

Legacy of the 2022 European Year of Youth

Throughout 2022, young Europeans were to be given opportunities to engage in learning and civic engagement activities, discover other cultures, improve their employment prospects, share ideas and broaden their horizons generally. Youth policy was to be mainstreamed across all relevant Union policy fields. Now that the European Year of Youth is drawing to its close, has it met its objectives?

Background

The proposal to make 2022 European Year of Youth (EYY22) was announced in Ursula von der Leyen's [2021 State of the Union address](#). The idea behind the Year was to highlight and mitigate the pandemic's impact on young people's education, employment, social inclusion and mental health; and to provide young Europeans with opportunities to gain knowledge and skills, and strengthen their civic engagement in shaping Europe's future. The voice of young people was heard in key consultation processes, such as the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#) (CoFoE) and the [EU Youth Dialogue](#) process. The Year was also intended to reinforce the 2019-2027 [EU youth strategy](#).

Proposed measures included conferences, events and information campaigns; participatory activities to gather ideas; the promotion of programmes and funding opportunities for young people; and studies and research. The European Parliament and Council [agreed](#) an €8 million operational budget for implementation, a European Year of Youth top-up from the [Erasmus+](#) and [European Solidarity Corps](#) budgets. The Year was also to dovetail with [Next Generation EU](#), bringing a fresh outlook for young people. A [commitment](#) was made to ensure that the European Year would leave a legacy beyond 2022. At Parliament's request, a wider ambition to mainstream youth policy across all relevant EU policy areas was added to the framework legislation. MEPs also secured a special focus on young people with fewer opportunities or mental health issues. The formal [decision](#) on the Year was adopted on 20 December 2021.

Examples of activities that took place

Throughout 2022, the European Commission coordinated activities together with the European Parliament, the Member States, regional and local authorities, youth organisations and young people themselves. The Commission convened meetings of [national coordinators](#) and other youth organisation representatives to help implement the year at EU level. According to the dedicated [website](#), over 8 000 activities took place during the year, in 54 countries. One of the northernmost activities was the [EU-Sámi Youth Idea Lab](#), raising awareness among Sámi youth about EU policies and aiming to come up with ideas on how to increase their participation in EU youth initiatives. In [Slovakia](#), a series of 'café Europa' discussions on EU-related topics was organised in the capital and other cities; in [Cyprus](#), there were interactive workshops. In [Malta](#), young people with disabilities were offered a chance to present their art in exhibitions. In Portugal, professional and secondary school students participated in the '[EU Olympics](#)' a quiz testing their knowledge of the European Union. In Ireland, women attending university or participating in apprenticeships were trained to become [role model mentors](#), to guide girls in their final year of secondary school; in the Netherlands, a special [Impossible without Youth](#) award will this year be handed out to youth-related initiatives organised at festivals around Europe.

As part of September's European Sustainable Energy Week, European [Youth Energy Day](#) gave young people a chance to get involved in Europe's transition to sustainable energy forms. A [Flash Eurobarometer](#) published in May collected opinions of young people on youth and democracy. 'Youth Talks' showcased conversations on topics such as [solidarity](#) and [interculturality](#). A 'voice platform' was opened on the Year of Youth [website](#), where young people could record a message saying what kind of Europe they wanted to live in. The same website gathered news and information about events, and articles by young journalists. During the [CoFoE](#), a third of the citizens' panels was made up of young people aged 16 to 25, and an equal



proportion were among the 'panel ambassadors', who relayed recommendations to MEPs, national politicians, the Commission and other EU bodies and civil society.

The Year saw the launch of flagship initiatives, such as [ALMA \(Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve\)](#), a new initiative to help young people who are not in employment, education or training to find their way to the job market, by combining support for education, vocational training or employment in their home country with a work placement in another EU country. In January 2022, the Commission proposed a [recommendation](#) to facilitate international volunteering activities for young people; the Council adopted it in April 2022. On 5 April, the Council also approved [conclusions on fostering engagement](#) among young people as actors of change for protecting the environment.

In September 2022, the European Parliament launched its [Youth Hub](#), a one-stop shop available in 24 languages, designed around the needs of young people. Parliament's contribution to the Year of Youth, the Youth Hub has become the home for all the activities Parliament organises to engage with young people. These include the [European Youth Event](#) (EYE), hosted in the Strasbourg hemicycle, the [Charlemagne Youth prize](#), awarded since 2008 to youth-run projects, [Euroscola](#), which allows young people to experience Parliament in the shoes of a Member of the European Parliament, and activities being rolled out continuously in EU countries, such as the [European Parliament Ambassador School](#) programme.

What legacy will EYY2022 leave?

On 25 October 2022, the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT), responsible for youth policies in the European Parliament, held a [debate](#) on the results of the year. The debate took the customary form of a structured dialogue with young people, involving representatives of youth organisations and the [EU Youth Coordinator](#). On this occasion, the [European Youth Forum](#) insisted that it wanted a [#YouthTest](#) put in place – an impact assessment tool for the EU to use to make sure that all EU legislative proposals have a positive impact on young people. According to the EYF, 'Youth mainstreaming in all policies is an aim of the EU youth strategy and one of the four key objectives of the European Year of Youth – the Youth Test is a way to both implement this strand of the strategy and realise this objective for 2022, hence providing a long-lasting legacy'. The CoFoE also called for this, and both the [European Economic and Social Committee](#) and the [European Committee of the Regions](#) have supported the idea. The youth test is already in use in some Member States (Austria, France and Germany).

On 14 November 2022, Parliament's CULT committee [exchanged views](#) on the ways that the Council of Europe (CoE) works with young people. Cooperation between the CoE and the EU could be deepened, especially in the youth sector, to strengthen the voices of Europe's young people.

On 24 November, in a plenary [debate](#) on the EYY22 legacy, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#), stressing that the Year's success should be measured not only by the number of events organised or their attendance, but also by the mechanisms and policies set in motion or advanced to positively impact the position and role of young people in society. Parliament calls on the Commission to adopt a fully fledged 'EU youth test' – not merely a bureaucratic check-list but engaging people in a holistic way.

On 6 December 2022, a European Year of Youth conference entitled '[Claim the future](#)' will be organised in the European Parliament in Brussels, concluding the thematic year and announcing its legacy and the activities that should follow. The high-level conference is co-hosted by three EU institutions – the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of the EU, represented by the Czech Presidency. The main programme has been proposed and co-created by young people, focusing on an inclusive, digital Europe through education, and on mental healthcare.

The Commission has [committed](#) to submitting a report by the end of 2023 on the implementation, results and overall assessment of EYY22 initiatives. The report should also include ideas for 'further common endeavours in the field of youth to cement the legacy' of the Year. In its June 2022 [communication](#) on the CoFoE, the Commission stated that young people should form a third of the participants of the forthcoming 'citizens' panels', and that 'when all participants are young people, this would be dubbed a 'youth test'. Youth organisations have [criticised](#) what they call a 'watering down' of the outcomes of the CoFoE. In her [State of the Union speech](#) in September 2022, the Commission President said that 'we should leave the world a better place for the next generation' and that, therefore, 'it is time to enshrine solidarity between generations in our [founding] Treaties'.

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