

## **Testimonials - BULLET POINT MR. GIULIO VITTORIO CERVI**

**Q1.** First, please tell me, *what is your initiative about, what is its objective and how are young people involved?*

- First of all, thank you for having me here. Thanks to the CAPP Foundation and Chairwoman Prof. Tarantola for inviting me to bring my testimony of what a group of young people can do together.
- I have the honour to represent a group of 32 students from 8 leading European universities. that were engaged in a collective policy thinking and writing exercise around the future of Europe. The output of this initiative, which was born from an idea of the sections in Italy & Holy See and Switzerland of the *Société des membres de la legion d'honneur* is the Report on the Future of Europe.
- This Report will be presented soon, in two weeks' time, in Rome to key Italian and EU policymakers.
- The aim of this exercise was to reflect on the current state of Europe, starting from our common values, imagine a counterfactual world in which the European Union did not exist and, finally, look to the future and propose a Manifesto to tackle the key challenges ahead.
- We approached our collective endeavour inspired by the famous words of Jean Monnet "Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises." It seemed appropriate to start from a discussion on the many crises the EU has gone through and use them as an instrument to bring about positive change. When we first met in September 2020, we identified seven key Challenges we believe to be the fundamental factors in the roadmap to a successful and long-lived European project: European Identity, Institutions, COVID-19, Economic Governance, the Environment, Migration, and Technology.

**Q2.** Before taking responsibility, you must be able to realise what you must take responsibility for. In that regard, digital channels are a gateway to what is

happening around the world. Let's start this round with a statement: ***Do young people know what they are responsible for in these times?*** (first a short round responding to the statement yes/no, than a new round to elaborate: How did this show in your initiative? If yes, can you give examples? Why is that?; If no, why is that, what could we do to improve this?)

- Well, it is difficult to generalise, as it is not really a clear cut issue. Nevertheless, I would like to be optimistic and say that "yes", young people are increasingly aware of their responsibilities.
- Social media are a powerful tool to raise awareness. And being aware is the first necessary step of exercising responsibility – without awareness there cannot be responsibility.
- In his Lent Message (2015), a few years ago, Pope Francis denounced that we have become prey of a "*globalisation of indifference*". Indifference, he said, is the "*more-common opposite of the love of God.*"
- Indeed, it is just so easy to be indifferent. Especially so, if you hold a privileged position. Nowadays, in our rich societies many young people could potentially afford not to see, not to know, not to care about the problems that are affecting other parts of the world and some parts of our societies as well.
- Instead, we see young people informing themselves and sensitising their peers – and beyond – on very crucial topics, from the issue of racial inequality, to the importance of adopting more sustainable consumer habits.
- This is why I am optimistic. The first step for exercising responsibility is "not being indifferent". The second step it "making a difference". This is a work-in-progress, so we will see.

**Q3.** Pope Francis calls on young people regularly, in particular, to make them aware they are not just the future, 'but the now of God'. ***Are young people well-prepared to take responsibility? How could we assist them?***

- I would argue that nobody is really prepared until they face their responsibilities.
- So, I would stress the importance of education and youth engagement. The Church is very active in these fields, and business leaders and policymakers can help in promoting a more widespread and equitable access to these opportunities to learn, become aware, and be actively engaged in the social debate and activities for our local and global communities.
- The very fact that we are having a panel about young people, with young people, is worthy of applause.

**Q4.** There are many questions these times that are also relevant for young people, while they are growing up and shaping their lives. A specific questions in taking responsibility is, evidently, ***what may we realistically expect from young people in this regard?***

- The key word in your question is “realistically”. So, let me give you two examples, that I think represent well the kind of responsibility young people are taking on themselves.
- On the international level, climate strikes/protests have gained momentum. You can think of this whatever you want, one thing is the empty talking another one is taking concrete actions. This being said, the key takeaways from this movement, in my opinion, are two: first, young people do care about a more sustainable future, which as we all know is the only one possible; second, they have been able to mobilise massively, keeping momentum and bringing this issue to the attention of public opinion and public leaders.
- Another good example, in my opinion, is the COVID vaccination rate among young people. Let me take the case of Italy, where more than 81% of people aged 20-29 are vaccinated. This figure is 5 p.p. higher than those in older age groups (30-49). This is a tangible evidence that when faced

with social responsibility, young people do not shy away; on the contrary, they are willing and capable to take the right action.

Two questions about **how you see young people taking responsibility (relating to your initiative)**. Where possible I will ask that during the contributions or at the end of the session.

**Q5. *What does your initiative show with respect to the topic of responsibility of the young?***

- That there is fertile ground amongst the young to be involved and engaged and proactively reflect upon our collective future. This is not something we should take for granted. And by this I mean both “our collective future” and “the fact that young people are engaged”. As I said earlier, we live in a society where too often we are immersed in a context of indifference.
- The interest that this initiative has generated is testified by the continuous involvement for several months of a group of young people who did not know each other before, had different backgrounds, nationalities, beliefs...
- This shows that it is possible to engage young people and when confronted with the right *stimuli*, they are ready and eager to take on their responsibility of thinking about the future.

**Q6. *What are the concrete steps that you, as a group of young people, will take in order to transform your project into action, effectively taking responsibility of what you said in the Report?***

- As you may know, a bottom-up initiative is going on in the EU, called Conference on the Future of Europe. After presenting the Report we have written to key policymakers in the coming weeks, we intend to present our proposals in that framework, as well.
- We want to do our part in shaping the debate on the future of Europe. Without being deterministic, it is a fact that the young generations will live the consequences of what is decided today. So it is paramount that we

have think about where we want to go as a society and try to steer the policy conversation in that direction.