaging debates and in-depth conversations, the festival will also include plenty of live music. The Generation Maastricht YO!Fest Concert, a European music festival organised in collaboration with Muziekgieterij Maastricht and Jeunesses Musicales International, is held on the evenings of Monday 6 February and Tuesday 7 February.

Luis Alvarado, President of the European Youth Forum:

“We are the most pro-European generation. At a time when the European project is at risk with extremely high youth unemployment, the rise of populist and xenophobic discourse, and a clear lack of ambition from our leaders, we need fresh and radical ideas from young people and youth organisations to bring positive change to our societies. 25 years after the signature of one of the major European treaties, it is time to #YouthUp Europe!”

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Notes to the editors:

About the YO!Fest

YO!Fest is the political youth-led festival of the European Youth Forum. More information about the YO!Fest: www.yofest.eu.

The full programme is available here: http://www.yofest.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PROGRAMME_By_VENUE_A4.pdf

About the European Youth Forum

The European Youth Forum is the platform of youth organisations in Europe. Independent, democratic, youth-led, it represents over 100 National Youth Councils and international youth organisations from across the continent. The Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives, by representing and advocating their needs and interests and those of their organisations towards the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. For more information, visit www.youthforum.org.

About #YouthUp:

#YouthUp is a Europe-wide campaign powered by the European Youth Forum to crowdsource the best ideas for a more inclusive politics in Europe. For more information visit: www.youthup.eu/

About Europe Calling!

In 2017, it will be 25 years since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty: the birth certificate of the European Union and the euro. The 25th anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty marks a history of optimism and the seizure of opportunities, but also solidarity under the pressure of financial and economic problems and the debate about Europe's openness. It also demonstrates that Europe requires permanent maintenance. Maastricht is the number one location to commemorate the signing of the Maastricht Treaty by means of a significant and interesting programme. It is also a perfect opportunity to look back and to look ahead to the future of Europe.

For more information about Europe Calling! And the full programme, visit <http://www.europecalling.nl/>.