

YouthProAktiv Youth Declaration on “A Closest Youth Collaboration with the European Parliament”

YouthProAktiv is a coalition of young people promoting political agency, proactivity, and entrepreneurship in education and policy. One of our core work pillars is advocacy at the parliamentary level, emphasizing the crucial role of the European Parliament (EP) in representing the interests of all citizens, including young people.

In the context of the European elections on 6-9 June 2024 and as a follow-up to the European Year of Youth 2022, a Flash Eurobarometer survey targeting young people (aged 15-30) revealed their expectations from the EU: preserving peace, reinforcing international security, promoting international cooperation (37%), fighting poverty and economic and social inequalities (34%), promoting human rights, democracy, and European values (30%), and increasing job opportunities for young people (28%). These expectations underscore the need for continued and enhanced youth engagement in EU processes.

Discussions on youth participation and inclusion in politics are primarily focused on youth representativity and representation. Incorporating youth into decision-making is crucial for upholding democratic principles, as today's youth are the foundation of tomorrow's society. This includes not only young voters but also those who have not yet reached voting age. Effective engagement requires both informing and providing tools for participation, ensuring that young people are active participants in democratic processes.

In its September 2023 *Resolution on parliamentarism, European citizenship, and democracy*, the EP emphasized the importance of youth participation. Over the years, the EP has launched several initiatives to foster this participation, including: the platforms *together.eu* and *youthideas.eu*, the *Digital Journey to the European Parliament*, the *Online Youth Talks*, *Youth Seminars*, *Euroscola*, the *European Parliament Ambassadors Programme*, the *European Youth Event (EYE)*, the *Local EYEs*, or the *Charlemagne Youth Prize*.

Similarly, the recent *Activity Report 2019-2024 of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)* highlights significant achievements in youth and education policy. Notably, the strengthening of Erasmus+, with its budget nearly doubled compared to the previous programming period, and initiatives like the European Solidarity Corps and DiscoverEU project. The CULT aims to become a hub for youth issues within the EP, engaging further with young people and bringing them closer to Union policy and decision-making processes.

We commend the efforts made so far and acknowledge the significant strides in engaging youth. Nonetheless, there are opportunities to further enhance and expand youth participation to fully realize its potential. Consequently,

1. We call on the EP to build on lessons from the Conference on the Future of Europe to enhance participatory and consultative mechanisms, ensuring outcomes are followed up during decision-making processes. These mechanisms should include platforms like *together.eu* and initiatives such as the *European Youth Event (EYE)*.

2. We strongly encourage the establishment of a continuous European Parliament Youth Dialogue to strengthen relations between young citizens and the EP. This dialogue can build on existing programs like *Online Youth Talks* and *Youth Seminars*, providing opportunities to discuss key policies and gather inputs from young people.
3. We urge Member States to better inform their youth citizens about tools for participation beyond elections, such as European Commission Public Consultations and the EU Feedback platform. Enhancing awareness and accessibility of these tools will ensure broader youth engagement.
4. We call for the establishment of youth councils and advisory boards at local, national, and EU levels to empower young people and ensure their perspectives are considered in policymaking. Programs like the *European Parliament Ambassadors Programme* can serve as a model for these initiatives.
5. We recommend implementing a youth-test mechanism to assess the impact of new EU legislation and policy on young people. This process should involve consultations with youth organizations and experts to identify potential negative impacts and develop appropriate mitigation strategies, mirroring the proposed "Youth Check" by the European Youth Assembly.
6. We advocate for improving the accessibility of information on youth-related policies and opportunities, creating inclusive youth spaces, and establishing information hubs run with youth. This can be achieved through platforms like *youthideas.eu* and initiatives like *Local EYES*.
7. We encourage the EP to explore additional ways to enhance youth representation, such as networks of young members, youth caucuses, and parliamentary committees on youth issues. Initiatives like *Euroscola* can inspire these efforts.
8. We recommend strengthening collaboration with the Parliamentary *EU40 Group* to foster mentorship and networking opportunities between young MEPs and youth organizations. This can provide valuable insights and support for young people's political engagement and career development.
9. We call for investing in local community organizations that promote democratic values and understanding among youth, including funding for youth services. These organizations can collaborate with initiatives like the *Charlemagne Youth Prize* to amplify their impact.

We strongly believe 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 EP must continue to facilitate active youth involvement in policy and decision-making processes to create a vision that genuinely resonates with the younger generation. Democracy is an ongoing process, and ensuring continuous and meaningful youth engagement remains a vital task for the EP and all EU institutions.