

To:

David Maria SASSOLI
President of the European Parliament

Cc:

Ursula VON DER LEYEN
President of the European Commission

Michaela MOUA
Commission coordinator for anti-racism

18 October 2021
Brussels, Belgium

Object: Harassment and discrimination during the European Youth Event 2021

Dear Presidents,
Dear Coordinator,

The European Youth Event, organised by the European Parliament in Strasbourg, is a place for young people from all over Europe and beyond to get together, shape and share their ideas on the Europe they want and deserve. It is supposed to be a safe space where diversity of opinions, worldviews and even appearances meet and engage one with the other, “United in diversity”.

During the weekend of 8-9 October, the EYE 2021 edition sadly stopped being a safe space for some groups of young Europeans.

Groups young people from minority backgrounds, for the majority girls, reported to have been targeted with verbal abuse and online hate speech. They also denounce the fact that their workshops, focusing on antiracism and inclusion, have been interrupted and disturbed by laughter and nasty comments on behalf of fellow EYE participants, who have been identified as young participants invited by French far-right MEPs.

To our knowledge, the groups victim of episodes of racial and hateful harassment are: #DiasporaVote!, a Belgian-based organisation with delegations all over Europe encouraging young people from minority backgrounds to engage with the EU and be more active in politics; but also the Forum for European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO), a pan-European network of 32 Member Organisations across 20 European countries representing

Muslim Youth in Europe. Other organisations have reported similar accusations. Similar episodes had already taken place in previous editions of the EYE.

The young participants who have been victims of such harassment report being shocked. The European Parliament had promised them a safe and welcoming space, but unfortunately, that is not what they experienced.

We, the Members of the European Parliament, express our full solidarity to the young EYE 2021 participants who have been victim of harassment of various kind, and strongly condemn the deplorable actions and words of those who perpetrated such harassment. We cannot accept that such behaviours take place, even less within our very own institution and when it is addressed to young people.

We call President Sassoli to make a formal condemnation of these events as well, as this episode is only a reflection of what we witness in our Member States, online and offline, daily.

We call for an enquiry to be set up in order to establish the full extent to which these serious events took place, to identify the responsible parties, and to establish whether these perturbations were premeditated and organised, as this element would add to the gravity of the events.

We also call for those responsible to be made accountable for their behaviour. The [EYE 2021 Code of Conduct](#) clearly states that “Demeaning, discriminatory or harassing behaviour or speech will not be tolerated at EYE2021”. We demand that the European Parliament as an institution acts on and fully implements its own EYE 2021 Code of Conduct and takes all necessary measures at its disposal so that such events do not happen again.

The European Parliament and its Members should be a model for respect and tolerance. Everyone has the right to their beliefs and political convictions, but these should be exercised in the full respect of other people.

These sad events demonstrate how crucial and urgent it is for the European Parliament and all the European institutions to actively stand by our values and commitments, and follow up on our statements with actions.

Sincerely,

Salima Yenbou MEP
Saskia Bricmont MEP
Maria Arena MEP

Terry Reintke (Greens/EFA)
Brando Benifei (S&D)
Tom Vandenkendelaere (EPP)
Niklas Nienass (Greens/EFA)
Andrea Cozzolino (S&D)



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Tilly
Metz (Greens/EFA)
Claude Gruffat (Greens/EFA)
Milan Brglez (S&D)
Eleonora Evi (Greens/EFA)
Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield
(Greens/EFA)
Thomas Waitz (Greens/EFA)
Aurore Lalucq (S&D)
Romeo Franz (Greens/EFA)
Stephane Séjourné (Renew)
Isabel García Muñoz (S&D)
Petras Austrevicius (Renew)
Nora Mebarek (S&D)
Giuseppe Ferrandino (S&D)
Philippe Lamberts (Greens/EFA)
Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana
(Greens/EFA)
Stelios Kouloglou (Left)
Sylwia Spurek (Greens/EFA)
Peter Pollák (EPP)
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Irene Tolleret (Renew)
Malik Azmani (Renew)
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Ivars Ijabs (Renew)
Pascal Durand (Renew)
Katrín Langensiepen (Greens/EFA)
Ernest Urtasun (Greens/EFA)
Rosa D'Amato (Greens/EFA)
Alicia Homs Ginel (S&D)
Mounir Satouri (Greens/EFA)
Marketa Gregorova (Greens/EFA)
Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (Renew
Europe)
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Pierfrancesco Majorino (S&D)
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Damian Boeselager (Greens/EFA)
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Bettina Vollath (S&D)
Petra Kammerevert (S&D)
Domènec Ruiz Devesa (S&D)
Marina Kaljurand (S&D)
Laurence Farreng (Renew Europe)
Idoia Villanueva Ruiz (The Left)
Miapetra Kumpula-Natri (S&D)



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Sylvie Guillaume (S&D)
Anna Donáth (Renew)
Rasmus Andresen (Greens/EFA)
Maria Walsh (EPP)
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Diana Riba i Giner (Greens/EFA)
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Hannah Neumann (Greens/EFA)
Sylvie Brunet (Renew)
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Marie Toussaint (Greens/EFA)
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Daniel Freund (Greens/EFA)
Anja Hazekamp (The Left)

Monika Vana (Greens/EFA)
Sophie in't Veld (Renew)
Jérémy Decerle (Renew)
Danuta Hübner (EPP)
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Christophe Grudler (Renew)
Martin Buschmann (NI)
Fred Predrag Matić (S&D)
Maria da Graça Carvalho (EPP)