



YOUNG  
EUROPEAN  
FEDERALISTS

**JEF Europe** | Young European Federalists

Brussels, 2nd March 2015

## **Press release: Democracy under pressure pan-European action**

### **Pan-European action**

For nine consecutive years, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, the Young European Federalists (JEF Europe) have been organising a pan-European “Free Belarus Action” in numerous cities across Europe. While it is still important to condemn Lukashenko’s last dictatorship in Europe and to show our support for the people of Belarus, we must acknowledge that democracy has been under large pressure in many other places in the last year, including within the European Union or at its borders.

### **Democracy is under pressure**

Democracy is under pressure from many different angles and on many different levels. The murder of Russian opposition leader Boris Nemtsov as well as the annexation of Ukraine’s territory are strong threats to democracy just beyond the EU border. The fundamentalist assaults in Paris and Copenhagen targeted the European core value of the freedom of speech. Anti-immigration movements like PEGIDA and populist parties like UKIP and Front National are trying to capitalize on these assaults to undermine trust between people and trust in the open and democratic society. Voter absenteeism in the European Elections remains a fundamental problem for the legitimacy of EU decision-making, and recent news of tax rulings (Luxleaks) and tax evasion (Swissleaks) have severely damaged citizens’ faith in solidarity and in the universal application of the rule of law in Europe and the EU.

The Young European Federalists want to emphasize that the European Union has engraved commitment to the promotion of peace, democracy and human rights in its very foundation. This commitment must be pursued as the highest priority of the EU and its member states, also in its relations with other states.

“Freedom of speech, a free press, equality and solidarity, rule of law, secularism of institutions and the protection of minorities are values that are constantly being challenged and threatened in Europe and in the EU”, says Peter Oomsels, vice-President of JEF.

“The recent events in and around Europe should outrage every democrat and remind them of the necessity to stand up for an open, tolerant, inclusive and democratic Europe. The European Union in particular has to take a stand for democracy by filling the gaps in its own institutional structure. Democracy is



YOUNG  
EUROPEAN  
FEDERALISTS

under pressure in part because only a strong federal Union, with a mature economic, monetary, fiscal and political union, would be able to summon the authority and instruments to defend democracy effectively”, Oomsels adds.

### **Let's make Europe a driver for Democracy**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, the Young European Federalists will organize their “Democracy under Pressure” action in numerous cities around Europe as a way of standing up for the democratic values they see threatened nowadays.

"Events and street actions will be organized all around Europe and we will symbolically collect peoples' hopes and concerns on postcards and blackboards. Documenting this on [www.democracyunderpressure.eu](http://www.democracyunderpressure.eu) we hope to show Europe that we care for our common values.

The message, especially important for young generations like ours, is that we cannot only complain about what's wrong nowadays, but we need to speak up, act and commit to defend the values we believe in and concretely work to build a more democratic and united Europe that will stand as a driver for Democracy," concludes Pauline GESSANT, President of JEF Europe.

END

Press contact: Pauline Gessant, President JEF Europe, [president@jef.eu](mailto:president@jef.eu), +33 683 116 009