



**European Committee
of the Regions**

**SPEECH BY 1ST VICE PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS
ON THE YEAR OF YOUTH
152TH PLENARY SESSION
1 DECEMBER 2022**

Dear President, dear Commissioner,

Dear representatives of youth organizations,

The young European generation

has been educated in an era of information and knowledge without boundaries.

It has been traveling without the burden of borders and checkpoints.

It is a generation that has seen integration and globalization

not as threats

but as opportunities for education,

and exploration, employment, and exchange.

At the same time,

the young European generation is called to tackle new global challenges:

climate emergency; migration flows; demography; brain drain.

In order for them to be empowered

to resolve unsolved or new crises,

they must be involved as soon as possible in the governance

of a globalised world.

It is with this in mind

that participatory democracy and other forms of inclusive dialogue with citizens must be supported, starting from the local level.

It is with this in mind

that youth involvement must be guaranteed through concrete acts:

the right to vote - at the age of 16 – the members of the European Parliament;

the right to put forward citizens' initiatives and promote referenda.

Dear colleagues,

Throughout the European Year of Youth,

We have been listening.

We also have innovated, by including more and more young people in our activities through the YEPP programme.

Now we need to seize the momentum created by the Conference on the Future of Europe and by the citizens' debates,

and promote new inclusive forms of citizens' dialogue,

starting from the city hall debates on European topics having a territorial impact, which can be managed by local youth associations, in partnership with their mayors or regional leaders.

Because there is no Future of Europe without our young generation, we decided at the Summit of Regions and Cities in Marseille to co-create an EU Charter on Youth and Democracy with the European Youth Forum and this in order to strengthen young people's participation in the European political life.

I thank all of you for your commitment, and for having accepted this challenge.

To ensure a long-lasting legacy of the European Year of Youth, we need now to mainstream a youth perspective in all policy areas at all levels of governance and we shall monitor the implementation of our common objective of empowering youth, fostering youth participation and improving the wellbeing of our young generation, and this in order to overcome the challenges that are before us.

As the year of youth is approaching its end,
next year's aspiration will be dedicated to skills and education.

By boosting competitiveness, participation and talent,
the European Year of Skills is the perfect continuation
of the current year of Youth,
as it will seek to reinforce lifelong learning
by further investing in training and upskilling
of the European workforce.

Dear colleagues,

There is a need to secure the principles and values
on which our Union was created:

our education systems must pass on to the new generations
the heritage and the raison d'être of our European community.

For this, we need to develop a 'full civic experience' for Europeans,
as it was proposed by COFE.

To this end,

we join the call for the introduction

of a European curriculum for civic education,
which includes the promotion of European values,
critical thinking and media literacy,
and knowledge about our Union.

I am sure the Ukrainian youth can today help us, and inspire us,
when it comes to keep fighting for those freedoms and values
young Europeans once fought for,
and which remain our main achievement.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY