

YouthProAktiv

Youth declaration on “The European Year of the Youth- beyond 2022”

YouthProAktiv is a coalition of young people promoting a culture of proactivity and entrepreneurship in education and policy.

The European Year of Youth (EYY) was declared during Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's State of the Union address in September 2021. This underscored the significance of young Europeans in shaping a more environmentally friendly, inclusive, sustainable, and digital future. It aimed to provide them with increased and improved opportunities while ensuring their voices were acknowledged and bringing them into focus post the COVID-19 pandemic.

In May 2022, the Commission released the Flash Eurobarometer on Youth and Democracy, featuring a survey on “Youth and Democracy in the EYY.” It revealed that the most common expectation among youth concerning democracy in the EYY was for decision-makers to pay greater attention to their demands and take action (72%), as well as to support their personal, social, and professional growth (71%).

These expectations align with the four objectives of the EYY: 1. Renew positive prospects for young people, emphasizing the opportunities arising from green and digital transitions. 2. Assisting young individuals, particularly those facing greater challenges, in becoming active and engaged citizens and agents of change. 3. Promoting available opportunities for youth at all levels. 4. Injecting a youthful perspective into the Union's policies.

The EYY constituted a cross-sectoral initiative executed at multiple tiers and involving various stakeholders. To date, 13,021 activities have been carried out in 72 countries. Nonetheless, as the 24 November 2022 Parliament resolution on the EYY legacy stated, the EYY's success should also be gauged by the concrete mechanisms and policies established or advanced to positively influence the position and role of young people in society. Consequently,

1. We call the Commission to establish an all-encompassing monitoring mechanism based on its call for evidence on the EYY report, to be released by December 31, 2023. This will help evaluate how the execution and results of the main actions and efforts have contributed to the four EYY objectives and supported new initiatives.

2. We strongly encourage that the lasting impact of the EYY should involve: methods for involving and hearing from young people across the EU, and new EU and national policies that reinforce the aims outlined in the 2019-2027 EU Youth Strategy.

3. We endorse the March 2023 Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education suggestion linking the legacies of EYY and the 2023 European Year of Skills in 2024. Sufficient funding should be provided for follow-up activities in the subsequent years.

4. We urge Member States to:
 - a. Modernize and strengthen labour market institutions, making their services more approachable, flexible, user-friendly, and reducing bureaucracy.
 - b. Fully implement the European Education Area by 2025, in tandem with the full execution of the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027).
 - c. Enforce an enhanced youth guarantee, ensuring every young person receives suitable employment, further education, apprenticeships, and internships as per their needs.

5. We call upon the Commission and Member States to develop a European strategy for safeguarding mental health in education and training, encompassing informal and non-formal learning.

6. We urge the EU institutions, national, regional, and local authorities, social partners, and civil society to enact the European Pillar of Social Rights concerning youth.

7. As entrepreneurship is crucial for boosting competitiveness, innovation, and a green economy, we call on Member States to: increase public spending on education and advance reforms to address skill gaps; prioritize lifelong learning, reskilling, and upskilling, and foster entrepreneurial skills to create career opportunities for young people.

8. We call on the Commission to mirror flagship initiatives like ALMA (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve). These programs help young people not in employment, education, or training to enter the job market, reduce youth instability, and provide a strong start to their working lives.

9. We call upon boosting young people's involvement in European decision-making by creating accessible avenues for participation. In this regard:
 - a. We support the Commission's plan to maintain the Youth Voices platform, Youth Talks, and ensure one-third of participants in future citizens' panels are aged 16 to 25.
 - b. We urge the Commission to introduce a Youth Test, an evaluation tool designed to guarantee that EU legislative proposals cater to the needs of young people and implement corrective measures in case of adverse consequences.
 - c. We endorse the Parliament's proposal for ongoing discussions with young people through structured dialogues in its Committee on Culture and Education.

We strongly hold that the viewpoints, aspirations, and expectations of young people are of utmost importance. The choices made today shape our world tomorrow, making it imperative to grant young individuals a voice in decisions that impact their future. The European Year of Youth had a central focus on putting young people in the spotlight, increasing their participation, actively listening to their perspectives, and taking concrete actions based on their input.

The critical challenge is to chart a course that effectively engages, connects, and empowers youth across Europe. Facilitating their active involvement in policy and decision-making processes is paramount for creating a vision that genuinely resonates with the younger generation. Hence, the importance of implementing a comprehensive, cross-sectoral youth policy that encompasses a broad and integrated approach.