

COMMUNICATION

**from the European Affairs Committee of the Federal Council
to the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament
pursuant to Article 23f paragraph 4 of the Federal Constitutional Act
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**Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council for a European
Year of Youth 2022**

On 15 September 2021, EU Commission President von der Leyen announced in her State of the Union Address that 2022 would be declared the European Year of Youth. On 14 October 2021, the European Commission adopted the corresponding initiative, which takes the special challenges young people are currently facing into account. Above all, the COVID-19 crisis had an unprecedented impact on the employment, education, social inclusion and mental health of young people.

The European Affairs Committee of the Federal Council explicitly endorses this initiative, which is intended to place young people, with their contributions and points of view, at the centre of political decisions and priorities, the overall objective being to strengthen the efforts of the Union and its Member States, as well as regional and local authorities, in the implementation of measures aimed at supporting and involving young people and improving their post-pandemic perspectives. The Federal Council particularly welcomes the cross-sectoral and inclusive character of the initiative.

The EU Youth Strategy provides the framework for EU youth policy cooperation during the period from 2019 to 2027. In accordance with its priority areas of “participation, engagement and empowerment”, this strategy fosters the social and civic engagement of youth and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society. The European Youth Goals are an integral part of the EU Youth Strategy. The European Affairs Committee of the Federal Council welcomes the European Youth Goals, which were drafted under the trio Presidency 2017/18, with Austria taking a prominent and active part in the definition and wording of the goals. In this context, the direct participation of young people in

the elaboration of the Youth Goals is particularly noteworthy: More than 50,000 young people from all over Europe submitted online contributions and participated in several EU youth conferences.

In Austria, youth policy is a matter of high priority, a position shared by all federal ministries, actors and stakeholders, as well as the Austrian National Youth Council as the statutory body representing the interests of children and young people. The European Youth Strategy provides the framework for the national youth strategy. This national strategy outlines 28 youth goals in four fields of action – education and employment, participation and engagement, quality of life and harmonious relations, and media and information – to be implemented through 82 concrete measures, with due consideration given to the European Youth Goals. Against the background of experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the essential goals is to create conditions and structures that strengthen young people and support them in addressing crises. Fostering youth participation is of particular importance: By means of “reality checks”, feedback on the youth goals defined and the measures taken is obtained from young people in order to assess the relevance of these goals from young people’s perspectives.

The European Affairs Committee of the Federal Council emphasizes and supports the European Union’s efforts to strongly involve young people in ongoing consultation processes, such as the Conference on the Future of Europe or the European Youth dialogue process. The Austrian Parliament, which is represented by four of its members in the plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe, organizes a total of five events for young people, each dealing with one of the nine major topics of the Conference plenary, to give them a chance to present their views of the Europe of the future and exchange ideas on the thematic priorities of the Conference.

On 25 May 2021, the Federal Council, positioning itself as the future-oriented “European Chamber” of the Austrian Parliament, invited young people to an interactive event entitled “Future.Youth.Europe”. The contributions made by the young participants are all being fed into the multilingual platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe.