

**BURNING WATERS**

**Hope and despair in Europe,**

**European Youth Dialogue**

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This text has been written by a group of 14 young adults and 4 adults from Italy, Spain, Germany, Russia, Albania, Romania and Czech Republic as the outcome of discussions about burning issues in Europe at the moment and water as a manifold metaphor, contested resource and important frontier and passage in Europe.



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# INTRODUCTION

## Reflections on Water and Burning Waters

1. Water as the source of life  
In the beginning god created heaven and earth and divided land and water. Life starts in water in the bible and in the evolution story. When we think about life, there is always a relation to water. That makes water special. In his depth can be hidden, all the time, something dangerous or something that reveals a solution to a special question of life.
2. Nourishing Water  
Water is very important for food. You may survive 30 days without food, but only 3 days without water. Without water, there will be no life on our planet. That makes water really basic. Water nourishes us. We have to reflect what nutrition we need.
3. Spiritual Water  
We are also in need of spiritual water. Basic Principles that shape our personality. Faith that keeps us upright and let us walk to the future with trust. Water that loads our batteries and let us start every day new.
4. Water for transport  
Since ancient times, rivers and lakes were the most important roads to transport goods and people. Out of transport comes traveling, coming together and welfare.
5. The dangers of water  
Each positive aspect is accompanied by several negative ones. Transport can bring exploitation and war. Out of religion may come nationalism, racism and antisemitism. Instead of water to drink water may be poisoned. The source of life can turn dry.

## 10 Rules as foundation of living together

1. Respect everything that has a life: Respect for cultural differences promotes a mutual understanding and tolerance. By respecting each other's boundaries, we create a safer and healthier environment. Respect is crucial for maintaining peace and harmony in our communities. Showing respect towards others can create a sense of security and trust.
2. Access to basic needs accessible to everyone (water-food-housing-health-education).  
Minimize the gap between inequalities between Global North and South due to colonial history and its current reverberations.
3. Less consumption of resources.
4. Human rights – in particular: Gender equality, No racism.
5. Freedom of belief: have the opportunity to believe in anything
6. Freedom of speech and Expression
7. To be honest to yourself and others (good intentions)
8. Living the present, grasp opportunities and enjoy the moment
9. Open mindedness
10. Communicate instead of using weapons: Encouraging peaceful behaviors & create safer places in our society

## What we see as a good life

Long respecting relationships.  
Living the present, grasp opportunities and enjoy the moment.  
Solid foundation of life, like good access to food, water, healthcare and more.  
The opportunity for good education.  
Support from people around you.  
To have a hobby you enjoy.  
Stable living condition and housing.  
A place you can call home.  
Spreading love and kindness.  
Faith in yourself and in god if you want.  
Peace in the country you are living.

## FROM WHERE WE COME

### 1) History gives us identity. We create history, and history creates us.

When we speak about and learn about history, we see three problems: Our perspective is dominated by a Eurocentric view. We do not speak about how past and present relate to each other. For example, in Italy we learn about fascism but we don't really associate it to nowadays discriminations. We see it as a far and ancient history. Finally yet importantly, history has always been written by the winners.

#### **Past**

Against this background, we would like to point out to how we see the abuse of power in Europe in the past, to bring to the focus that we need to look at the history: Our main thesis is simple. Deep problems that concern people become tools in the hands of radical people. The problem is very deep. Our society has the tools to interpret any events, and we simply choose them on the market. This is pretty much how our society works.

Therefore, we must be able to interpret history ourselves and create space for dialogue and exchange of interpretations.

Generally, we have lived in a past in which white supremacy has sustained colonization. Also, the ideology of the "Aryan" race superiority has dominated the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The persecution of believers like the Jews has been there since ancient times, and it happened especially during the Second World War almost all over Europe through the Nazi government.

The twentieth century is a century of two ideologies: fascism and communism. As experience has shown, both of these radical ideologies cannot peacefully coexist with other entities. All socialist projects have failed. All fascist regimes sought to expand territory and expansion. These ideologies are united by the suppression of human rights and active interference in the life of every person. In the sociological aspect it is about the subordination of voices to ideological concepts. For this purpose, myths are created and maintained, which the state disseminates through propaganda. Same abuse of power: fascism and communism. Examples of the past are Hitler and Stalin.

In Germany in particular, this ideology fuelled the Holocaust: After the first world war, Germany faced a general economic crisis, and no jobs available for people. This led to a huge satisfaction. In this

context, people saw Hitler as a hope for a better life and made him come to power. The consequences were the Second World War and the Holocaust. Hitler managed to mobilize an entire community, and could mobilize all resources for surveillance by the state. The Nazis destroyed innocent people. Women had no rights and couldn't do anything against it.

Another example of abuse of religion/persecution of religious believers is the period of communism in the Czech Republic. Here, confession or faith was prohibited and Christian pastors were sent to work camps similar to concentration camps.

## **Present**

We still today face the consequences of dictatorial regimes and generational trauma.

Examples:

- day of victory in Russia, it is like a propaganda instrument.

In Russia, we celebrate Victory Day, the Great Victory Day. Now it is a myth and a weapon of propaganda. This is an opportunity to mobilize people for new wars and the source of many problems. A return to the myth of victory allows the regime to exist and centralize society around ideology. This is basically fascism.

- Lack of courage of Albanian people to go against the stream and lack of individualism
- People who faced the lack of resources in the past now try to make decisions to prevent that this, the lack (of food, of money, for example), happens to them again.
- those who were born in the late Francoism and democracy, are the heirs of unresolved pain and difficulties, trained not to ask questions in order not to dig into the wound

We face also today the rise of radical regimes.

The consequences of radical regimes are: The cult of person. Transferring the cult to the real ones. Idea of heredity. We see this in Spain, Italy and Russia. Moreover, the use of spiritual and material resources as instruments of power, for example: Italy – church. Russia the same. Last but not least, a consequence is monopoly over the media: television, radio, journalism, and the subordination of courts and other institutions.

## **Future and Vision:**

Devaluation of our time in capitalism. Our time has a price unfortunately. It can be sold for whatever, and the risk is, that with digitization, we as humans get paid less than a machine. These days, a lot of work that existed in the past is replaced with machines and technologies. Amazon is an example of a company that keeps only few workers these days.

Immigrant question. the challenge of the future are migration and assimilation in Europe.

Migration flows are raising worldwide. We have more than 350 million people who migrate, because of war, crisis or cultural reasons. We live in a time with a lot of conflicts in the world. We observe that in Europe, the population is decreasing because of a low birth rate. In other continents, the demographics are different – and we have population growth, for example in Asia.

Should immigrants simply assimilate into society? But what if they strive to maintain an identity?

It is important to have enough population growth to have enough labour force for the economy. This is why would need a better social policy that supports families.

## **What we should do in the future:**

### What we suggest:

In times of crisis, being conscious about your choice.  
Hear every voice, and make the difference between extreme and normal.  
In democracy, we need to hear every opinion either if it is left, right or central.  
To be careful with the propaganda and brainwashing ideas.  
Be open-minded. Even if we have to get out of our bubble.  
Which party can express my ideas the best? Do not follow the crowd.

### Protection and improvement of institutions:

Empowering women with positions and access to government.  
Reserving the place for minority in the parliament.

### Don't impose our lifestyle and democracies to other countries

### Study history

We need to study not only what happened but HOW it happened → critical thinking!!  
Exposing and studying ALL points of view.  
Studying history in a critical and analytic way, causes and consequences, how things happened step by step to not commit the same errors again, don't limit our knowledge to European history.  
Promoting of differences-social media.  
Deconstruction of national holidays  
Open dialogue - constructing safe places to open dialogues.  
Sharing information (individual memory) and reflecting.

## 2) Work and Welfare in Europe – our perspective as young generation

### **What we envision as ideal:**

#### Personal fulfilment and Self-Realization:

This includes pursuing goals, discovering and developing personal talents and interests, and achieving personal and professional milestones. Self-realization leads to a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

#### Health and Well-Being:

Physical and mental health are fundamental to personal happiness. Regular exercise, a healthy diet, and mental health care are key to living a happy and balanced life.

#### Connection to Economic Growth:

Economic growth is crucial in creating conditions for people to find happiness. The thesis is: "Economic growth promotes individual happiness by improving conditions for social bonds, personal fulfillment, and health."

Economic growth creates jobs and income, enabling people to live in stable communities and finance social activities that strengthen social bonds.

A growing economy offers more educational and career opportunities, allowing people to discover and develop their talents and achieve professional goals.

Economic growth increases investments in healthcare and public infrastructure. Improved healthcare services and access to healthy food and recreational facilities contribute to overall health and happiness.

Through these mechanisms, economic growth can directly and indirectly improve the quality of life and thus increase individual happiness.

### **What do we see as challenges today:**

#### In Italy:

The issue of employment in Italy is a critical point from many perspectives. From the outside, Italy is a destination for many, given its culinary culture, apparent economic stability, and the beauty of its architecture and Mediterranean landscape. However, a closer look reveals many problems. The field of employment can be broken down into various aspects:

#### 1. Youth (education system, baby boom, youth unemployment)

In Italy, young people, despite being the cornerstone of the future, are not given much consideration. The post-war economic boom led to a baby boom and a subsequent insufficiency of available jobs (inflation of academic qualifications). Currently, young people face significant difficulties in finding employment and receiving an adequate salary to achieve economic independence. Young people are caught in a loop of accepting underpaid work, employers take advantage of this situation and continue to underpay because there is no revolution, and it is convenient for a company to underpay. University degrees seem to have lost their value for finding a job of personal interest in one's field. Many young Italians are forced to move abroad to find better opportunities, contributing to a "brain drain" that further weakens the Italian economy.

Solutions:

- **Improve the Education System:** Integrate education more closely with the labor market through internships, apprenticeships, and practical training
- **Support Youth Entrepreneurship:** Offer tax incentives and financial support for start-ups run by young entrepreneurs.
- **Career Guidance:** Implement career guidance programs in high schools and universities to help young people choose study paths that align with job market demands.
- **Paid Internships:** Ensure that internships and apprenticeships are adequately paid to prevent exploitation and provide young people with financial support while gaining experience.

#### 2. Pensions (reforms)

The pension system in Italy is another area of concern. The aging population puts a significant strain on the pension system, as there are fewer workers to support the growing number of retirees. Reforms over the years have attempted to address this by raising the retirement age and adjusting benefits, but challenges remain. The "Quota 100" scheme, for instance, allowed some flexibility in early retirement but also posed financial sustainability issues. There is an ongoing debate about finding a balance between ensuring fair pensions and maintaining the economic viability of the pension system.



Solutions:

- Pension System Reform: Continue reforming the pension system to ensure long-term sustainability by balancing retirement age with life expectancy and work health.
- Private Pension Plans: Promote enrolment in complementary private pension plans through tax incentives and informational campaigns.
- Family Support: Implement policies that facilitate work-life balance, such as paid parental leave and childcare services, to encourage greater workforce participation and increase the number of contributors to the pension system.

### 3. Salaries (wage stagnation and economic growth, inflation)

Salaries in Italy often do not match the cost of living, especially in major cities like Rome and Milan. Many workers, including those with higher education degrees, struggle to earn a salary that reflects their skills and qualifications. Wage stagnation has been a persistent issue, exacerbated by economic crises and slow growth. This impacts not only individual well-being but also broader economic growth, as low disposable income limits consumer spending and investment. Efforts to raise the minimum wage and improve wage policies are part of ongoing political and economic discussions.

Solutions:

- Increase Minimum Wage: Establish a legal minimum wage that reflects the cost of living, ensuring all workers can cover their basic needs.
- Collective Bargaining: Strengthen collective bargaining to ensure fair wages and improve working conditions.
- Incentives for Companies: Offer tax incentives to companies that adopt fair wage policies and invest in employee training and development.
- Productivity Policies: Promote policies that increase productivity through innovation, digitalization, and continuous training, enabling higher wages.

### 4. Illegal Contracts (informal work)

Illegal contracts and informal work are significant problems in the Italian labour market. Many workers are employed without proper contracts, which means they lack legal protections, job security, and benefits such as health insurance and pensions. This is particularly prevalent in sectors like agriculture, construction, and domestic work. The prevalence of illegal contracts undermines the formal economy, leads to unfair competition, and exploits vulnerable workers. Tackling this issue requires stronger enforcement of labor laws, better inspection mechanisms, and more robust support for workers to report abuses without fear of retaliation.

Solutions:

- Strengthen Inspections: Increase the number of labor inspectors
- Worker Protection: Create safe and anonymous channels for workers to report illegal contracts and abusive conditions
- Regularization Programs: Implement regularization programs for informal workers,
- Awareness Campaigns: Educate employers and workers about labor rights and the risks associated with illegal contracts

## 5. Discrimination and Exclusion (gender, migrants, age)

Discrimination and exclusion are pervasive issues affecting various groups in the Italian labor market. Women, migrants, and older workers often face barriers to employment and career advancement. Gender discrimination leads to significant pay gaps and limited opportunities for women, while migrants frequently encounter prejudice and are often relegated to low-paying, insecure jobs. Age discrimination can make it difficult for older workers to find new employment or advance in their careers. Promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, enforcing anti-discrimination laws, and creating supportive policies for all workers are essential steps to address these challenges.

Solutions:

- **Inclusion Policies:** Promote inclusion policies that support access to work for women, migrants, and older workers through training programs, mentoring, and hiring incentives.
- **Equal Opportunity Laws:** Strengthen equal opportunity laws and ensure their effective enforcement, implementing concrete measures to reduce the gender pay gap and combat workplace discrimination.
- **Support for Migrants:** Offer integration programs for migrants, including language courses, vocational training, and job search assistance.
- **Diversity Training:** Promote awareness campaigns and diversity training programs for companies, encouraging them to create more inclusive and respectful work environments.

### 3) Rise of populism in Europe

Why are so many people following populist parties? Why are there movements in Europe?

#### **Description of the situation**

Some of us in the group observe that some young people who start voting, they vote what their families think/vote, there is a lack of sensibilization against populist speeches among some young people.

Social media is creating one-sided information and can influence very heavily your opinion.

Politics is not a topic that is talked about, you would like to avoid the uncomfortable situation of revealing your political opinion in friendships and family.

In Spain, values of the Franco era are coming back: not to welcome migrants, not giving migrants the same rights, positive image of the military, straight family/traditional gender roles.

Reasons:

Lack of information about the parties, lack of education about the parties in school, no idea about whom to vote, especially in the last year of school. Longing for a big change, because everything is getting worse, they want to see a radical change in the world, people are tired of what they experience - what is getting worse: economy, lack of job, the wars in Europe/the world. Many young people are nowadays not interested in politics of their region/country or have no engagement for their place of living because they would like to leave to better opportunities.

Spain: still the kingdom has power in the country, and the kingdom is deciding for more conservative/right wing policies, even though the party elected (Sanchez, PSOE, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) is left-wing.

Germany: the history of the divided country (GDR – BRD) shapes the experiences of politics and democracy, and the economic opportunities today, and this is used by populists to seduce them and promise a radical “change”.

### **Solutions**

- Foundation of an initiative/organisation from the government or private that goes to the schools and informs the young people who turn 18 about the different political parties.
- Open spaces for political discussions where you can share your opinions, maybe in youth clubs and other public spaces for young people where they go and spend their free time.
- We should bring young people in the political parties/assemblies and also not only men but also women and people with different backgrounds, not only White people with no migration background, as role models that you can identify with, that you feel represented and feel that people have empathy with you and can fight for your interests/perspective.
- Found a party that is representing the rights for the young people - not only talking about work and economic opportunities, because often, young people are in education and have other concerns.
- All parties you should be in social media for young people and focus on young people.
- Teach and learn about how the dictatorship and authoritarianism started in our histories (Germany, Spain etc.) so that people really understand that the “values” they follow (anti-immigration, traditional roles) are leading to a bad situation.
- We want to strengthen democratic values and institutions in countries in which we still have monarchies.

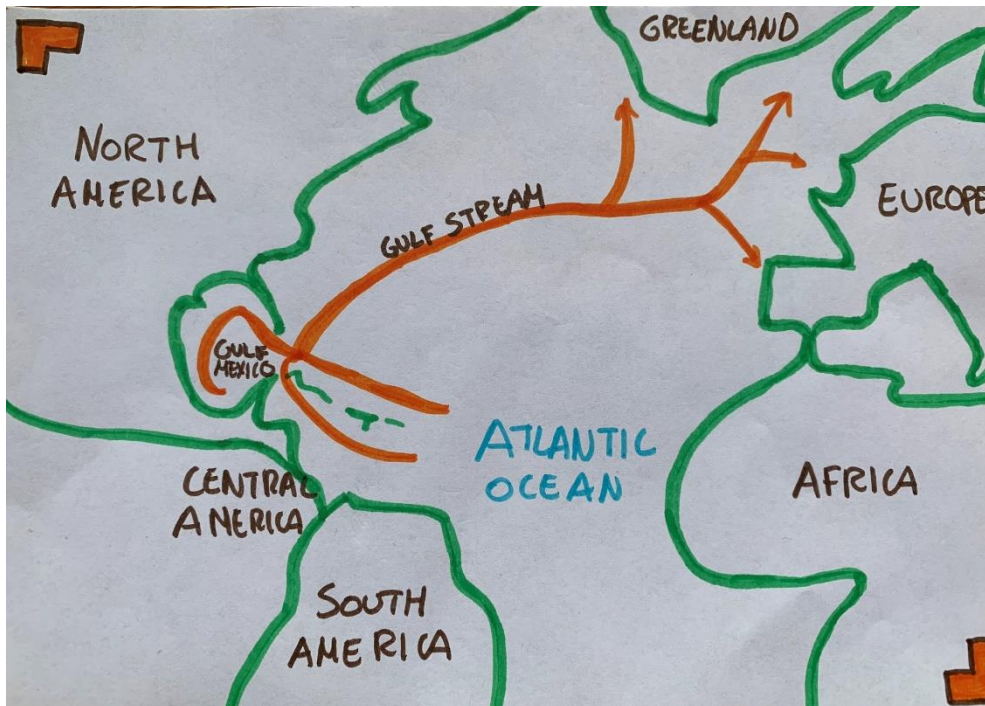
### **Visions**

- We observe with sorrow that populism strengthens hate and mobilization against minorities: We would like to have politics in which the focus is on positive visions that include all – and young people, too.
- We would like politics that focus on the issues and the problems to be resolved instead of fighting against each other/competing for power.

## CLIMATE AND WATER

The climate change will go on, but we have to do something against, because the climate crisis destroys our nature, our lives and our planet.

### The golf stream



Own drawing

The Gulf Stream is a strong ocean current that brings warm water from the Gulf of Mexico into the Atlantic Ocean. It extends all the way up the eastern coast of the USA and Canada.

What causes the Gulf Stream?

It is caused by a large system of circular currents and powerful winds, called an oceanic gyre.

What is happening?

Greenhouse gases ( $\text{CO}_2$ ) are causing the melting of glaciers. The Gulf Stream is slowing because of that.

Why is it important?

The ocean currents are very important, because they transport the cold water in the equator and the hot water in the poles.

Consequences:

Without the Gulf Stream, winters in Europe would be much colder and a large part of the Baltic Sea would freeze over in winter.

Climate shock in Norway: Falling of 20 degrees

Less rain: The Atlantic Ocean rises 70cm.

But: It is not sure because we have already global warming. However, it would be great to avoid the stop of the Gulf Stream by reducing Greenhouse emissions.

### The golf stream in our capitalist world

There are several articles about the problem of the Gulf Stream, global warming and the risks that we may face, such as in the Guardian, in The Conversation and in BBC. It reminds us of how the economics of capitalism work. We see there global processes that seem to be working, but we cannot predict crises and have little understanding of how we can influence them. The press and mass media can be divided into two types. The first are publications that write about the approaching collapse of «Atlantic meridional overturning circulation». The second type are publications that write that there are risks, but they are small, the system works and will work in the next, say, 100 years. If we remember that water and the processes associated with it are an indicator of problems, maybe we can say that the deep risks associated with slowing down of «Atlantic meridional overturning circulation» and the international community's response to this danger can say a lot about our society and preparedness for global crises - both climatic and economic.

### North and South Pole

The Arctic is nearing a tipping point of global climate change. Nearly five months after Antarctica's high-temperature record, the Siberian city of Verkhoyansk reached a historical high of 38°C (100.4°F) on June 20, 2020, heralding a summer of extreme heat and wildfires in a region better known for ice storms. The ice's dimension is as big as Austria's territory.

Globally, temperatures have risen above the 1950-1980 average of those times. These warmer temperatures have significant impacts, causing the Arctic sea ice to melt, frozen ground (known as permafrost) to thaw. Habitats to shrink for wildlife that rely on cold temperatures. As global temperatures rise due to increased carbon emissions, sea ice is declining. The Arctic and Antarctic are largely lethal to humankind, unforgiving with their dark winters, harsh winds, and violent cold. When there isn't enough ice to reflect the sun's rays into space, the heat is absorbed by the dark ocean, accelerating rising water temperatures and ice melt. This alters ocean currents, weakens the jet stream, and changes wind patterns. The effects ripple through the global ecosystem, manifesting in greater drought, heat, floods, and storms.

Warming in the Polar Regions is occurring five times faster than the global average. The Antarctic continent and the East Antarctic Ice Sheet have experienced this rapid warming, and the Southern Ocean is also warming faster than expected. Ice and snow in the Polar Regions, because of their light color and high albedo, typically reflect most of the incoming solar energy back out of our atmosphere. However, as more greenhouse gases cause our planet to warm, the rate of ice and snow melt increases. This decreases the amount of solar radiation reflected out to space and increases the amount absorbed by the Earth's surface and oceans. Sea level rise: The melting arctic ice directly contributing to rising sea levels.

Changing habitats: Due to the melting ice, many animal species are threatened with losing their living space. In the long term, this can also lead to the extinction of animal species. The added energy warms the Polar Regions, accelerating the rate of ice melt and thus causing more warming.

As the Polar Regions warm, the land, ice, ocean, and living things are affected. The poles regulate our climate, weather patterns, and even our maritime food supply. They are warming faster than anywhere else on Earth, with untold consequences for those who live at the planet's more accommodating latitudes.

To prevent climate devastation, we must cut greenhouse gas emissions nearly in half by 2030 compared with 2010 levels.

### Consequences of the climate change:

#### Philippines and Tuvalu – Islands that risk to disappear

We see rising sea levels in the Philippines. They have no resources to fight the issue and sweet water reservoirs are shrinking. They are a poor country, and population is already concentrated in a very small territory. Because of the climate change, the Philippines face more and more heavy weather and the coastline is destroyed. The Philippines is one of the 10 most effected countries by climate change (because it's an island) – similar to Tuvalu, an island that is in danger as the sea level rises. People are forced to flee because of floods, droughts and costal erosion.

### Problems of the different states of water in Germany

There are different states of water, which are very different. These are separated in: rain, snow, fog and hail. In Germany every year, we are feeling different states of water, which cause a lot of problems. In the last years we felt more of the problems, because of the climate change.

On the one hand there is too less rain in Germany, so plants can't grow up which is too bad for the agriculture. Moreover, there will exist more forest fire. On the other hand, rain turns just in a second into a horrible storm. Too much rain leads to flooding in different parts of Germany. For example, last year there were bad floods in Germany, that destroyed a lot of houses and hurt people. Another current example for flooding is the German state Saarland. The climate change is noticeable in this example's trough the unpredictability of weather conditions.

Fluctuations in temperatures are known in Germany. The winter is sometimes getting too warm and then it's getting too cold with more than one meter snow.

#### **Solution:**

The whole world should be more climate friendly. Our idea is to produce less carbon dioxid and less water pollution. For floodings we need more protective measures and preparations, for example walls. For the droughts we should collect the water from the floodings.

It is important to do something against the climate change in long term. But long-term steps take time. Because of this, it is important to be prepared for moments such as flooding.

## **In our vision**

It's difficult to change the climate or weather in Germany in the near future. Our life is too fast and our consumption is too big. We can't stop, because people need more and more. There is a horrible impact for the whole world.

Our vision is responsibility and a natural and respectful world for everyone.

We feel stronger than nature, but we are subject to nature.

Than more we take from the nature, the nature will destroy us! Water will destroy us!

Our solutions are little steps forward.

We have hope for our future. We have hope for our climate. We have hope for our water.

But we need a change and have to work together against the climate change.

## HOPING AGAINST HOPE

Looking for hope is like walking on water.

Hope can also mean to go deep into negative emotions.

You can go anywhere by love.

It always looks impossible but eventually, it is possible.

If you give everything you can't solve to God, there will be solutions.

Look for something you can do. It will do a change.