



Europe for YOUTH – YOUTH for Europe  
EU Youth Conference:  
Space for Democracy and Participation

# Conference Report

EU Youth Conference  
2–5 October 2020



Federal Ministry for  
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,  
Women and Youth

In cooperation with:

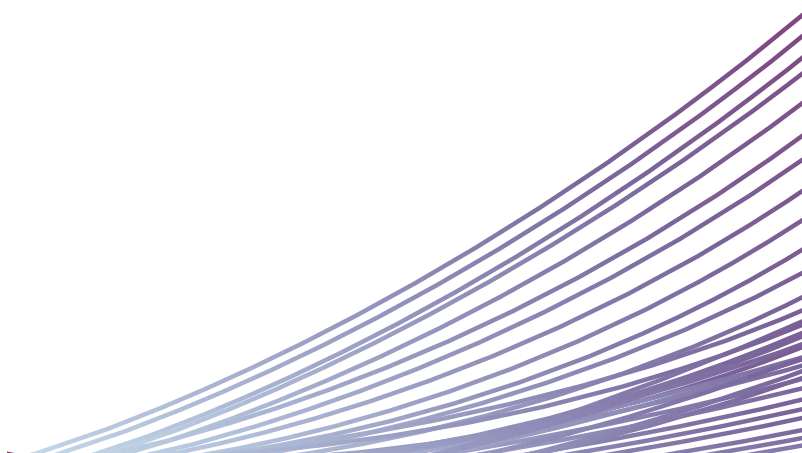


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*This report gives a brief overview of the EU Youth Conference under the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union.<sup>1</sup> It was written by the German Federal Youth Council on the basis of the conference's Harvesting Summary<sup>2</sup> and contains an explanation on the conference's programme and methodology. Furthermore, the main outcomes will be presented and briefly put into context. Finally, the report includes links to further information.*

**Disclaimer:** Please note that the outcomes presented on the following pages reflect the views of the participants of the EU Youth Conference and by no means represent positions of the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth or the German Federal Government.

## About the EU Youth Conference

### “Europe for YOUNG – YOUNG for Europe: Space for Democracy and Participation”

The EU Youth Conference was held as a digital event from 2 to 5 October 2020. Under the slogan “Europe for YOUNG – YOUNG for Europe: Space for Democracy and Participation”, the participants discussed how the European Youth Goal #9 “Space and Participation for All” can be realised, mainly focusing on the European level.



The conference was organised by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth together with the German Federal Youth Council. Originally planned as a physical event in Berlin in July 2020, the conference had to be postponed and moved into the virtual space due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only the Conference Team came together in Berlin.

The participants of the EU Youth Conference included national youth delegates, youth representatives of international youth organisations, representatives from national youth ministries and from European institutions. All in all, around 200 people from about 40 European countries took part in the EU Youth Conference. The youth delegates were chosen or elected at a national level, in most cases via the national youth councils. In addition, German Federal Youth Minister Franziska Giffey, serving as one of the hosts of the conference, participated in some of the programme items as did several high-ranking political decision-makers from the Portuguese and Slovenian youth ministries, from the European Parliament and from the European Commission.

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1 For further information on the EU Youth Conference please go to <https://euyc-en.dbjr.de>.

2 The Harvesting Summary is a comprehensive documentation of the EU Youth Conference. It includes a large part of the ideas and discussions and was developed by a Harvesting Team which consisted of a group of young people who documented the discussions and outcomes at the conference. You will find the Harvesting Summary on this site: <https://go.dbjr.de/euyc-harvesting>.



The **aim of the conference** was to **explore Youth Goal #9 and the topics of youth and democracy**. This included looking at different aspects of the topics and at issues that are important and currently relevant to young people. Thanks to a participatory approach, attendees had the opportunity to shape the conference and decide on their own which topics should be discussed.

At the end of the conference, the participants formulated **one political demand for each of the seven Targets of Youth Goal #9**. These demands can be seen as a summary of all the discussions and ideas that arose during the conference.

### European Youth Goals<sup>3</sup>

The 11 European Youth Goals are the outcome of a participatory process in 2017/2018, which involved several tens of thousands of young people from all over Europe. They reflect the views of European youth and serve – with due regard to the principle of subsidiarity, national competences and the freedom of association – as an inspiration and provide guidance to the EU, its Member States and their relevant stakeholders and authorities.

Youth Goal #9 “Space and Participation for All” aims to strengthen young people’s democratic participation and autonomy as well as provide dedicated youth spaces in all areas of society.



The Youth Goals are available in different languages:  
<https://youth-goals.eu/youthgoals>.

The EU Youth Conference in Germany was not a one-off event of the German EU Presidency, but formed part of the EU Youth Dialogue. The EU Youth Dialogue is a European youth participatory process. Through 18-month cycles on a priority topic, the Youth Dialogue supports the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027. It ensures the involvement of young people in the decision-making process in (youth) policy. This is done through a dialogue between young people and decision-makers in Europe.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue runs from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2021 under the Trio Presidency of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia.<sup>4</sup> It focuses on Youth Goal #9 “Space and Participation for All”. During this 18-month work cycle, concrete recommendations on how to implement this Youth Goal at the European, national, regional and local levels will be developed and implemented. With the seven Targets of Youth Goal #9 as its guiding framework, the 8<sup>th</sup> cycle focuses on improving mechanisms for youth participation and creating (new) spaces for young people’s participation in all areas of society, and aims to turn Youth Goal #9 into Youth Actions.

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<sup>3</sup> The European Youth Goals can be found in the Annex of the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027, page 11: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL&from=EN>. More information on the European Youth Strategy: [https://europa.eu/youth/strategy\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/strategy_en).

<sup>4</sup> Further information on the 8<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue can be found in the Explanatory Note on the 8<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue (Trio Presidency Germany-Portugal-Slovenia): [https://jugenddialog.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/EXPLANATORY-NOTE\\_EUYD\\_-8th-cycle-3.pdf](https://jugenddialog.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/EXPLANATORY-NOTE_EUYD_-8th-cycle-3.pdf).



## Programme and methodology

The programme of the conference followed a participatory approach, guiding the participants through different phases of open brainstorming, elaboration and discussion, dialogue with political decision-makers and reflection, and finally culminating in the formulation of seven concrete political demands by young people. The table below gives a brief overview of the programme. As the programme can be understood as a process consisting of different phases that build on one other in terms of content, programme outcomes were produced in each phase of the programme.<sup>5</sup>



### Overview of the programme

	Friday, 2 October	Saturday, 3 October	Sunday, 4 October	Monday, 5 October
<b>Morning</b>		Overview of Youth Participation ..... World Café	BarCamp Sessions	Dialogue with Political Decision- Makers <sup>6</sup>
<b>Afternoon</b>	Opening and Introduction	Open Sessions and Workshops ..... BarCamp Sessions Planning	BarCamp Sessions	Summarising Outcomes in Working Groups on Targets ..... Official Closing

The main challenges of the digital conference were to keep the participatory and dialogue formats as a place where participants were able to exchange views, listen and learn from one another and to shape the event in the most interactive way possible. A range of tools, such as Mentimeter, Padlet, BarCamp, several Webex meeting rooms, and a digital café were used to make (informal) dialogue and exchange among participants possible online. The topics of the conference were jointly explored, viewed from different perspectives, discussed and worked on, and at the end, the participants formulated concrete ideas and demands.

The conference was therefore a process with programme items building on each other.

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed description of the programme and the outcomes produced at the different stages of the conference, please take a look at the Harvesting Summary (see footnote 2).

<sup>6</sup> The names of the politicians can be found here: <https://www.dbjr.de/en/article/im-dialog-mit-politikerinnen-der-europaeischen-union>. Each dialogue group also developed one key outcome which is part of the Harvesting Summary.



## Outcomes

The EU Youth Conference was the major European level consultation event of the 8<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue and focused on effective and sustainable youth participation. Since it is quite important for meaningful participation to ensure proper documentation of the outcomes, a Harvesting Team collected and clustered all discussion outcomes developed. The corresponding, more detailed Harvesting Summary contains an overview of the discussions, ideas, demands and other outcomes of the EU Youth Conference.<sup>7</sup> It also includes the Youth Goal #9 Target Summary with further details on the 7 Targets of Youth Goal #9 and the discussions.



In the final participatory format of the conference, participants had the opportunity to review and complement the gathered outcomes of the conference. These outcomes were structured and divided according to the seven targets of Youth Goal #9 and were discussed in small groups. Based on these discussions, each group formulated one concrete political demand which can contribute to the implementation of Youth Goal #9 at European level and in the Member States.



7 See footnote 2.





The seven Targets of Youth Goal #9 and the respective political demands are as follows:

## Target 1

*Ensure young people can adequately influence all areas of society and all parts of the decision-making processes, from agenda setting to implementation, monitoring and evaluation through youth-friendly and accessible mechanisms and structures, ensuring that policies respond to the needs of young people.*

- **Political Demand:** We demand co-decision-making processes on all levels with young people and youth organisations, implemented through a rights-based approach.



## Target 2

*Ensure equal access to everyday decision making for all young people from different backgrounds.*

- **Political Demand:** Decision-makers should encourage and invest in dedicated processes which amplify young minority voices and ensure their direct engagement.



## Target 3

*Increase youth participation and thus equal representation in the electoral process as well as in elected bodies and other decision-making organs at all levels of society.*

- **Political Demand:** Ensure young people's access to formal decision-making by lowering the age of voting and political candidacy to 16 in all elections, while ensuring all youths have the opportunity to gain sufficient skills and motivation to participate actively and passively in elections, as well as removing all barriers to voting.





## Target 4

*Provide youth-led physical facilities and infrastructures called youth spaces defined by being autonomous, open and safe, accessible to all, offering professional support for development and ensuring opportunities for youth participation.*

- **Political Demand:** We demand a new EU Fund to set up and sustain youth spaces.



## Target 5

*Ensure safe virtual youth spaces are accessible to every young person which provide access to information and services as well as ensure opportunities for youth participation.*

- **Political Demand:** We request that the European Commission puts the creation of safe digital spaces for young people, along with the support and funding of developing digital literacy activities, as one of the top priorities in all programmes along with prioritising it horizontally at European level.



## Target 6

*Ensure sustainable funding, common recognition and development of quality youth work in order to strengthen youth organisations and their role in inclusion, participation and non-formal education.*

- **Political Demand:** We demand funds to be made available for permanent structures of participation.







## Target 7

*Provide youth-friendly, relevant, comprehensive information, also developed by and with young people, in order to enable youth participation.*

- **Political Demand:** We demand critical thinking to become a part of the obligatory private and public school curriculum for at least one hour a week from the ages 10–16 in order to fight fake news and disinformation with media and information literacy and to encourage youth participation/motivation to be a part of the debate.

As these demands are the result of a participatory process running throughout the conference, they can be considered as part of its main outcomes.





## To sum up...

In conclusion, the Conference Team would like to sum up the ideas, demands and solutions brought up by the participants of the EU Youth Conference concerning Youth Goal #9. The following summary is based on the Harvesting Summary but has been rephrased for an easier understanding:



- Young people have to be provided with the skills and information they need to participate in society. They need to be educated and informed through new media, schools and informal forms of education. They also have to receive information properly prepared for young people (youth-friendly, low-threshold) and they need to know how to deal with information that reaches them through other media by thinking critically.
- Young people need safe spaces where they experience self-efficacy and those spaces have to get sustainable funding. This has to start from an early age on in safe digital spaces just as much as in physical spaces for youth only, which are youth-led, co-led or provided by youth organisations. The funding for these spaces needs to come from national, regional or local authorities or EU institutions and to offer possibilities to be independent from national governments. In addition, funds for youth organisations and youth councils have to be expanded and include permanent structures of participation. This is also the case for professional support for these youth spaces (youth work).
- Young people have to play an active role in political decision-making processes. They have to be asked proactively for their opinion and their opinion must be heard. Discussions between young people and policy-makers need to be held on an eye-to-eye level and young people have to be involved as equal decision-makers. Furthermore, they should be able to vote at the age of 16 and more young people need to be represented in decision-making bodies. Emphasis has to be placed on empowering them at an early age to use their right to vote and stand for election.
- All of this has to be applicable to all young people as there should be equal opportunities for everyone. This needs to be ensured especially by fostering young people from minority backgrounds.



## Use the outcomes!

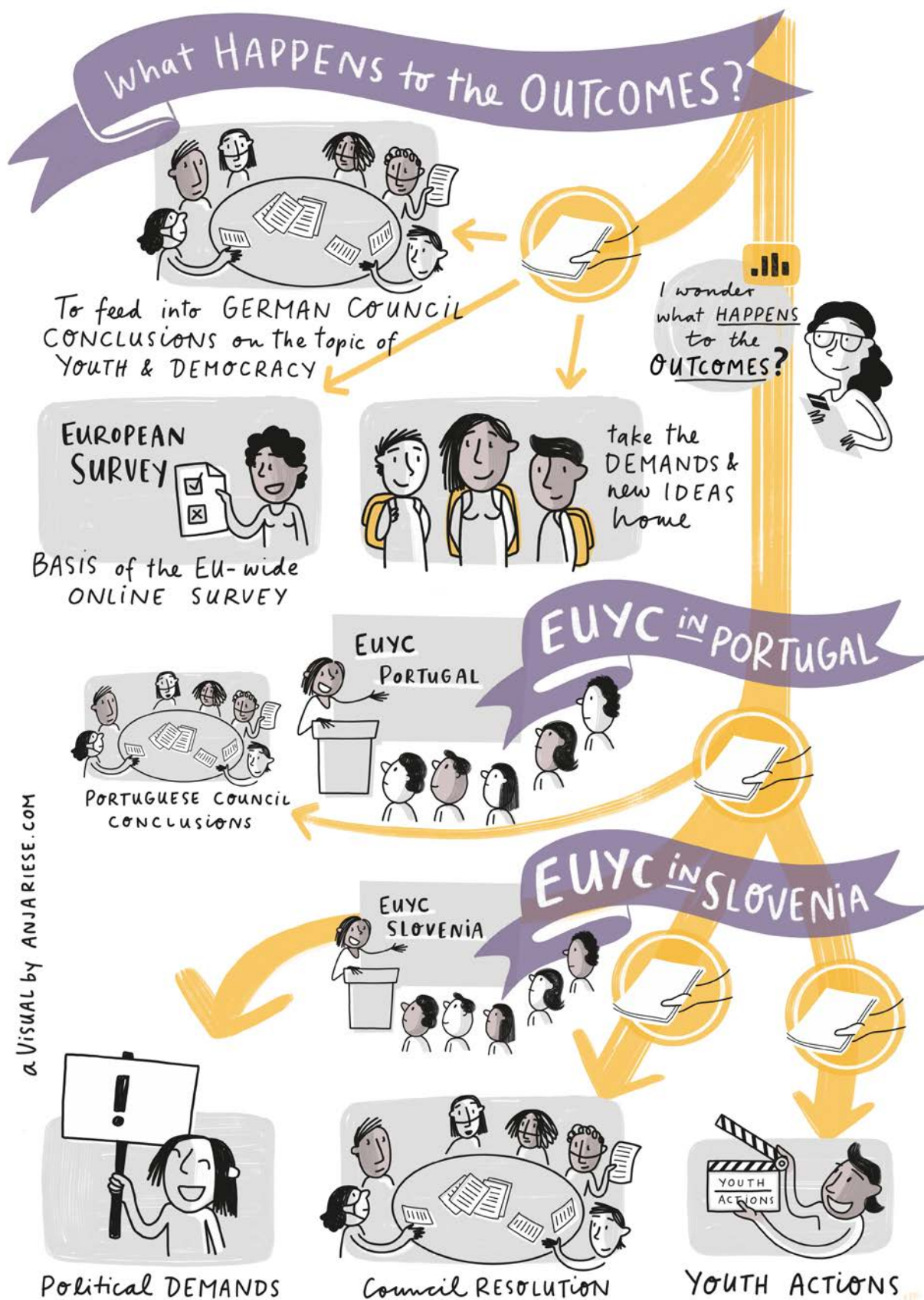
Based on these conclusions, in particular on the 7 demands that were formulated at the EU Youth Conference, everyone is invited to use these outcomes, either as a basis for their own work or in order to pass them on to politicians and decision-makers.

The outcomes of the EU Youth Conference in Germany will influence the EU Youth Dialogue process and EU policy-making in various ways:

1. Outcomes feed into the overall results of the qualitative consultation phase of the 8<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue.
2. They form the basis of the online survey of the 8<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue.
3. They feed into the German Council Conclusions on “Youth and Democracy”.
4. They are put forward as political demands to decision-makers both at the EU level and in the Member States.
5. The outcomes of the 8<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue will shape the resolution to be adopted by the Council of the EU Youth Ministers under the Slovenian Presidency in autumn 2021.<sup>8</sup>



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<sup>8</sup> An overview on the EU Youth Dialogue process and its outcomes can be found in the Explanatory Note on the 8<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue (see footnote 4).





## **Imprint**

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([http://www.youthconf.at/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/BJV\\_Youth-Goals\\_DesignManual.pdf](http://www.youthconf.at/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/BJV_Youth-Goals_DesignManual.pdf)).

\* For general questions to all government offices and agencies, the general public service number 115 is also available. In the participating regions, the 115 is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. between Monday and Friday. Calls to the 115 from a German landline and many mobile networks are charged at local rate and are therefore toll-free for flat rate holders. Deaf persons can access information by dialing the SIP address [115@gebaerdentelefon.d115.de](mailto:115@gebaerdentelefon.d115.de). To find out if the 115 is available in your region and for more information on the general public service number please visit <http://www.d115.de>.