

## Message of the 92nd General Assembly of the German Federal Youth Council

On the occasion of its 92nd General Assembly and the 70th anniversary of its foundation, the German Federal Youth Council met with its numerous partner organisations from Europe and Israel in Berlin on 26th October 2019. For years and decades Youth Councils from 18 countries have been writing stories and history. Together we addressed democratic exchange, mutual tolerance and solidarity. We have come together for an intensive exchange on today's challenges for young people and their associations.

For us

- Shrinking space for civil society and youth,
- Experience Europe: Solidarity with youth in the Western Balkans,
- The political role of Youth Councils in EU Presidencies,
- Sustainable Development Goals,
- Remembrance work: Learning from history,
- Current challenges for youth exchange and international cooperation

are fundamental questions for youth in Europe and Israel for 2020 and the near future. Numerous independent youth organisations in Europe and beyond are facing increased political pressure. Their work is being questioned or transferred to structures close to the government. The Council of Europe and to some extent the European Union with its support programmes often remain the only partners to enable educational and exchange work and to support international networking. 70 years after the Council of Europe was founded, there is a risk that its important future work for democracy and human rights will be weakened.

For all of us, the Council of Europe stands for the dissemination of values such as human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe and beyond. With its Youth Department, the European Youth Centres opened in 1972 (in Strasbourg) and 1995 (in Budapest) and the European Youth Foundation founded in 1972, it remains an indispensable partner for us.

The Council of Europe is a pioneer in the field of youth participation. In no other political institution has youth participation been more active than here. With the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth, all decisions on youth matters are taken jointly by government representatives and young people. Thus youth participation is actively lived – this is unique. Throughout Europe, the Council of Europe is an important source of inspiration and an anchor of hope for young people and youth organisations.

Each Member State regularly chairs the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for six months. Germany will take over the chair in November 2020. In addition, the German Council Presidency in the EU will start in the second half of 2020. On these occasions we expect the Federal Government to support the concerns of independent youth structures – not only in the EU. We appeal to the governments, in particular to the German Federal Government, to send an encouraging message to young people, youth workers and youth organisations in the memberstates: support the recognition and strengthening of independent youth structures and thus comply with the numerous recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to the memberstates of the Council of Europe.

We want to experience Europe and show solidarity. Together, we want to create spaces for civil societies and its youth organisations. As youth councils, we want to be important partners of the EU Council presidencies. Together we want to learn from history and keep memories alive. We want to shape a sustainable Europe and tackle the current challenges in youth exchange and international cooperation.

Berlin, 26th October 2019