



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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## YOUNG PEOPLE MEET IN MALTA TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

*On 15 and 16 May, youth and youth ministry representatives from all across the EU met in Malta, following the invitation of the Maltese Presidency and the Deputy Prime Minister, Louis Grech, to discuss the future of the European project beyond the youth field.*

As part of the discussions on the future of Europe, initiated in Bratislava last year, and on the initiative of the European Youth Forum, the Maltese Presidency of the European Union invited young people to discuss the future of Europe and hosted a conference on "Youth for Tomorrow's Europe", in addition to the traditional EU Youth Conference as part of the Structured Dialogue.

This conference took place at a crucial moment as Europe decides on a pathway for a new common vision. Young people cannot be left aside in this debate around the European Commission White Paper on the Future of Europe, the Rome Declaration and beyond.

Kicking off the event, Italian Under Secretary for EU Affairs Sandro Gozi underlined the responsibility of young people to input into the future of Europe, emphasising that nothing about the EU should be taken for granted. He also called for a massive increase in youth investment - upscaling funding by 10 times to programmes benefiting young people, such as Erasmus+.

Participants, representing Member Organisations of the European Youth Forum, highlighted the importance of expanding the reach of youth policy, bringing the voice of young people to all policy areas. Achieving this will depend on the future of the EU Youth Strategy, which will be a key framework in this regard.

Representatives sparked debate on main challenges Europe is facing from many different angles: inclusion, participation, rights, identity and sustainable development. Among other recommendations, representatives underlined the need for more civic education, raising awareness of rights, mainstreaming sustainable development in all policy fields and improving mechanisms of youth participation at all stages and areas of decision-making.

Outcomes of the discussions will be presented to the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council meeting on 22 and 23 May with all EU Ministers and will be disseminated to all relevant stakeholders.

**Luis Alvarado, President of the European Youth Forum:**

“The European Youth Forum welcomes the Maltese Presidency’s initiative that puts young people at the core of the future of Europe debate. This is the way forward. The European project depends on the ideas, ambition and determination of young people to Youth Up our ‘old continent’ and it is essential that we are given the space to unleash this potential.”

**Michael Piccinino, President of the National Youth Council of Malta (KNZ):**

“We must keep pushing to have governments help youth organisations reach more youth on the ground, having signed declarations in some European Capital on their own is not enough. We need governments to help us, provide resources and more if we are to succeed in engaging even more young people.”

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**Notes to editors**

**About the European Youth Forum**

*The European Youth Forum is the platform of youth organisations in Europe. Independent, democratic, youth-led, it represents over 100 National Youth Councils and international youth organisations from across the continent. The Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives, by representing and advocating their needs and interests and those of their organisations towards the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. For more information, visit [www.youthforum.org](http://www.youthforum.org)*

**About KNZ**

*As Malta's National Youth Council, KNZ is an umbrella organisation that represents over 40 youth-led organisations across the country, and directly represents over 20% of it's country's population. KNZ is tasked with providing a forum of dialogue for young people across various topics, whilst aiming to keep the interests of all Maltese and Gozitan youths at heart. KNZ also acts as the official channel of information between the nation's youths and government officials.*