

# Can youth participation become a blueprint for wider and deepened democratic innovation at the EU level?

16 September 2025  
19:00-21:30 CET  
Dinner-debate  
Residence Palace

# Democracy Retreat

Residence Palace, Rue de la Loi 155, 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium  
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## A stronger role for young voices in the EU?

The European Union (EU) has long recognised that solidarity between generations is essential to its future, as enshrined in Article 3 of the Treaty on the EU. In recent years, this principle has been given new momentum. The **2024 Summit of the Future** saw global leaders commit to intergenerational dialogue and meaningful youth participation in policy-making. Building on this, the European Commission committed to integrating young people's perspectives across policy areas, as envisioned in the **Pact for the Future** and the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022.

This ambition has now been anchored at the highest level with the appointment in 2024 of **Glenn Micallef** as the **EU's first Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport**. Concrete initiatives are already taking shape: including the consultative process around a forthcoming **EU Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness** (announced in February 2025), and renewed Council Presidency priorities – from Poland's focus on youth inclusion and threats and opportunities of the information landscape, to Denmark's work on a 'solid framework' for youth involvement in future EU programmes related to education, youth and sport.

## Can youth participation renew EU democracy?

While earlier participatory mechanisms already support this agenda (e.g. EU Youth Dialogue since 2010), what is different now is the scale and the ambition. The newly introduced **Youth Policy Dialogues** aim to strengthen youth voices across Commission portfolios and ensure a closer alignment with institutional policy-making processes (with the first one launched on 28 January). Together, these initiatives seek to address **youth disillusionment with democratic institutions**, improve their representation in formal decision-making processes, but also develop **new and stronger bridges** across generations.

This Fourth Democracy Retreat invites you to engage in a frank discussion about how the EU can make youth participation a **genuine force for democratic renewal** and ensure it is not only a 'symbolic consultation'. Strengthening youth participation is an investment in a broader and more **future-oriented vision of European security** to foster trust and social cohesion and mitigate long-term challenges.

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## A dinner with...

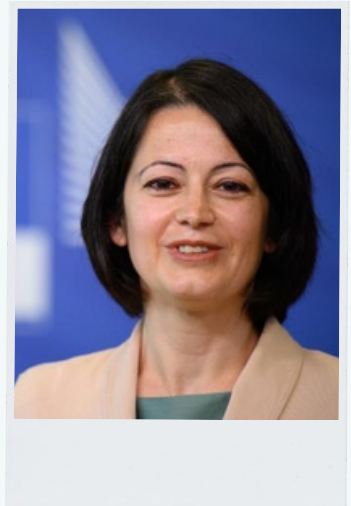


### **Tamàs Szücs**

Special Advisor on Intergenerational Fairness, Directorate-General (DG) for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission

### **Biliana Sirakova**

EU Youth Coordinator, DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission



## In a discussion moderated by



### **Ben Eersels**

Executive Director, G1000

## And in the presence of...

A selected group of participants from policy circles, such as the European Commission, European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the EC's Joint Research Centre, the EESC, the UNESCO Brussels Team, the UN/UNDP Representation, the Flemish Youth Council, the Brussels Parliament and experts in democratic innovations and researchers from youth organisations and sister Horizon projects on democracy.

# Programme At a Glance

This dinner dialogue will be a chance to take stock of these innovations and challenges they encounter, and discuss whether youth participation can serve as a blueprint for wider and deeper democratic innovation throughout the EU.

Our fourth edition will feature a panel discussion followed by inter-table discussions and a moderated dinner discussion, building on our overarching questions:

**What do youth-specific dialogues mean for the broader landscape of participatory democracy in the EU? And can they serve as models for more inclusive governance?**

**How can embedding youth perspectives contribute to the EU's resilience-building, within and beyond the EU's institutions?**

**What safeguarding mechanisms can be implemented to systematically assess and incorporate the interests of future generations in legislative processes?**

**How to address barriers that prevent young people, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds, from fully engaging in policy-making?**

## About Nets4Dem

This Democracy Retreat is organised by Networks of Networks 4 Democracy (Nets4Dem), a Horizon Europe project coordinated by Democracy Reporting International. To enhance and transform the landscape of democracy initiatives, Nets4Dem brings together **more than 200 cities, over 50 think tanks and universities, and dozens of democracy-focused NGOs** across **38 European countries**. Co-organised by the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) and the Egmont Institute, this series of retreats aims to equip stakeholders with cutting-edge **strategies to strengthen and renew democratic processes in Europe**, promote innovative approaches to democratic governance and foster collaboration among policy-makers, practitioners, and democracy researchers.