

# Ways of Europe

## Budapest: Democracy, Dignity and Shared Futures for Europe

Ways of Europe is committed to building a Europe rooted in dignity, justice, and democratic freedom. In Budapest, a city marked by historical struggles for democracy and by today's social tensions, we gathered young people, activists, migrants, and local actors to rethink what Europe must stand for now.

Budapest reveals the vulnerabilities and the potential of the European project. Here, we reflected on the Rule of Law, democratic participation, peace, migration, and solidarity, not as separate issues, but as intertwined foundations of our shared future.

This manifesto arises from their experiences, concerns, and aspirations. At a time when democratic backsliding, polarization, exclusion, and insecurity threaten our shared future, we reaffirm a simple truth:

**No one is free until everyone is free.**

**Our collective demands and visions:**

**Democracy Must Be Inclusive, Participatory, and Representative.** Democracy cannot thrive where voices are excluded. Minorities, migrants, and all residents must be part of the political process, not as an act of charity but as a democratic necessity. We support short-term measures such as quotas, but also long-term reforms ensuring that decision-makers understand the realities of minorities and vulnerable groups.

**Participation must be accessible.** Voting rights for all residents, inclusive housing policies, participatory budgeting, referenda, union involvement, and democratic education are essential tools. Mandatory voting and fact-checking initiatives can strengthen informed participation.

**Democracy begins from the bottom up.** Communities must have the power to influence local and national decisions. We must explore alternative democratic processes that better include minorities and guarantee that every voice is heard from small-scale assemblies to EU-level consultations. A democracy that listens is a democracy that grows.

**Peace Requires Justice, Inclusion, and Human Connection.** Peace is more than the absence of war; it is the presence of equality, opportunity, and connection. Migration and peace are intertwined. Inclusive societies reduce fear and social tensions. When people meet, listen, and learn from one another, empathy replaces stereotypes. Language learning and cultural exchange must be supported. not to erase one's culture but to promote coexistence without domination.

**Education is protection.** People must know their rights, understand democratic structures, and develop critical thinking. Civic education and media literacy should be present at all levels of schooling.

**Narratives shape realities.** We call for a proactive shift in public discourse, moving from fear to curiosity. Knowing one another is the first step toward building peaceful and equal communities.

**Intersectionality is essential.** Policies must recognize overlapping forms of discrimination and design solutions that promote justice across gender, race, class, culture, and legal status. Let communities participate in decisions that affect them. Peace is sustainable only when everyone has a voice.

**Solidarity Is Action.** Solidarity is not a feeling, it is practice, commitment, and shared responsibility. It requires acknowledging different perspectives, acting collectively, and strengthening networks already working towards justice. Solidarity must be voluntary, but also supported. Local networks, migrant-led organizations, intercultural initiatives, and inclusive public spaces must be resourced and recognized.

**Media must represent people with dignity.** We reject stereotypes, criminalization, and sensationalism about migrants. We demand narratives that highlight the agency, leadership, and contributions of people with migratory backgrounds. Solidarity means ensuring everyone has the means to live freely. This includes access to mobility, education, rights information, emotional intelligence, and media literacy. It means understanding that anyone can need support at any moment.

**Solidarity is intercultural.** It crosses borders, identities, and sectors, from climate to education, from migration to social protection. We cannot have solidarity without communities. And communities cannot exist without participation, dialogue, and shared spaces. Mobility should be motivated by curiosity and learning, not desperation. Shared public spaces, intercultural programs, and access to accurate information help communities connect.

**Cross-cutting commitments for equality, participation, and shared responsibility.** Europe must extend rights and protections to all who live here, regardless of citizenship. Residency, contribution, and belonging must guide access to justice, mobility, and participation, not nationality.

**Equality requires structural tools.** This includes fair and accessible work permits, equal pathways to European citizenship across all member states, and policies that ensure that every person can participate fully in social, economic, and political life.

**Education is a lifelong practice of democracy.** Intercultural learning, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and media literacy must be integrated across formal and non-formal systems. These skills help communities resist polarization, engage constructively, and understand the realities of others. Decolonized education, fair regulations, and cooperation among nations are essential to prevent new forms of inequality and exclusion. Justice requires acknowledging power imbalances and transforming them.

**Inclusion strengthens communities.** Migrants and refugees bring knowledge, skills, and perspectives that enrich Europe. Recognizing them as contributors, not burdens, is fundamental for cohesion, innovation, and long-term peace. Every person should have access to safe movement, dignified living conditions, and spaces where they can meet others, learn, and build a shared sense of community.

**A fair Europe requires equal access to education, participation, and rights. Only then can we create societies capable of understanding, cooperation, and long-term stability.**

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