



European Committee
of the Regions

[Y]FACTOR

Holding Hands

Discover youth perspectives on
local and regional democracy in
the light of the Ukraine war



@yfactorproject

Final Report 2022

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1 Introduction

Welcome to the final report of the [Y]Factor Project from the Summer 2022 trainees. This year we decided to work on a very topical issue: the war in Ukraine. Therefore, we have spent the last four months investigating what the youth local and regional perspectives on democracy are in the light of the war in Ukraine. The following final report, which accompanies our Documentary “Holding Hands”, is intended to provide input for all interested people, but also for subsequent trainee groups, to give them advice for their own project.

Our work can be divided into four main parts. In the first section, the concept of the [Y]Factor Project at the Committee of the Regions will be introduced. Followed by a presentation of our project, its aims and a brief description of its implementation. After that, we will concentrate in the fourth chapter on the state of play on five central topics: Democracy, Humanitarian Aid, Economy, Security and Identity. After this in-depth research, the opinion of youth will be put in the spotlight. In the fifth chapter, the opinions of six young Europeans and Ukrainians on the respective topics are analysed as well as relevant quotes from the conducted interviews are given. Finally, in our conclusion, the respective findings are contrasted and conclusions are drawn. On the last pages, you can get to know the dedicated team that made this project possible and read about their personal insights.

2 What is [Y]Factor Project?

Twice per year, the European Committee of the Regions welcomes 24 trainees who, alongside their day-to-day work in their Unit or Political Group, are encouraged to take part in the [Y]Factor Project.

The project, launched in 2017, serves “to connect the dots of the institution” and develops a more comprehensive view of what the CoR is and can be for young people. Indeed, the choice of topic, the planning, outreaching and the implementation of the project are in the hands of the trainees and are coordinated by the directorate for communication. The only guideline is that the project’s topic should concern three of the main thematic of the Committee: Youth, Europe and Regions.

The project does not represent the official views of the CoR, but it provides some insights from the trainees, which might be relevant to the current political priorities of the CoR.

Since its inception, the topics former trainees have covered are extensive and their results can be found on the following links as well as in [Y]Factor Project media channels, namely Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

- Spring 2017: [#MeandEU \(at YOFest in Maastricht\)](#)
- Summer 2017: [All EU need is You\(th\)](#)
- Spring 2018: [Between regional and European identity](#)
- Summer 2018: [Citizens’ dialogue in Molenbeek](#)
- Spring 2019: [Europe for her](#)
- Summer 2019: [Capturing \(Y\)our Europe](#)

- Spring 2020: [Rethink \(Y\)our waste!](#)
- Summer 2020/Spring 2021: [Mind the digital gap](#)
- Summer 2021: [Next step – a European Year of Rail podcast](#)
- Spring 2022: [Closing the rural-urban digital divide](#)

3 What is the [Y]Factor Project Summer 2022 mission?

On 24th February the Russian Federation launched its shocking invasion of Ukraine, the period since has been one of disbelief and growing concern. It has resulted in an unprecedented wave of 6.5 million refugees, in the resurgence of urgent security concerns, in disastrous economic consequences, and in an energy crisis of an as-yet-unknown extent. Consequently, European citizens have been mobilised by the results of this conflict across the European Union. Thousands took to the streets to express their solidarity with Ukraine.

Local and regional authorities have been at the forefront in dealing with the fallout of the war. Whether they are the regions on the Ukrainian border that are on the frontline of receiving refugees, rural counties in Western Europe dealing with rising prices, or towns sending aid to the partner cities in Ukraine itself. Likewise, the ultimate results of this war will take a long time to manifest, and it is today's youth who will have to contend with them as they move into an uncertain future. Therefore, it is vital to understand young people's perspectives on local and regional politics at this moment in history.

As trainees at the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) we intend to create a repository of diverse youth perspectives from various EU regions, and to catalogue them at a time when democracy is under attack. Thus, we wished to use our position as CoR trainees and the resources at our disposal to gather youth regional and local perspectives on democracy in the light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. By doing this, the this [Y]Factor Project Summer Semester 2022 aims at:

- Give a voice to young people.
- Learn the needs and concerns of the youth in the fields of research spurred by the war.
- Bring forward a youth regional and local perspective on the war.
- Provide CoR with hands-on knowledge to produce Youth evidence-based policy opinions on the remits researched.

3.1 What have we done?

This project aimed at producing both a policy report and a documentary. The former, here presented is the combined result of a survey of other previous and relevant work and interviews carried to young Ukrainian and European Union citizens. All this has been done while keeping in mind our ethical concerns, organisational structure and budget.

In light of local and regional youth perspectives the research focused on the following four areas, which we believe are closely interconnected with the concept of democracy and have repercussions on it:

- Humanitarian aid
- Security
- Economy
- Identity

Each of these areas were first given an academic research and overview as presented in Section 4, this then gave the foundation of knowledge to create a set of questions which were then asked to the young European and Ukrainian interviewees. In this final report, their responses are analysed in the context of the previous research, to stress the main concerns of a randomly selected sample of young citizens.

Moreover, the 25-minute documentary, which will be premier the last day of our internship (i.e., 15th July) has been developed combining and editing the footage from our interviews, in order to produce a more visually appealing and engaging picture of the outcomes and main findings of this project.

3.2 How have we done it?

Concerning our organic structure, we distribute the workload by projects and assign them to flexible and dynamic Task Forces (TF) instead of static and closed working groups. Those horizontally organised TF have been changing and rebranding themselves as the nature of the work required as shown by the following graph.

Organic Structure



Source: Produced in-house

This was decided as we wished to avoid closed working groups, hierarchically arranged with little mutual communication. It was also vitally supported by our decision to use the Trello app which facilitates this style of workflow management. The nature of that productivity and workflow management software allowed us to automatically assigned tasks to the TF as they arose and considering participants' workload and interests, set up deadlines and have a unified hub to manage the content produced. It also meant that there was full transparency regarding what was being worked on, and who was working on it.

Ultimately this style of organic structure helped us to create dynamism in three ways:

- Impromptu knowledge-sharing & cooperation between trainees in different task forces Synergies.
- Greater accommodation of trainees depending on needs and skills.
- Room for adaptability to unexpected events.

3.3 Communication Strategy

- The communication group worked on three main strands of activities:
- Definition of a consistent visual identity
- Implementation of reach-out initiatives
- Execution of a social media-based communication

In terms of our visual identity, new branding was created for this year's project. The choice of the colours identity is tied to reflect the core themes of the project, which are mainly democracy, regions and youth engagement. The main colours used were yellow and blue, which apart from being a call of the Ukraine and EU flag, produce unconscious feelings in the target audience. Psychological research has observed that blue transmit a sense of freedom and trust, which can symbolise perfectly the relation between Ukraine and the EU and what they both stand for, while yellow conveys cautionary feelings and optimism, that represent the persistence of both Ukrainians and European citizens to strive for a better future despite the uncertain times we are living in. Overall, the colour palette chosen for our visual identity does not only show the solidarity we have with Ukraine, but it also provides an understanding that the project is mainly based on how the Ukraine war has affected youth around EU regions.

We developed thoughtful planning of the diverse posts with which we wanted to reach our target audience, establishing meeting the different dates for the posts and types of posts in order to maximise our impact. That was possible thanks to the insightful meetings with the media management team of the CoR.

Considering the nature of our project we delineated a target audience composed of young Europeans and non-Europeans between the age of 18 and 35. It did not exclude other potential viewers from different age groups or categories. The reasons behind that choice were twofold: First, we believed that as young professionals we are in the best position to address our peers and raise their awareness on the issues of democracy, humanitarian, security, economy and identity in light of the Ukraine War. Second, we think that the outcome we have produced, namely a short documentary, can fit perfectly the millennial generations who look for short and easily consumed content.



[Y]Factor Project Branding

Source: Produced in-house

In the same vein, despite us developing a social media and outreach campaign for the 3 channels of the [Y]Factor Project (i.e., Twitter, Facebook and Instagram), we focused our attention on the latter one, Instagram. That choice was made based on the target audience, as millennial cohorts, despite being the ones using Facebook for the first time, have mostly migrated towards Instagram and are not using in great measure other social media such as TikTok. Additionally, Instagram as an easy and accessible way to obtain quick information also offered us a wide variety of formats (e.g., polls, sneak peeks, highlights) through which we conveyed the information in an engaging fashion.

We worked to deliver a distinctive tone and voice that could resonate with our target audience (young Europeans between 18 and 35 years old). Across all three channels, we devised multimedia content that can be best described as

- Informative
- Educational
- Interactive
- Engaging

Particularly on Instagram we developed a campaign on three stages. First, we presented through post all the Team and with the help of stories we introduced our followers to the [Y]Factor Project and our aim for this summer semester.

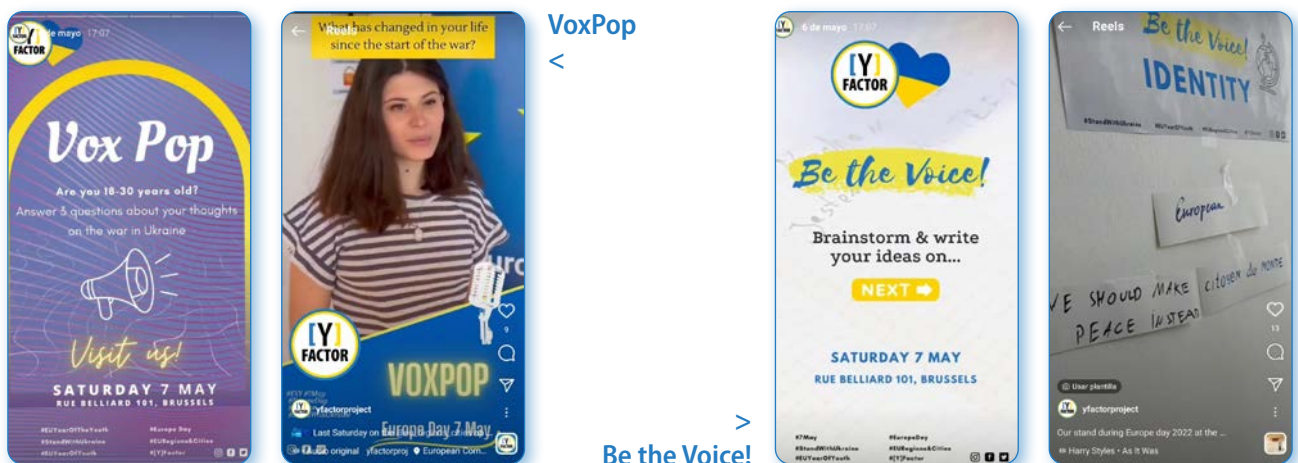
1st Social Media Campaign Stage. Presenting the Team



Source: Produced in-house

Second, for the Open Doors Day at the CoR we developed 2 main events to promote the project, namely “VoxPop”, in which participants recorded answers to questions regarding their perspectives on democracy were posted on our pinned stories; and “Be the Voice!”, in which participants could write down their comments and ideas on the topic under research. We shared reels and stories of the events during the previous days to boost the participation rates and carried full coverage on social media during the Open Doors Day.

2nd Social Media Campaign Stage.



Third, we started the campaign through which we introduced the participants of our documentary. Each participant was presented in 3 steps: a post with some information of them, a story of them on a consecutive day advertising the documentary and a post video in the participants' mother tongue on the third day including more information about themselves. Additionally, during the three phases, we share some stories of our daily work under the hashtag #BehindTheScenes.

3rd Social Media Campaign Stage. Presenting the participants



As expected, the social media on which we had the most successful media performance was Instagram. The cut-off date for collecting the insights here presented was 15 June 16:30 PM. On the 29th of March 2022, the number of followers was originally 357. As of the cut-off date, we increased our followers by 83 accounts. This figure is expected to increase more when we promote our documentary at the end of June 2022. Additionally, during the first and second media campaign stage 29th March to 31st May, we reached 2,038 accounts and managed to engage 93 accounts constituting a successful campaign.

Further, on to this, we expect to increase our social media outreach between the end of June and mid-July with the release of the "HoldingHands" trailer and the documentary itself. Moreover, that boost in the Instagram audience might be stronger due to the agreement with the CoR communication team that this documentary will be promoted on social media through paid advertisement.



Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/yfactorpresents>



Twitter

<https://twitter.com/yfactor?lang=en>



Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/yfactorproject>

@yfactorproject

4 State of Play: Democratic, Humanitarian, Economic, Security and Identitarian Local and Regional Concerns

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused great dismay around the world and particularly in the European Union. Due to security issues, the destabilisation of the local economy and an unprecedented refugee crisis of nearly five million people¹, the war has caused great concern in the EU's border regions with Ukraine. Therefore, the aim of the Y-Factor project is to give a voice to the European youth who have been affected by the return of the war to the European continent and to provide them with a platform where their local and regional perspectives about these topical issues surrounding democracy are heard.

In order to obtain the perspectives of young people, the following research question will be asked through interviews:

4.1 Democracy

In the following a working definition for the term democracy is given. This term is used and defined qualitatively by different authors.

Democracy is considered today in the Western world to be the "best possible" functioning form of government. Although contemporary democracies have weaknesses and shortcomings, the worst democracy still looks better than any other form of government, especially better than authoritarian regimes. Democracies (ideally) offer people individual and political freedoms, opportunities for participation, and the rule of law. In addition, it is assumed that democracies do not wage war against each other. This is the reason why democracy can be seen as a guarantor for securing a permanent renunciation of force in the intergovernmental area (Czempiel 1992: 29). These assumptions are based on the desire for protection, preservation, and, if possible, the spread of democratic governance in the world. Despite the security aspect, experience suggests that human rights can be best guaranteed within the framework of democratic structures. This phenomenon has become increasingly important since the 1990s.

What are youth regional, local and EU perspectives on democracy in light of the Ukraine invasion?

This will be done by means of a constructivist approach in semi-structured interviews. The project is intended to include a number of interviewees coming from diverse regions of the EU and Ukraine.

In the following document, the proceeding is outlined. In a first step, a broad working definition for the term democracy is given. Subsequently, a brief picture of the four central areas (humanitarian situation, economy, identity and security) which are intended to lead the development of the interview questions will be presented. Finally, the topics will be linked to democracy in order to develop questions for the interviews.

Even with the frequent use of the term democracy, there is still disagreement about what exactly can be understood by this concept or what criteria should be used to identify a democracy. Hence, a brief overview of the different definitions will be displayed in order to explain how the term democracy can be applied in the Y-Factor project. Defining the concept of democracy universally is difficult because on the one hand the term is used to describe the ideal form of government and on the other hand it describes an inadequate reality.

Schumpeter offers a definition of democracy that is widespread and commonly approved. This definition still serves as a starting point for many revised definitions of democracy.

Schumpeter describes democracy thus:

"The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election

1 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will.” (Schumpeter 1950: 397).

This definition requires the existence of free and fairly elected representatives representing the interests of the population. Over time, further procedural and formal demands on democracy have also been formulated and added. According to Dahl (1971) these minimum requirements are considered to be necessary but not sufficient for a functioning democracy.

Below, Dahl’s requirements are listed:

- Existence of elected representatives.
- Free and fair elections in which coercion is quite limited.
- Passive suffrage.
- Active suffrage.
- Freedom of speech.
- Freedom of information.
- Freedom of assembly (Dahl 1971, Whitehead 2002).

Recently, other aspects have been emphasised such as:

- **Internal guarantee of the ability to govern:** elected representatives must have the real opportunity (effective power) to exercise their office. The “dominance of the civilian government” must be ensured (Frantz 2000: 54). For example, government power should not be compromised or restricted by the military (Diamond 1997: 311), an aspect that played an important role for Turkey for instance.
- **External guarantee of the ability to govern:** The prerequisite for this aspect is the international legal independence of the respective state. (Dahl, 1791).

In accordance with Dahl, Linz, Lipset and others, democracy is defined by Diamond as follows:

Democracy “encompasses not only a civilian, constitutional, multiparty regime, with regular, free, and fair elections and universal suffrage, but organizational and informational

pluralism; extensive civil liberties (freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations); effective power of elected officials; and functional autonomy for legislative, executive, and judicial organs of government.” (Diamond 1997: 311f.)

This very broad definition focuses on both formal and functional aspects. It is contrary to the following definition of Potter which is shown below. He defines the liberal democracy with focus on the electoral criterion.

“A liberal democracy is a type of political regime in which binding rules and policy decisions are made not by the entire community but by representatives accountable to the community. This accountability is secured primarily through free, fair and competitive elections in which virtually all adult men and women have the right to vote and stand for elective office.” (Potter 1997: 4)

On the one hand, there is a broad consensus about the necessity of formal requirements. However, on the other hand there is an agreement that these requirements are necessary but not sufficient. The explanatory power about how such formal requirements actually ensure democratic structures is limited. This can be empirically demonstrated by the wave of elections in the Arab world or in Belarus. A variety of elections does not necessarily create more democracy.

Another criticism of the definition is that it is too narrow and too broad at the same time and therefore does not seem meaningful. For example, it is too narrow because it implies that a state can only be classified as democracy if universal suffrage is guaranteed. This full inclusion is something that has only happened in Switzerland since 1971. At the same time, the definition is one-sided, formal, and not very ambitious. It does not consider important aspects such as the regime’s functionality (performance) or social participation. (Whitehead 2002)

In conclusion, the fulfilment of formal requirements is not sufficient to classify a state accurately as a democracy. That means one cannot simply tick off the criteria on a “checklist” because this may lead to a misjudgement. If only one of the indicators on the list cannot be proven (for example universal suffrage), the

state will not be classified as a democracy even though there is a fundamental democratic mood. In addition, a state may be categorised as a democracy because it fulfils all formal requirements, even though they might not in fact be implemented. For simplified and improved classification, it makes sense to distinguish between formal democracies on the one hand and functioning or substantial democracies on the other hand.

In this project, the term democracy is to be seen as describing a liberal, constitutional, and rule-of-law

secured regime. Additionally, the concept is based on a functioning government system which ensures the formal requirements of a democratic system. Moreover, it implements the idea both practically and energetically. The use of the phrase does not refer to the ideal type of a democratic system, nor does it define a perfect democracy. The tension between normative and descriptive elements in the definition of democracy remains unresolved. However, it should be taken into consideration in the use of the term democracy.

4.2 Humanitarian concerns

This section explores the humanitarian consequences of the conflict with a focus on the main aid instruments and actions taken by the European Union, its member states, regions and municipalities. Moreover, it pinpoints how the European youth has reacted locally to the conflict along humanitarian lines.

The escalation of the latent Ukrainian conflict in February 2022 has turned an already volatile situation into a full-scale humanitarian emergency. As a result of the military offensive launched by the Russian Federation, Ukrainian people are fleeing their homes to find safety elsewhere within the country and are crossing borders into neighbouring countries. Accordingly, the European Union has released a package of humanitarian aid measures to provide immediate support to the Ukrainian civilians.

The efforts of Member States to address the immediate and long-term scale of this challenge will need to be supported financially at the Union level. This is why the European Commission (EC) proposed making available €3.4 billion to support Member States and particularly those closest to the EU - Ukraine border.

Moreover, the EC has also adopted a proposal for Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE), allowing the Member States and regions to provide emergency support to people fleeing from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Furthermore, the EU has turned to its regions and cities to help support the millions of Ukrainian refugees fleeing war. On March 28, the EC presented a 10-Point Plan for stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war against Ukraine. Likewise, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) launched an Info-Support Hub, a platform

to support regions and cities welcoming displaced people, and to link transit regions and overburdened local and regional authorities (LRAs) with those in other Member States that have more capacity to help. The platform includes needs and offers concerning accommodation, employment opportunities and humanitarian assistance to help refugees. Local and regional politicians are the building blocks and foundations of democracy, and their role is to provide immediate solutions to citizens. In contrast, any long-term solutions must be developed with their involvement. With the Info-Support Hub initiative, the CoR calls on LRAs from Europe to request or offer their support via this platform.

Additionally, European civil society, especially youth organisations, have reacted with massive solidarity for Ukraine, alongside their local and regional administrations, through various actions such as peaceful protests, or opening humanitarian aid channels and information lines. Furthermore, European youth associations like the European Youth Forum have released statements condemning the unnecessary and unprovoked terrorist war on Ukraine and have called for all parties to support the country. They have also stressed their continued support through basic material shipment to Ukraine and help to the Ukrainian Youth Council.

In five weeks, a quarter of the population of Ukraine has been forced to flee their homes. As of today, more than 4 million refugees have fled Ukraine, making this the fastest-growing refugee crisis since World War II. In addition, refugees have entered Poland, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Slovakia, and Belarus and a further 6.5 million people have been displaced internally within Ukraine.

Poland is the most common destination of refugees, hosting more than two million alone. Stabilising the land borders with the EU is of the utmost importance as this is the key way that aid is arriving in the country. Most refugee transit centres are located close to the Lublin Voivodeship and the Podkarpackie Voivodeship border².

Number of Ukrainian Refugees in the Neighbouring Countries as of March 29

Country	Number of Ukrainian refugees
Poland	2,336,799
Romania	608,936
Republic of Moldova	387,151
Hungary	364,804
Russian Federation	350,632
Slovakia	281,172
Belarus	10,902

Source: <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/timeline-of-ukrainian->

Take Away

If we are to consider humanitarian aid to Ukraine then it shall be noted that solidarity is a key concept characterising the action of the European Union. The bordering regions suffered extreme influxes of Ukrainian asylum seekers. However, their capabilities are overburdened, reason of which the EU created the CARE Package to allow the Member States and regions to provide emergency support to people fleeing from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Moreover, the civil society, especially youth organisations, have massively reacted in solidarity with Ukraine alongside their local and regional administrations. However, due to the magnitude of the support to be provided and the integration of Ukrainian refugees over an indefinite period, the perceptions of youth on democracy might be altered by the insufficient aid provided to the people in need.

4.3 Economic concerns

In this section, we dig through a literature review into the main economic concerns arising from the Ukraine conflict that could affect youth locally and regionally. After revising the latest news and being aware of the topical issues through our own experience, we decided to focus on inflation, energy prices, and employment and trade.

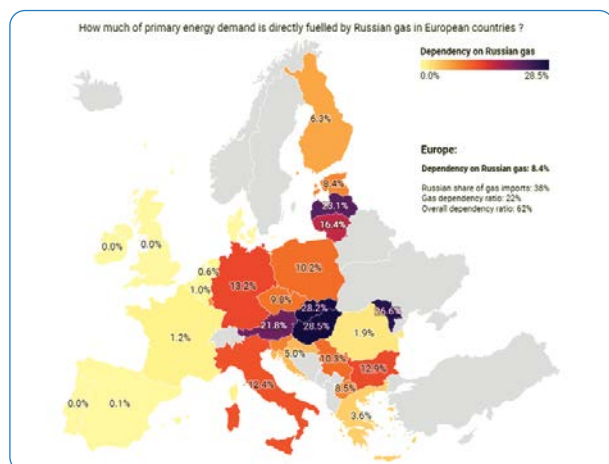
4.3.1 Energy

The dependency on Russian gas has presented itself as a key issue in the wake of the war in Ukraine. Russia supplies around 19% of the world's natural gas and 11% of its oil; therefore, the many EU Member States, such as Germany, Hungary, and Slovakia, strongly depend on Russian gas and oil. As a result, energy prices have drastically risen. For instance, the cost of oil is nearly double now what it was a year ago. Inevitably, the price shock risks increasing energetic poverty and disrupting the production of goods and services worldwide.

The EU's energy dependence on Russia is subject to being used as blackmail by the Russian Federation, e.g., when Vladimir Putin ordered the so-called "unfriendly countries" to pay for energy imports in rubles. In 2019, Russia provided Europe with 27% of its crude oil imports, 41% of natural gas imports and 47% of solid fuel (mostly coal) imports. While some countries have promised to phase out Russian imports, others are more hesitant. Germany's case is especially worrying, as the country has promoted natural gas instead of nuclear power as a partner source to renewables. Coupled with the high prices Germans pay for energy – in the first half of 2021 Germans paid the most for energy in Europe at 0.3193 Euro per kWh –, it is no wonder elected officials fear losing popular support if prices were to increase much more due to a total Russian ban. Nevertheless, the revelation of Russian atrocities committed in the recently recaptured town of Bucha has galvanised support for further sanctions throughout Europe, with yet unforeseen consequences.

² <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2022/3/621dd8214/people-across-poland-show-solidarity-refugees-ukraine.html>

Mapping European Dependency on Russian Gas



Source: <https://www.bruegel.org/2022/03/the-economic-policy-consequences-of-the-war/>

Alternative methods must be sourced for these countries. A new US-EU Energy Deal has been put in place to counter this; however, it is likely not enough to compensate for the lost energy from Russia.

The impact of the shocks differs across EU regions, particularly those that have a common border with either Russia or Ukraine. Thus, the European energy market is in an extremely difficult situation, requiring coordinated policy measures to ensure a “reliable and affordable energy supply” without jeopardising climate goals.

Additionally, a new analysis from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that low-income households, in which young precariat could be included, will spend 18% of their income on average after-housing costs on energy bills after April. For single adult households on low incomes, this rises to a shocking 54%. Those skyrocketing prices increase vulnerable groups’ risk of poverty. Furthermore, they also put a substantial burden on LRAs as to the first providers of social buffers in many cases³.

4.3.2 Employment & Trade

Over the war, sanctions have meant that any existing trade with Russia in EU countries has become non-

existent. Sanctions are foreign policy instruments based on article 29 of the Treaty of the European Union⁴. Since Ukraine is a major manufacturer and producer of agricultural goods, its economy is expected to shrink by almost half this year. Moreover, Ukraine ranks among the top steel producers. As a consequence of the trade decrease of core goods, EU regions will suffer shortages. Russia and Ukraine represent almost a third of the world’s supply of exports in this regard.

Ukraine’s output of grain and potatoes is among the highest in Europe and is among the world’s largest producers of sugar beets and sunflower oil. Consequently, food distribution chain disruption can already be felt across many local supermarkets, putting the EU in sensible food insecurity that cannot be understated. In addition, food insecurity can greatly impact an entire generation of children and youngsters that need a rich and varied diet for healthy psychological and physical development.

Moreover, the need to integrate Ukrainian refugees fleeing their country into the hosting countries’ labour markets to avoid a loss of skills and secure a smooth integration might cause a race to the bottom in wages.

The war in Ukraine has created a new negative supply shock for the world economy; Russia and Ukraine account for 2% of global GDP⁵. However, the magnitude of the economic impact of the conflict is highly uncertain and will depend in part on the duration of the war and the policy responses.

4.3.3 Inflation

According to OECD assessments, the economy will be affected by the increase in commodity prices, supply chain challenges, refugees’ humanitarian costs, and excessive investment needs to safeguard energy supply via green investments and upgrading defence systems.

The OECD considers that the war in Ukraine will lead in the short term to a slowdown in the recovery and a strong increase in inflationary pressures. However, the precise quantification of the impact on these two

3 <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/rising-energy-bills-%E2%80%98devastate%E2%80%99-poorest-families-adding-harmful-legacy-millions-children>

4 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12016M029>

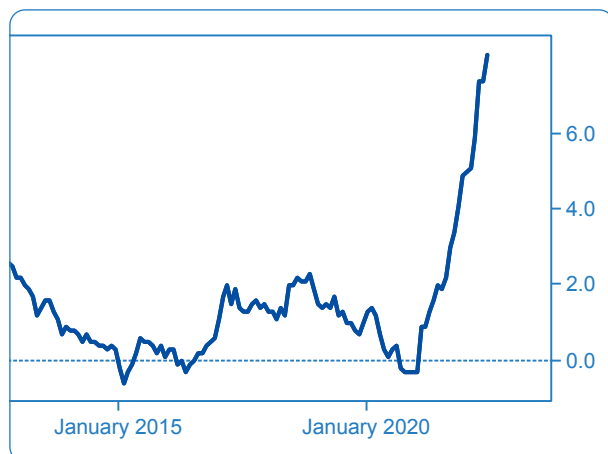
5 [Interim-economic-outlook-report-march-2022.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/interim-economic-outlook-report-march-2022.pdf) (oecd.org)

variables is contingent on the evolution of the conflict and its political consequences⁶.

The European economies would be the hardest hit, especially those that share a border with Russia or Ukraine, particularly given the relative importance of trade and energy links with Russia prior to the conflict. Moreover, in the event of a complete disruption of energy exports from Russia to the EU, inflation would be increased by a further 1¼ percentage point (bringing the full shock to euro area inflation to over 3½ percentage points)⁷. It would further reduce European growth by over half a percentage point.

Those inflationary pressures might exert tremendous consequences on youngsters transitioning to adulthood and starting to make a life of their own. They can also hinder the recovery and resilience of public services like health, housing or education provided in many cases by LRAs across the European Union.

HICP Inflation Rate - Overall Index (Euro Area)



Source: https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/macroeconomic_and_sectoral/hicp/html/index.en.html

4.4 Security concerns

This section explores two core, frontline security issues due to the war in Ukraine, which can directly affect youngsters locally and regionally. These are namely the militarisation of the EU Member States and increasing military expenditure, and the cybersecurity and misinformation through social media.

Take Away

The war in Ukraine and the resulting international reaction, accompanied by major sanctions from the West and the EU, have several implications for the perception of democracy. For one thing the conflict has exposed the EU's great dependence on energy imports, with all its accompanying geostrategy consequences. The EU's sanctions regime, for example, currently cannot fully cover the area of energy, which could increase the pressure on Russia, as the EU is currently unable to compensate for thereby lost energy supplies. In this way, the EU is unintentionally maintaining important financing resources for the Russian Federation. At the same time, the shortage or increased demand for these resources on the world market - also due to the search for alternative suppliers - has led to a sharp increase in price of energy within the EU. In addition, this has resulted in rising inflation risks. With the economic turmoil and the influx of Ukrainian citizens into the EU, a loss of jobs also seems possible. Increased energy prices, especially for financially disadvantaged groups, as well as the increased inflation risks and possible job losses, can also strongly influence the perception of democracy. The questionnaires will therefore also examine these considerations from the perspective of local and regional youth in the affected border areas, in order to subsequently clarify the influence of these economic factors on perceptions of democracy.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has upset the security order of Europe. The expansion of NATO to the countries of the former Soviet bloc after the end of the Cold War was accompanied by a steady decrease in military expenditure as a percentage of GDP as the threat of war receded into the background⁸. That trend

6 <https://www.oecd.org/economic-outlook/>

7 Economic repercussions of Russia's war on Ukraine – Weekly Digest (europa.eu)

8 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?end=2020&locations=EU&start=1960&view=chart>

was first broken in 2014 as a consequence of the Russian invasion of Crimea, which saw the eastern NATO and EU Member States pick up their military expenditure to meet NATO targets (2% of GDP), as well as a more limited increase across the board for western EU Member States. According to Eurostat, as of 2020, the highest levels of total expenditure on defence in the EU were observed in Greece (2.6 % of GDP), Latvia and Estonia (both 2.5 % of GDP), Romania (2.4 % of GDP), Lithuania (2.3 % of GDP) followed by France and Cyprus (both 1.9 % of GDP). In contrast, Ireland (0.2 % of GDP), Malta (0.5 % of GDP) and Austria (0.6 % of GDP), all of which are neutral countries, and had comparatively low expenditure on defence in the EU⁹. NATO figures further count Poland as spending 2.30% of GDP on defence in the same year, something which is explained by the different methodological approach used¹⁰.

In the wake of the Russian invasion of February 24th, some of the countries short of NATO's target have

pledged to meet and even exceed it, notably Germany, which had long forgone militaristic aspirations due to its historical past. Denmark has made a similar pledge, while the remaining countries remain committed to NATO's deadline of 2% GDP by 2024, set in 2014 in response to Russia's invasion of Crimea. Allies have activated NATO's defence plans, deployed elements of the NATO Response Force, and placed 40,000 troops in the eastern flank of the Alliance, along with significant air and naval assets, under direct NATO command supported by Allies' national deployments. NATO is also establishing four multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, in addition to the existing battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The eight battlegroups will extend all along NATO's eastern flank, from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south (see map below).

Although Europe has so far managed to avoid a military escalation that would push it into the conflict,

NATO presence in Europe



Source: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/3/pdf/2203-map-det-def-east.pdf

9 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_defence#:~:text=As%20a%20share%20of%20total%20expenditure%2C%20%27defence%27%20expenditure,of%20GDP%29%20and%20France%20%281.8%20%25%20of%20GDP%29

10 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621784/IPOL_BRI\(2018\)621784_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621784/IPOL_BRI(2018)621784_EN.pdf)

it is set to suffer due to the consequences of this further supply line disruption following the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, it has to be seen if the trade-off between military and social investment 'Guns or Butter Curve', which has been hypothesised by many economists but hardly ever proved empirically, is to happen as a result of this crisis¹¹. If proved, it could hamper the resilience and recovery of public services that are often provided first-hand by LRAs. Moreover, it could block any possibility of upward socio-economic progression of a generation of youngsters that have faced the Grand Recession of 2008 and the Covid-19 crisis.

Another major concern is cybersecurity and misinformation. The omnipresence of social networks in our lives and especially in young generations' is intimately linked to digitalization. Each of our networks is governed by algorithms, which, in their initial use, should show us content that interests us but also leads us to become addicted to these networks. So, can we legitimately ask ourselves, are algorithms a threat to democracy?

The digitalization of our societies has brought many benefits, including that a larger number of citizens have handled the political debate. However, as we know, social media uses algorithms to select what is more relevant or interesting for us and hide from us what is not. This fact can pose a problem and a threat to democracy. Because the algorithms choose which information to promote, they impact how we learn about and see the world. We naturally assume

that the things we see first are most important and are opinions shared by many people. In contrast, we assume that the things removed by algorithms are opinions shared by a minority. Meanwhile, reality can be different. This disconnection, alongside the great time spent by the young generation online, can create a reality distortion for them and subsequently a real threat to the short-term future of our democracy.

Take Away

The war in Ukraine has also had an impact on perceptions of democracy in the border regions. On the one hand, democracy can be altered by a further advancement of the conflict in Ukraine in the light of a possible military escalation. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with military prospects are expected to block any possibility of upward socio-economic progression for the young generation. On the other hand, security matters in terms of digitalization might also have a powerful impact on the perceptions of democracy in border regions. The growing presence of algorithms due to the constant exposure to social networks might alter democracy because algorithms choose which information to promote and hence they filter the information according to mechanical criteria, while realistic pieces of information might be ignored due to 'mass' effects.

4.5 Identity

From a constructivist standpoint, this section studies, through a review of academic literature, the concepts of 'Identity', 'European Identity' and 'regional or local identity' and sets the guidelines on how to explore it during the interviews alongside the previously regarded topics.

Research on the concept of identity has been multi-disciplinary and across various scientific fields, mainly within the humanities and cultural studies approaches. Stuart Hall (1996) was one of the leading scientists who dealt with the concept of cultural identity from

a philosophical and political perspective. For Hall, identity does not have a stable core to itself but rather a changing character. He uses a strategic definition for identity, pointing out that identities are ever-changing, fragmented and fractured, and constructed across different and often antagonistic discourses, especially nowadays. The construction of identity assumes that – on the one hand – many people identify with the same circumstances and values or – on the other hand – differentiate themselves from values, situations or circumstances of others. Therefore, identity is the factor that unites or differentiates people from others.

11 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1962969>

Identities are produced by specific institutional sites and practices, meaning they are constituted within representation, in the orientation of history, language, and cultural resources. It follows that every identity has its margins. It is stabilised by what is left out. Identifying with the same institutional practices and sites means sharing an identity with others. This shared identity becomes a collective identity, collapsing in the overall meaning of being in the same place, sharing the same origin, sharing the same social status, or feeling the same affective connections. These collective identities are not naturally given but constructed socially and societally. On the other hand, being differentiated means not having the same origin, being of different social status and not feeling affective connections. This fact also means that constructing a collective identity is based on being different from someone else.

In this regard, European identity can also be understood as being socially constructed. As a collective identity of the European Union, it serves as a connecting factor, offering points of reference for its citizens. However, next to this European identity, there are also national, regional and even local identities that have to be considered when speaking about identities and identification of European citizens (Risse, 2010). The same can be applied to the youth marked by similar customs, manners, and events that serve them to identify with a specific generation.

Numerous studies over the years, including earlier versions of the Eurobarometer, have shown that Europeans, with variations between countries, usually identify first with the local and national levels and only then with Europe. Although questions about degrees of personal identification are no longer present in more recent versions of the Eurobarometer, precisely because of disappointing results when it comes to European identity, the Special Eurobarometer 508 (2021) showed that only slightly more than half (56%) of the European population feels European. That number is slightly lower among people aged 15-24 (54%) and 25-39 (55%), and higher among the population over 55 years old (59%).

However, individual identification with Europe should not be confused with a collective European identity arising from a certain institutional framework or a distinct social group, serving a legitimizing function (Delanty, 2003). At the same time, even though it is a quite common approach, European identity does not necessarily have to be understood as opposing national identity (Burgess, 2002). Instead, it should be understood as a multi-level, multi-layered

concept encompassing potential for contradiction. Furthermore, authors diverge on the real need for a widespread sense of collective identity for Europe as a political and social community, and on whether a European identity is a condition for or the by-product of the European institutional construction (Kohli, 2000).

While it is true that Europe encompasses many different identities, a historical, spiritual and cultural legacy is at the basis of what could be understood as a European identity, which is but one among many identities by which people understand themselves. It is a pillar of the European integration project and the foundation for its democratic legitimacy. Nonetheless, since the EU as an institutional construct does not exactly equate with Europe in the social-cultural sense, this legitimacy problem cannot be overlooked, especially when considering the discussion surrounding the “democratic deficit” in the EU (Burgess, 2002).

Nevertheless, the unprecedented and strong unified EU member states’ response to the Covid-19 and Ukraine crisis might have boosted cues for individuals to identify as part of the European Community and consequently enhance their feelings toward European Identity.

Take Away

With regard to identity, it can be summarized that identity is socially constructed, mostly in distinction to the “other” or in agreement with the “same”, and is subject to constant change and fragmentation. This applies in the same way to a European identity. For the research it follows that the unprecedented and strongly unified EU member states’ response to the war in Ukraine might have boosted cues for individuals to identify as part of the European Community and consequently enhance their feelings towards European identity. Within the framework of the research, these considerations are to be inquired from the perspective of local and regional youth in affected border areas, to subsequently illustrate the impact of identity on perceptions of democracy.

5 Findings: How are youth regional and local perspectives about democracy?



Lou Boillod, 26 | Amiens (France)

Lou currently lives in Barcelona, where he is working in IT. He describes all the humanitarian aid which has been done so far as good, but still not sufficient. He is worried about the situation in Ukraine, especially about the economic consequences which are going to be felt even stronger after the war.

For Lou, "democracy is the way to express your freedom of speech. Express your right to vote, your right to tell your story, the right to speak about your feelings regardless of origin and economic class." Lou himself identifies as French since his whole family is French and he has done his whole life in France. Although France is a democratic country, he sometimes felt that in the past, the government did not accurately see the peoples' wishes and desires, even when those went on the streets to demonstrate. He perceives the citizens' struggle to make their voices heard as a problem in the country. He stresses that all the advantages of democracy have not been good enough for French society.

"Democracy is the way to express your freedom of speech. Express your right to vote, your right to tell your story, the right to speak about your feelings regardless of origin and economic class."

Anna Boyko, 19 | Shepetivka (Ukraine)

Anna was in Ukraine when the war started. She described the situation as really tense, she was afraid when she heard the bombs and she is still afraid nowadays and has panic attacks at least twice a day. On March 29, she arrived in Belgium. In Ukraine, she was a student at the Academy of Arts in Kyiv. She does not know how her tomorrow will look like, she does not know about her parents, about her house. During the last months, she was in contact with a volunteer woman who helped her to come and study in the conservatory.

For Anna, "democracy is when you feel freedom yourself. When you can introduce yourself when you can vote. And it is also independence." The war in Ukraine now shows that Ukraine wants to be a country that lives democratic values since the citizens are willing to fight for their freedom. This is also why she regards the chances of Ukraine becoming a member of the European Union as good since.



"Democracy is when you feel freedom yourself. When you can introduce yourself when you can vote. And it is also independence."



Marcell Szikszai, 25 | Miskolc (Hungary)

Marcell was in Brussels when the war started. He stresses his support for the EU gas and oil embargo on Russia but underlines that the sanctions do not only affect the latter but also EU member states, which is why - according to him - another solution has to be found in the future on how to provide proper and sufficient heating not only for European but also for Ukrainian citizens. For him, the act of showing solidarity and empathy is important in order to reassure the Ukrainian and other affected regions' people. He acknowledges that there is a lot of active support in European states and stresses that the EU's offer to have Ukraine join the EU would be a good solution, however, stronger ties would need to be developed when the war will have ended. He stresses that Finland's and Sweden's approaches toward joining NATO show that Europe is already now more united. He wants this to be the case for Eastern European countries as well.

"Freedom means, for example, that I can be in this park with you, and I'm free to share my thoughts with you without any repercussions."

Marcell defines democracy as a system where people can speak and live freely. For him, this is strongly connected to freedom: "Freedom means, for example, that I can be in this park with you, and I'm free to share my thoughts with you without any repercussions." Unfortunately, Hungary has had specific problems with democracy in recent years, especially when it comes to freedom of the press and freedom of speech. The war has amplified this problem. Marcell underlines that he is worried about his country's direction, however, when it comes to his own identity, he

identifies first as Hungarian and then as European. According to him, these can be conflicting values sometimes. He stresses that the Erasmus programme was a great opportunity to understand the EU, to understand people living in different countries. From his experiences, he believes that a European identity is still in progress and that not everybody would agree to have a European identity, especially in the Eastern European states.

Anya Shevchuk, 23 | Chernihiv (Ukraine)

Anya is currently living in Barcelona, working for an American company in the financial sector. During the interview, she spoke in her mother tongue. Anya stresses that because of the war, it seems impossible for her to continue living, plan anything, and think of the future. She follows the news and tries to be in contact with her loved ones who are still living in Ukraine.

For Anya, her identity is very important: She gets goosebumps whenever she listens to the Ukrainian anthem, and she identifies as Ukrainian. Still, for her, this is strongly connected to having and living a European identity. Anya defines a European identity as supporting human rights, loving freedom, respecting people, and protecting democracy. However, because of the war, Anya's perception of democracy has changed: Before she took it for granted, and now she knows that it can be taken away from you. For her, protecting and "saving Ukraine now means the democratic world as we know it." Anya underlines that before the war started, Ukraine was going into a good direction in terms of a functioning economy and a functioning government. For her, those are indicators that Ukraine shall become a member of the European Union.



"saving Ukraine now means saving the democratic world as we know it."



"I'm European and then secondly, I'm Italian."

Federico Torcaschi, 26 | Parma (Italy)

When the war started, Fede was in Brussels, he read the news on his phone. He remembers the time as a period of tension. He points out that there has been humanitarian aid from the EU to Ukraine, especially with the support of food and other sorts of supplies. He stresses that the increase in gas prices led to more expensive bills and also to inflation without any control. Part of his family is from Russia, so he knows how difficult it is to move money around from Russia to Europe because of the restrictions and the sanctions.

For Fede, freedom means being able to move, meet people and express his ideas. For him, Europe fulfils this special feeling: "I'm European and then secondly, I'm Italian." For Fede, democracy is the act of giving someone else the power to decide in charge of one's interests. He stresses that especially on a local and communal level, he remembers a lot of organizations and initiatives which tried to involve citizens. He points out that sometimes, people tend to forget about the positive things which democracy brings to our daily life. Therefore, he underlines that democracies need to be strong so that there is no room for authoritarianism.

Sofia Marchak, 22 | Kalush (Ukraine)

Sofia is a Ukrainian student who used to live in Kiev until the invasion. Sofia had suspicions about a possible start of the war already before, however, when her father informed her about the invasion, she was shocked. She directly went to the train station to flee to the Western part of Ukraine, where she is originally from. Now, since 25th February, she has been living abroad, first in Romania and now in Brussels where she has become a student at the Brussel's Conservatory to practise her violin.

For Sofia and her family, democracy is something rather new: Only 30 years ago, Ukraine got independent from the former USSR and has been developing a new political system based on democratic values. Sofia is the first generation in her family to experience this freedom entirely, which is why she values it a lot and sees the chance to build a completely new and open-minded mentality. Sofia stresses that the war now underlines that democratic countries shall defend their freedom and their peace because it can be taken away very easily.

Sofia underlines that she feels connected to European values and beliefs: She stresses that since 2014, Ukraine has developed a distance from Moscow and stronger ties with Europe. She personally feels many similarities with young European citizens and pronounces that the war has helped in shifting the mindset further into this direction. In her opinion, "the European Union seems strongly united in all senses of this word" and she would like Ukraine to be part of this circle since they define as Europeans.



"the European Union seems strongly united in all senses of this word."

6 Conclusion

All six interviewees expressed worry and uncertainty about the consequences of the war not just for their countries and families, but to democracies everywhere. There's a constant identification of democracy with the ideal of freedom, which means not just freedom of movement and speech, but also freedom for any country to choose its own future, without fear of foreign aggression. The Ukrainian interviewees hope that Ukraine will continue on with its course of rapprochement to the European Union after and in spite of the war and that it might one day even join the block.

As previously mentioned, the European Union provided measures of humanitarian aid for the immediate support of the Ukrainian civilians fleeing their country. These measures took the form of the Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE), which allows member states and regions to properly welcome Ukrainian refugees arriving in EU territory. Civil society also immediately took part in showing its heartfelt support for Ukraine through various measures, such as peaceful protests or informal channels of communications and humanitarian aid. Such measures were met under a favourable light by the interviewees. However, some have expressed concerns that they might not be sufficient for a prolonged period of time. In fact, it was suggested by Lou that further help might be needed, especially for the future reconstruction of a post-war Ukraine.

Those most concerned about the economic consequences were the interviewees from the European Union, which is justified since the Ukrainian interviewees are mostly worried about their own personal stakes – their family and homes - in the war. While the sanctions imposed by the EU have hit Russia the hardest, as Federico mentioned while referring to the Russian side of his family, the fuel and food shortages have resulted in inflation picking up the pace in several EU Member States. As Marcell pointed out, the EU needs to find other partners and solutions on how to provide proper heating for European citizens if it wishes to make good on its Russian oil and fuel embargo.

While the Russian invasion didn't take the Ukrainian interviewees completely by surprise, they, just like other Europeans, were still shocked at the fact that Russia would launch a full-scale invasion of its relatively peaceful and democratic neighbour. Security

concerns were raised both by Anya and Anna around the idea that democracy is something that can easily be taken away in such a way and that Ukrainians are not just fighting to defend their land, but also their freedom. There's a consensus by omission among all interviewees that NATO had nothing to do with Russia's invasion and that if anything, as Marcell expressed, further expansion of the alliance would mean more unity and hence, more security for Europe and its people.

The concept of identity reproved itself to be the hardest to define and even more so when speaking about a European identity. In fact, in these circumstances, a European identity is seen under several lights. Sometimes, especially when talking to EU interviewees, it is seen as an addition to another identity, such as a national, regional or even local sense of identification. The concept of a European identity is even met with a certain scepticism, as Marcell stated in his interview. He particularly refers to the Euroskepticism that he perceives to be felt by some communities, especially in Eastern Europe. However, in other cases, a European identity is seen as a connecting factor, a point of reference and a shield to use against a war that wants to deprive people of their very own sense of self in order to impose a new one, forcefully and from above. This is particularly true for the Ukrainian interviewees, most of whom declared to feel strongly connected to the idea of having a European identity, however feeble it may still be at times. For example, Anya sees a European identity as protective of democracy, respecting human rights and individual freedom. According to Sofia, she feels a stronger connection to Europe since her country has tried to cut ties with Russia, a connection that has only further increased since the invasion started. In this context, she strongly believes that Ukraine should be part of the European Union, as its citizens already feel like Europeans. This further confirms Stuart Hall's definition of identity as something that does not have a stable core but rather a changing character. Furthermore, this can be confirmed by the fact that the interviewees declared that their sense of belonging to a European community grew stronger since the beginning of the war, proving how identity is a shifting concept that encompasses many different historical, cultural and even spiritual factors.

7 Meet the Summer 2022 [Y]Factor Team

The project was only possible thanks to a dedicated team who, in addition to their daily tasks for the Committee of the Regions, also worked with great enthusiasm on the Y-Factor project. Here are their insights from the last four months:



Josephine Landmann
24, Magdeburg, Sachsen-Anhalt

"This project gave me a lot of goose bumps moments and new insights. Even though it was quite challenging, I would definitely not want to miss it."



Pablo Torres Herrero
25, Oviedo, Asturias

"It has been a highly insightful and touching experience that not only has improved my management and coordination skills but has also strengthened the friendships I developed with other trainees at the CoR and my commitment to democracy and human rights."



Lucas Surgeon
25, Cologne, Nordrhein-Westfalen

"The experience of collaborating on a project we were all passionate about, with a group of incredibly talented people, was brilliant and one of the highlights of my traineeship."



Tadhg Pidgeon
26, Bray, Co. Wicklow

"I was very happy to have had the opportunity to be involved with Y-Factor, and to have worked with such a great team of amazing people, on what was an excellent and fascinating project."



David Martin Diaz
42, Avilés, Asturias

"It was very gratifying to be able to be the director of the documentary and show my colleagues and friends a little bit about the world of cinema."



Therese Borg
25, St Paul's Bay, Malta

"The experience you gain by participating in and completing this project is remarkable. Not only did I get to know more the team but I also gained new skills within the communication team!"



Beatrice Berti

25, Livorno, Toscana

“Listening especially to the Ukrainian refugees interviewed has been really emotional, I felt immersed in the story they were telling.”



Pablo Gesteiro

26, Pontevedra, Galicia

“Research skills, editing videos and working as a part of an international team.”



Gloria Grasso

25, Parabita, Puglia

“The project was a great opportunity to work together with the other trainees, develop our skills and learn more about contemporary issues.”



Ilaria Buttu

25, Cagliari, Sardinia

“The project has definitely given an added value to our experience at the CoR, as it brought all of us trainees together to work and collaborate on such a sensitive and topical issue.”



Beatriz Rocha Veiga

22, Vila Nova de Gaia, Porto

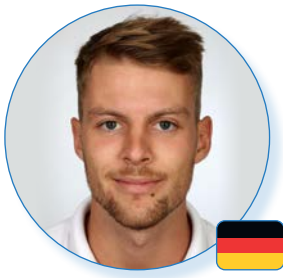
“If there is something I learned from working on this project is that European youth must look to the past as well as to the future. Putin’s propaganda machine takes advantage of the public’s ignorance of history in order to portray Russia’s past acts of aggression in merely defensive terms, and thus justify its atrocious actions in Ukraine today. As the memory of the horrors of the twentieth century recede in the minds of Europeans with each new generation, it is vital to keep history alive and to further its knowledge for the sake of peace.”



Antonino Mangano

28, Villafranca Tirrena, Sicily

“Developing a youth project for young European people - tackling current European issues like war in Ukraine, solidarity and identity - represents a remarkable step for sensitising on European values and commitments. This is how changes happen and how a more European society can be built. I am glad to be part of it: thanks to the [Y]Factor!”



Julian Sommer

27, Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg

“Peace is not everything, but everything is nothing without peace.” -*Willy Brandt*-



Ilhem Boudjema

24, Paris, Île-de-France

“This project only reminded me of this quote from Hussain Ibn Ali « The most generous person is the one who gives to those who do not expect his help.”



Marta Silva

24, Viana do Castelo, North

“The [Y]Factor Project was a great way to listen to young people’s thoughts about democracy and the European project, especially in a time when the Russian war in Ukraine makes us rethink everything.”



Sarah Cool-Fergus

24, Gatineau, Quebec

“From the research to the recording, seeing the [Y]Factor Project come together taught me that little bits of consistent work over time can go a long way!”



Elena-Madalina Udrea

22, Antwerp, Antwerp

“It was an entire learning process to participate to the project. I am grateful for the opportunity I had and for the people I met. “



Lena Herrmann

26, Berlin, Berlin

“It was amazing to see and experience how passionate everybody was engaged in the project. You could really feel that also we as participants were moved by a common European spirit.”

8 Annexe 1: References

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European Committee of the Regions





The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States. Our members are elected presidents of regions, regional councillors, mayors and local councillors - democratically accountable to more than 446 million European citizens. The CoR's main objectives are to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council have to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union as a means of upholding EU law where there are breaches to the subsidiarity principle or failures to respect regional or local authorities.

Edited by the Directorate for Communication of the European Committee of the Regions

Brussels, June 2022 — CdR_4727

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 101 | 1040 Bruxelles/Brussel | BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Tel. +32 22822211 | e-mail: PublicationsCdR@cor.europa.eu | www.cor.europa.eu

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