



## “Our Digital Future – c’est ICI”

### Press Release | September 18, 2019

MONTREAL – For the first time 600 youth will come together in 12 cities across Canada and Europe for a new series of transatlantic dialogues empowering youth to make their voices heard on our digital society.

Between October 2019 and 2020, young adults (from 18 to 30 years of age) will take part in six on-site and online, 24-hour “Thinkathons,” where they will imagine how we can forge new, inclusive societies in harmony with technological advancements.

Participants will shape their ideas into recommendations for Canadian and European policymakers. Using a newly-built online platform, they will be joined by hundreds more online for a dynamic discussion and debate on our digital future.

Our societies are increasingly digital and online. Our youth, who are digital natives, are uniquely situated to understand the particularities, complexities, challenges, and possibilities of a digital world.

“*Our Digital Future – c’est ICI,*” will focus on six policy topics around digitalisation for young people and future generations. It aims especially at engaging minorities and underrepresented voices in policy conversations.

To support local networks, and a transatlantic exchange at the same time, we are matching a Canadian and a European city for each “24-hour Thinkathon” as follows:

- **“Citizenship 4.0”:** Montreal – Brussels (October 4-5, 2019)
- **“Social Relations”:** Edmonton – Milan (November 29-30, 2019)
- **“Smart and Fast Expanding Cities”:** Vancouver – Madrid (March 13-14, 2020)
- **“Security”:** Halifax – Tallinn (May 29-30, 2020)
- **“Education”:** Ottawa – Athens (September 25-26, 2020)
- **“Culture and Entertainment”:** Toronto – Frankfurt (October 16-17, 2020)

The first Thinkathon – on Citizenship 4.0 – will take place at the same time in Montreal and Brussels, as well as online. Participants will be guided in discussions around the impacts of technological advancements on citizenship and how we can harness digital technology for the greater good, to build inclusive societies with active citizens.

The project is organized by the Goethe-Institut, ThinkYoung and Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi NDG and funded by the European Union as part of its program, "EU-Canada Youth Transatlantic Civil Society Dialogues."

### Quotes

*"We are delighted to support this new series of dialogues that aims to connect young Europeans and Canadians and give them a voice in our societies," says **Peteris Ustubs, EU Ambassador to Canada**. "These dialogues offer a new platform for youth to exchange views and discuss what is important to them in the digital age. The EU is committed to supporting youth reach their full potential in all areas of social, civic and democratic life."*

*"The project offers an exciting opportunity for young people in Europe and Canada to connect and exchange their ideas for a more inclusive, digital future," says **Katja Melzer, Director of the Goethe-Institut Montreal**. "It comes at a point when young adults raise their voices and claim their spaces in policy making processes, while an increasing part of our societies realize that they have to listen to them as it is their future that is being shaped by our decisions today. Personally, I am very curious to learn about the concerns and propositions from a young generation regarding digitalisation and inclusivity."*

*"What does it mean to be a good citizen in the new Millennium?" says **Luca Selva, Director and Co-founder of ThinkYoung**. "600 young people from Canada and Europe will debate on this with the online community. Clear recommendations, videos and social media campaigns will be produced for policy makers to shape the right set of laws!"*

*"The CJE NDG has always promoted civic engagement as a way for young adults to build a network of like-minded individuals, impact the decisions that affect their daily lives and discover opportunities to advance their career aspirations," says **Hans Heisinger, Executive Director, Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi NDG**. "Our Digital Future – C'est ICI allows us to fulfill the vision of supporting youth in fully integrating into society as it provides a platform for them to share their voice in shaping public policy in Canada and Europe. We strongly believe that this project puts power in the hands of youth to take action and be heard."*

### Background

Over the past 30 years, a new digital culture, interactivity and instantaneous communication have fundamentally changed our world. We are now at a new crossroads: advances in augmented and virtual reality, machine learning and artificial intelligence; the 'internet of things'; how we interact with devices and the disappearance of the keyboard; and big data and user experience tailored to the individual will all change how we live, work, play and participate in society – administratively, economically, socially and politically.

What are the potential benefits – and potential drawbacks – of these changes? How can we ensure that such changes lead to the further development of inclusive societies?

While public awareness of some negative aspects of a digital world (online bullying, 'fake news') has increased, there has been little public discussion on finding solutions to these problems.

Participating online or on-site will give youth the unique opportunity to influence regulations and help them create a truly inclusive digital society. Our goal is for the voices of all youth –

especially those of minorities and underrepresented groups – to be heard. All outcomes and recommendations will be communicated to European and Canadian policymakers to assure that our shared digital future will be inclusive.

Participants will expand their networks, learn new skills and influence topics that are important themselves and their peers. They will be entered to win a trip to Frankfurt or Brussels to present the outcomes at the conclusion of this project.

#### **Quick Facts about the project ‘Our Digital Future – C’est ICI’**

- **600 participants** (between the ages of 18-30)
- Digital youth dialogues taking place in **12 cities** in Canada and Europe (Montreal-Brussels, Edmonton-Milan, Vancouver-Madrid, Halifax-Talinn, Ottawa-Athens, Toronto-Frankfurt)
- **6 exciting digital age policy topics**: Citizenship 4.0, Social Relations, Smart Cities, Security, Education, Culture and Entertainment
- **Dynamic on-site conversations** moderated by experts
- **Innovative online platform** that connects youth across the Atlantic and facilitates real-time discussions over the 24-hour Thinkathons
- This new platform for young adults will offer local and global exchanges that addresses our digital future in a holistic and positive way, and help youth identify the principles, processes and decisions that will lead to inclusive digital societies.

#### **About the Goethe-Institut**

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany’s cultural institute, active worldwide. Through our 149 institutes and 10 liaison offices in 98 countries, we promote the study of German abroad, provide information about Germany and encourage international cultural exchange.

The Goethe-Institut Montreal was founded in 1962 and since 2012 its new premises are located on St. Laurent Boulevard in the heart of the “Quartier des spectacles,” the cultural centre of Montreal. From this central location, we service the areas of language, cultural and information for the provinces of Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as well as for the Canadian capital of Ottawa.

#### **About Carrefour jeunesse-emploi Notre-Dame de Grace**

The Carrefour jeunesse-emploi Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, known today by its acronym CJE NDG, was founded in 1998. We are a non-profit organization that works primarily with young people aged 16 to 35 living in the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Côte Saint-Luc, Hampstead and Montreal West neighbourhoods. The CJE NDG promotes the socio-professional integration of individuals aged 16 and over by offering them personalized support, enhanced by the expertise and enthusiasm of our multidisciplinary and multilingual team. We develop innovative projects that are focused on the specific needs of our participants. We strive to ensure the success of our participants in the labour market, particularly by helping them return to school and providing them with the appropriate tools for their personal development.

## About ThinkYoung

ThinkYoung is the first think tank that focuses on young people. It was founded in 2007 and has expanded to have offices in Brussels, Geneva, Madrid and Hong Kong. It is a not-for-profit organisation, with the aim of making the world a better place for young people, by involving them in decision making processes and by providing decision makers with high quality research on key issues affecting young people. ThinkYoung conducts studies and surveys, makes documentary movies, writes policy proposals and develops education programmes: up to date, ThinkYoung projects have reached over 600'000 young people. Based on its research on young people's necessities, ThinkYoung creates training and workshops to empower youth with the tools to have a positive impact and make a change.

## About the Delegation of the European Union to Canada

Established in 1976, the European Union Delegation to Canada is a fully-fledged diplomatic mission and, as such, the natural contact point in Canada between the EU and the Canadian authorities. It also has a strong public diplomacy mandate designed to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the European Union as well as EU-Canada relations.

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