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## First Youth Policy Dialogue with Commissioner Glenn Micallef in Athens

# European Commissioner Glenn Micallef visited Athens for his first youth policy dialogue, emphasizing sport and culture as unifying forces and calling for greater empowerment, opportunity, and accessibility for young Europeans.

In a packed room in downtown Athens, European Commissioner Glenn Micallef stood inside the cycle of a diverse crowd of 30 young people across the EU to talk about sports, culture, and inclusion. He later described this as “probably the most colourful room” he had encountered since taking office. And how could it not be?

This was the first [Youth Policy Dialogue](#), which took place in Athens on 28 January 2025. Commissioner Glenn Micallef had been entrusted to “make proposals to make it easier for people, in particular the younger generation, to visit and to make the most of our cultural heritage.”

His message in Athens was clear: Europe must empower its young citizens, bridge societal divides, and ensure that democracy is not just a structure but a shared, lived experience. “It means that you must have a voice. We must have a voice.”



## The Power of Sport and Culture

Speaking from personal experience, Micallef reflected on his early days in a local football club, where the game taught him lessons about teamwork, inclusion, and perseverance. He argued that Europe must embrace this spirit of unity in the face of deepening divisions. Sport and culture, he said, are not just pastimes; they are instruments of cohesion, breaking barriers of class, nationality, and background.

A participant highlighted how access to artistic and cultural expression remains largely concentrated in capitals, a reality that Micallef acknowledged as a challenge the EU must address. “Regions that invest in culture,” he noted, “are richer, more diverse, and more open to new ideas.”

Many young Europeans still find their participation in sports or cultural life determined by their socioeconomic status. “We still face situations where your level of education, your background, your social status could determine your access to sport and culture,” Micallef admitted. If Europe is to thrive, he argued, these activities must be available to all, not just the privileged few.



Micallef pointed to initiatives like Erasmus+ and Creative Europe as evidence of what the EU can achieve when it remains steadfast in its core values—equality, solidarity, respect, and tolerance. These principles, he insisted, should continue to guide Europe’s work. But listening to the voices in the room, it was evident that young people wanted more than programs; they wanted structural change.

In response, the Commissioner promised to consider their feedback on the policies he would implement during his mandate and hoped to create “a movement of young people in the next five years that push forward for change.” For Micallef, the mission is clear: At a time when Europe faces rising extremism and deepening inequalities, sport, and culture must be strengthened, not sidelined. The EU must invest in its youth—not just in words but in action he said, and he concluded with a clear message: “We are stronger when we are one, and when we are a team.”

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Image: European Commission