

## The Maastricht Debate 2019

The Maastricht Debate 2019 will take place on April 29 evening with the lead candidates of the European political parties for the role of European Commission President. The 90-minute event will be broadcast live across the European Union.

It's been five years since the last Maastricht Debate, where current European Commission President Juncker defended his vision for Europe and outlined what he would do if elected.

This year, three partners from Maastricht are jointly organizing the Maastricht Debate 2019: Working on Europe – Maastricht University, the City of Maastricht and the Province of Limburg – as well as the European Youth Forum and the European Journalism Centre.

Similarly to the 2014 edition, the debate will focus on the concerns of students and young people across Europe, many of whom will be voting for the first time.

On this occasion, the organizers have invited POLITICO, the leading European publication for EU influencers, to ensure an extensive reach to the widest possible audience.

## The organisers

### Maastricht, Working on Europe

Maastricht, Working on Europe is a joint programme by the Province of Limburg, the City of Maastricht and Maastricht University.

Since 1992, Maastricht is inextricably linked with Europe: the Maastricht Treaty seals European commitment to shaping their collective identity – a great experiment that is still in full swing.

The signing of the Maastricht Treaty, that holds the European Heritage label, was seen as a milestone for European integration. It has made Maastricht famous, but its European character exceeds mere symbolism: here, Europeans come together to work and think about how collaboration can be further improved, how a shared vision can become reality. Maastricht is a workshop for Europeans, a place where they can develop and realise their ideas and ideals in a rapidly changing world.

This is not a coincidence. Maastricht has always been a city defined by (crossing) borders. For centuries, it has been at the confluence of cultures, where different peoples meet, trade, cooperate and, indeed, from time to time wholeheartedly disagree. Here, in the capital of Limburg, surrounded by Dutch, French and German speaking industrial and cultural hubs, **Europe is lived.**

This experience permeates everything: work, leisure and education. Maastricht University, for example, has a leading role in teaching, researching and enriching European collaboration across disciplines and cultural viewpoints. The university creates and shares knowledge that allows businesses and organisations to thrive, make a profit, create jobs.

Maastricht is a forum for culture and commerce, where ideas are created and debated. The European project is far from complete – here in Maastricht, you can experience it as a dynamic process. New developments, new opportunities and new questions are emerging all the time.

Every European can actively participate in this dialogue. All of us can contribute our enthusiasm, our criticism, our knowledge and our opinions. That is why everyone is welcome in Maastricht to shape Europe one day at a time, to enrich the European project with their ideas. Dreamers and doers, thinking straight, thinking lateral – everyone will find a platform here to start businesses or movements, to host demonstrations or events. Maastricht is a workshop for ‘our Europe’ in all its forms, where the words on the Maastricht Treaty become alive.

For Maastricht, for Limburg, for the Netherlands and for Europe: [Maastricht, Working on Europe](#)

### **Studio Europa**

Studio Europa, based in the heart of the city, brings to life the programme Maastricht, Working on Europe. The team of Studio Europa consists of a Managing Director, Europa Chair, several researchers on European themes, programme-makers, events managers and marketing and communications specialists.

Our aim for Maastricht, Working on Europe is to position Maastricht as a meeting place for citizen dialogue and debate and establish a Centre of Excellence for research on Europe and European integration. In short: a workplace for a better Europe. For everyone.

Our programme consists of three branches: a strategic research agenda; thought-provoking and inspiring events; and the European Heritage Label for the Maastricht Treaty. Our mission is to stimulate active, critical debate with citizen engagement at its core.

### **Province of Limburg**

The [Province Limburg](#) is the supervisor for the municipalities and makes the policy for the entire province. The province works a lot together with municipalities, the national government, companies, educational institutions and other organizations.

### **Municipality of Maastricht**

Maastricht is located in the south of the Netherlands. The municipality functions in the service of its inhabitants. [Municipality Maastricht](#) regularly assists with the organization of events to contribute to the development of the city.

### **Maastricht University**

[Maastricht University](#) (UM) is the most international university in the Netherlands and, with 16,300 students and 4,300 employees, is still growing. The university stands out for its innovative education model, international character and multidisciplinary approach to research and education.

### **European Youth Forum**

The [European Youth Forum](#) is the platform of youth organisations in Europe. They are representing over 100 youth organisations, which bring together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe. The goal of the Youth Forum is to empower young people to

participate actively in society to improve their own lives by representing and advocating their needs and interests.

### European Journalism Centre

[European Journalism Centre](#) is active in building a sustainable, ethical and innovative future for journalism through grants, events, training and media development. They are an international non-profit organisation, headquartered in the Netherlands, that connects journalists with new ideas, skills and people.

### The candidates

#### Bas Eickhout, European Green Party

Eickhout (1976, Groesbeek, the Netherlands), has been Member of the European Parliament for the Dutch Greens (GroenLinks) since 2009. Eickhout is the leading candidate for the European Greens, together with Ska Keller in the elections for the European Parliament in 2019. He is also the leading candidate for GroenLinks in the same elections.

Eickhout studied Chemistry and Environmental Science at the Radboud University in Nijmegen and lives in Utrecht. Since 2000 he has been working as a researcher at the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving). He worked on several projects that had to do with international environmental problems, such as climate change, agriculture, land-use and biofuels. He co-authored the IPCC report on climate change which received the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.



He co-authored the GroenLinks election programme for the European elections in 2004, 2009 and 2014, and the Dutch elections in 2010 and 2012.

#### Guy Verhofstadt, Alliance for Democrats and Liberals for Europe

A former Prime Minister of Belgium for almost 10 years and now leader of the ALDE Group in the European Parliament, **Guy Verhofstadt** (1953, Dendermonde, Belgium) is well-known as the pro-European champion, and a proud Member of ALDE's Team Europe. His political focus? Progress and freedom!

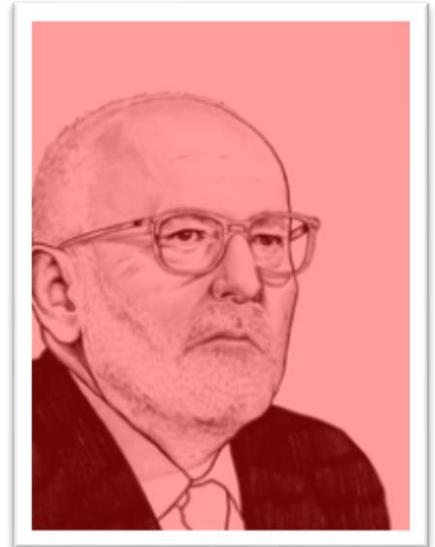
As Brexit coordinator for the European Parliament, Guy made citizens' rights rise to the top of the political agenda and proved himself a staunch defender of Europe's four freedoms. But he is also convinced Europe should use Brexit to renew and reinvent itself. By completing the single market for example and even more so: by strengthening the liberal values the Union was founded on. His main goal is to make the European Union fit for the 21st century! Faster decision making and more focus on the essential tasks of the Union!



**Frans Timmermans, Party of European Socialists**

Frans Timmermans (1961, Maastricht, the Netherlands) is a Dutch politician and diplomat serving as First Vice-President of the European Commission and European Commissioner for Better Regulation, Inter-institutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights since 2014.

Timmermans previously served as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2012 to 2014 in the Second Rutte cabinet and State Secretary for Foreign Affairs from 2007 to 2010 in the Fourth Balkenende cabinet, in charge of European Affairs. He was a member of the House of Representatives for the Labour Party from 1998 to 2007 and again 2010 to 2012. He was a civil servant in the Government of the Netherlands from 1987 to 1998, until he became active in politics.



**Jan Zahradil, Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe**

Jan Zahradil MEP (1963, Prague, Czechoslovakia) is a Czech politician for the Civic Democratic Party (ODS). He has been a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) since the Czech Republic entered the European Union in 2004. Zahradil also served as Member of the Chamber of Deputies (MP) from 1998 to 2004.

A scientific researcher by profession, Zahradil entered politics during the Velvet Revolution. He was a member of the Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, before becoming an adviser to Prime Minister Václav Klaus. In 1998, he was elected to the national Chamber of Deputies. Three years later, he became Vice-Chairman and later First Vice-Chairman of the ODS. From his election to the Chamber of Deputies until 2006 he was the ODS shadow minister for Foreign Affairs.



He was appointed MEP on the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, in May 2004. He was elected head of the Civic Democrats' delegation in the European Parliament, in which capacity he led the negotiations that founded the European Conservatives and Reformists. He was re-elected in 2009 and became Vice-Chairman of the newly founded ECR. In March 2011, Zahradil was elected Chairman. He also sits on the Parliament's Committee on Development.

**Violeta Tomić, Party of the European Left**

I am one of the two “spitzenkandidaten” (top candidates) of the Party of the European Left at this year's European elections. I graduated from the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in 1985 and started working as an actress in Ljubljana City Theatre in 1987.

From 2002 to 2014 I was a self-employed professional in (the field of) culture. I have collaborated with all institutional and independent theatres in Slovenia; and have received a number of professional awards. In 2014, I have been elected into Slovenian parliament and I have worked as an MP ever since.

I am also the Vice-Coordinator of Levica. As an MP, I am the president of the Committee on Culture and a member of the Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Food, the Commission for Relations with Slovenes in Neighbouring and Other Countries, and the Commission for Public Office and Elections. In 2019, I have been appointed General Rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people in the Council of Europe.

I stand for a radical reform of Europe. European Union must become a social union, not just an institution that imposes fiscal rules on its member countries and dictates the laws of supply and demand. If it wants to survive, it must become a guarantee of social security and justice in all member states. The realization of such future demands a distribution of wealth from the richest to the poorest, and an introduction of minimal social and workers' rights standards, pension and disability security, and social transfers. This is why the Party of the European Left claims this: Europe will be social – or it will fail. For a Europe of people, not the profits!

**The moderators****Prof. dr. Rianne Letschert, Rector Magnificus of Maastricht University**

Prof. dr. Rianne Letschert (1976) studied International Law at Tilburg University, the University of Amsterdam and the University of Montpellier. She obtained her PhD at Tilburg University with a thesis titled 'The impact of minority rights mechanisms' (2005), dealing with competing international organisations making policy and law on national minorities.

In March 2011 Letschert was appointed professor to the new chair of victimology and international law at Tilburg University. From April 2010 to August 2010 she was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Lauterpacht Centre for International Law at the University of Cambridge (UK), and Research Fellow of Clare Hall, Cambridge, where she was offered a lifelong membership. In 2014 she was Visiting Professor at the University of Barcelona. Letschert has authored and edited several book publications and articles in national and international journals.

In May 2015 she was awarded a Vidi grant by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research on the impact of international tribunals on societies and individuals that have been



confronted with serious human rights violations and international crimes. She is expert consultant for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon on victim issues. Apart from her position as professor she served as director of the International Victimology Institute Tilburg (INTERVICT). In 2012, Letschert joined De Jonge Akademie (Young Academy) of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences of which she became chairperson in April 2015.

Prof. dr. Rianne Letschert was appointed Rector of Maastricht University on 1 September 2016.

### **Ryan Heath, political editor POLITICO**

Ryan is political editor at POLITICO Europe, with particular responsibility for shaping POLITICO's 2019 European elections coverage. Ryan served for three years as the original author of our Brussels Playbook column.

He began writing for national newspapers in his native Australia in 1999, and is the author of two books including the cult classic "Please Just F\* Off, It's Our Turn Now," an account of how the Baby Boomers / 68er generation are viewed by the Millennial generation. After working as a speechwriter for the British civil service, he joined the European Commission working for President Jose Manuel Barroso and Vice President Neelie Kroes as a spokesperson. Ryan is regular policy commentator on outlets such as BBC, CNN, MSNBC, and Deutsche Welle. He has reported from major events such as the World Economic Forum in Davos, G7 summits and US political conventions.



### **About Maastricht**

Just like The Hague that stands for the City of Peace and Justice, Maastricht as the birthplace of the Maastricht treaty and an international city has the ambition to develop and draw attention to Maastricht as an international centre of excellence, with a leading European research agenda and a visible bridge to its inhabitants. The idea came in the autumn of 2016, when the rector magnificus of Maastricht University, Rianne Letschert, who recently had only been appointed as the youngest rector in the country –attended Europe Calling!, a successful campaign by the city and province as part of the celebrations for the 25th anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty.

Letschert took her idea to the mayor Annemarie Penn-te Strake and governor Theo Bovens, which has resulted in a partnership with a shared vision to make a special project of Europe: Maastricht, working on Europe. Annemarie Penn-te Strake states that "Europe Calling! made clear to us that it's incredibly important to continue probing the values of the European Union.

Moreover, the notion of 'Workshop Europe' fits perfectly with the location and the international ambitions of Maastricht. The inhabitants of our city, the country, and the EU need to be mindful of the future of Europe and work on it together. As the birthplace of the Maastricht Treaty and as an international city with many young people from all over the world, we're obliged to stand up and play a role. And that's what we're doing with Working on Europe." Theo Bovens also states his opinion regarding this special project of Europe "Europe is a match with Maastricht and with Limburg.

The university, the city, and the province are positioning Maastricht as a centre for dialogue on the future of Europe: 'Working on Europe'".

### **History of Maastricht Treaty**

On 9 and 10 December 1991, a European Council meeting – also referred to as the European Summit – was held in Maastricht. During that meeting, the twelve Member States reached agreement regarding a treaty on European political union, which would convert the then European Community into the European Union, and regarding a treaty relating to European monetary union, leading to the birth of the euro. On 7 February 1992, the treaty was signed in the Limburg Provincial Government Buildings: the Maastricht Treaty was born.

Before the Maastricht Treaty, the current European Union used the abbreviation EEC: European Economic Community. Following the conclusion of the Treaty, the Member States started collaborating not just in economic areas but in other areas too. With regard to finance, it was decided that efforts would be focused on creating a single European currency: the euro. After the setting up of the European Central Bank in 1998 and the fact that share prices had already been quoted in euros since 1999, the new European currency was finally launched on 1 January 2002.

### **Signed by:**

The European Summit was attended by the government leaders of all the then European Member States, together with their ministers of Foreign Affairs and Finance. The President and the two Vice-Presidents of the European Commission and the President of the European Parliament were also present.

The European Summit was held in the banqueting hall of the Limburg Provincial Government Buildings. After agreement had been reached, it was decided that the official signing would be a very special occasion. On 7 February 1992, the Treaty was signed by all participating European ministers of Foreign Affairs and Finance in the Council Chamber.

### **Why was the Treaty concluded in Maastricht?**

In 1991, the Netherlands, together with Portugal, held the presidency of the European Council, in which the twelve members of the EEC were represented. The European Summit was therefore held in the Netherlands. Limburg, with its provincial capital Maastricht, put itself forward for organising the summit. Because of the location of Limburg, at the centre of the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion, the international character of the city, the many hotel and conference facilities and the then brand new Provincial Government Buildings on the River Meuse as a favourable location, Maastricht was chosen. This was a follow-up to 1981, when the Limburg capital also hosted a European Summit.

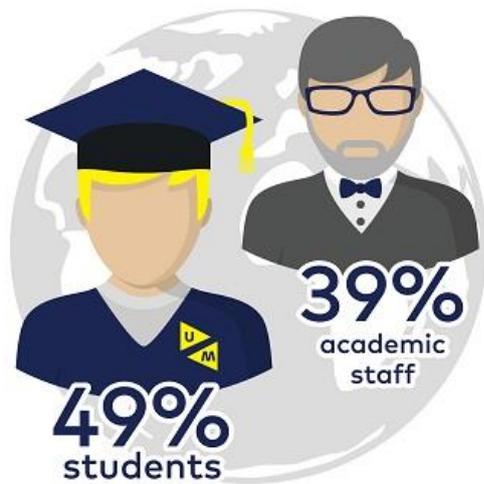
Facts & Figures



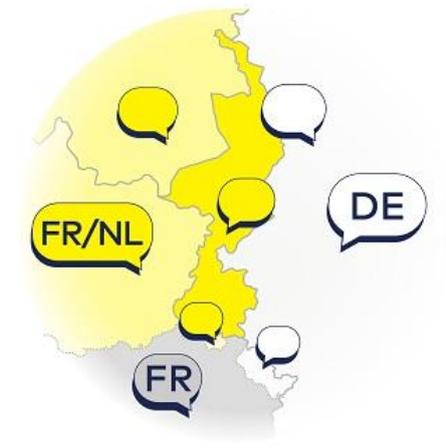
Limburg natives feel more European than the Dutch.



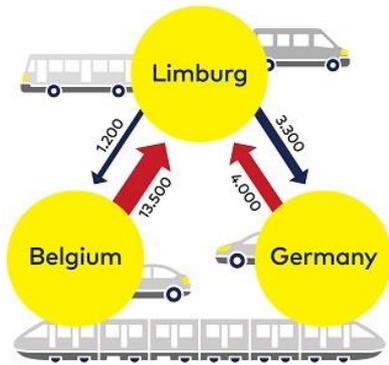
Limburg is literally more connected to foreign countries



Maastricht most international Dutch university



French and German native speakers nearby



Daily cross-border commuting in the Euregion



Annual number of foreign visitors to Limburg



135 European & international institutions in Maastricht



## General information

### Venue

Located in the heart of the city, at the famous Vrijthof square, Theater aan het Vrijthof is the cultural hub for performances, concerts, and other activities that stimulate cultural debate. Theater aan het Vrijthof aims to present performances that merit deeper reflection. The place where the theatre is framed by interesting museums and magnificent churches. Just as in 2014, the Theater aan het Vrijthof is the venue for this already famous debate.

### Address

Theater aan het Vrijthof  
Vrijthof 47  
Maastricht  
The Netherlands

### Accessibility

#### By car

The closest available parking places are the Q-park garages under the Vrijthof and Mosae Forum. Other car parks are located near the Onze Lieve Vrouweplein and along the eastern bank of the Maas (note the closing time).

#### With public transport

The easiest way to travel to Maastricht is to take a train to Maastricht Central Station. For a clear travel planner you can use [www.9292ov.nl/en](http://www.9292ov.nl/en). From Maastricht Central Station almost all buses go to the Market (or Vrijthof).

#### Maastricht Bereikbaar (Maastricht accessible)

You can find all current information on how to reach Maastricht on <http://www.maastrichtbereikbaar.nl/en/homepage>.

### Media travelling from Brussels to Maastricht can use a special bus service:

#### Monday 29 April 2019

15h00 Departure Gare Schuman – Brussels (bus/metro station Wetstraat/roundabout Robert Schuman square

16h45 Arrival Theater aan het Vrijthof – Maastricht

21h30 Departure Theater aan het Vrijthof – Maastricht

23h15 Arrival Gare Schuman – Brussels

**Interview schedule**

There will be a press zone after the debate. This is a space where you as a media representative can ask your questions to the debaters immediately after the debate, from 20:30 onwards. The debaters will be accompanied from the auditorium to the press zone, where spokespersons will also be welcome.

**Photo opportunity**

Because of the live registration of the debate, the only possibility for taking photographs or filming in the auditorium is at 18:55.

**Contact persons**

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