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AER Youth Regional Network (YRN)

Policy Recommendations for a more Democratic, Inclusive, Green and Digital Europe

Sankt Pölten, Lower Austria, 30 November 2023

The present policy recommendations were expressed by young European citizens as part of the preparatory workshop to the third **MEET Debate (“Mobilise Europe = Engage Together”)**¹, organised in Sankt Pölten, Lower Austria, on the 30th of November 2023.

These recommendations will be integrated into the policy and advocacy work of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and Youth Regional Network (YRN), to **bring these young voices to the European institutions, and to regional and European policymakers and stakeholders.**

Some of the policy recommendations expressed in the present document were already defended in the AER Bureau Position on Youth, “For tailor-made youth policies addressing the challenges of the next generation”².

“Speak less *about* the youth, and more *with* them.”

1. Democratic Europe

Which actions or initiatives do you think would be most effective in enhancing citizen participation, especially among young people, in EU policy-making?

Developing mandatory **European civic education programmes in schools**, from an early age (primary schools, middle schools, high schools) in all EU countries.

Reaching out to **diverse profiles of young people, from various backgrounds**, including and especially young people who are not already engaged in politics / civic spaces.

Lowering the voting age, hand-in-hand with mandatory political / civic education programmes.

¹ The MEET Project is co-funded by the “Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values” (CERV) programme of the European Union. More information about MEET here: <https://aer.eu/meet/>

² AER Bureau Position, “[For tailor-made youth policies addressing the challenges of the next generation](#)”, adopted on the 7th of December 2022.



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- # Developing **trustworthy information-sharing platforms**, especially on what local democracy means, and on which / how decisions are made. This includes **offering and sharing opportunities** with and for young people.
- # Developing **innovative formats to engage with the youth**, such as “Pub Tours”.
- # Involving the **media and social media platforms** in sharing reliable information in engaging formats.
- # Involving **youth civil society organisations / associations as key players in engaging with young people** and providing them with youth civic spaces, where they can express their views and bring them to the policy-makers³.
- # Developing **Youth Action Plans at all levels** (local, regional, national, European).
- # Generalising **youth impact assessment tools**, such as the [EU Youth Test](#).
- # **Involving artists to engage young people** in civic spaces, politics and elections.
- # Appointing **local councillors for Youth Affairs and for European Affairs**.

2. Inclusive Europe

What specific changes or policies would you like to see the new European Parliament and Commission prioritise in the next five years to ensure a fair and inclusive transition?

How can the EU deliver a fair and inclusive transition in the next five years with positive outcomes for our local communities and citizens, making them feel that they are fully part of our European project?

- # Developing and improving **access to public transportation**, especially in rural and remote areas, and developing **incentives to reduce the use of individual cars**.
- # Investing in **infrastructures, adapted to achieve a green and digital transition**. This includes sustainable, energy-efficient, low-carbon buildings and transports, and increased access to the internet, especially in rural areas (digital).
- # Supporting young people for them to **access green and affordable housing**.

³ The AER Youth Regional Network (YRN), Equipo Europa, the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the Young European Federalists (JEF Europe) and DYPALL were mentioned as examples.

Developing **inclusion policies towards discriminated and/or isolated communities**, especially populations with a migrant background, or discriminated on the basis of their religion, beliefs and/or language, or from a disadvantaged / less-favoured socio-economic background. A particularly important dimension is to **build these policies directly with the concerned communities**.

Going to **meet citizens living in the rural / remote / isolated areas and communities**, speak to them where they live, to better understand and become aware of their issues and realities.

Addressing the **age gap** in political representation, and providing space and opportunities for young people to access political representation.

Addressing the **brain drain and generational gap in rural areas**, by providing young people with opportunities and incentives to stay (and to come back) in these areas.

3. Green and Digital Europe

What should be the top priorities in the Green Transition to address environmental challenges at the local and regional level for the new European Parliament and Commission?

Framing the Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a more accessible and intelligible way, to facilitate concrete actions. For example, the language / wording surrounding the Green Deal tends to be too bureaucratic and complex, which inhibits actions and harms the objective of involving citizens and business to build a sustainable, carbon-neutral future.

Sharing good practices on the successful implementation of the Green Deal, and making this information widespread and accessible, to create a multiplier effect.

Providing funding / financial support to communities implementing the Green Deal, and making the application process clear and accessible.

Favouring and valuing the implementation of the Green Deal at local and regional level, through actions adapted to the specific potential and challenges experienced at local level, in local communities.

Creating incentives, such as Awards delivered to “model regions” when it comes to implementing the Green Deal and the SDGs.