Motion

#EndTheVeto: Towards a European Democracy capable to act

signed by: JEF Europe (Young European Federalists)

co-signed by:

Recalling that

- The European Youth Forum has already called for a Treaty reform process following up on the Conference on the Future of Europe, leading to a renewed European Union capable of handling an enlarged membership;[1]
- The European Youth Forum has furthermore called for the gradual elimination of unanimity from ordinary decision-making on domestic EU policies and a transition towards Qualified Majority Voting (QMV);
- The European Youth Forum has consistently called for meaningful and diverse youth participation in European decision-making and for young people's contributions to be followed by concrete institutional action;

Recognising that

- The European Union faces geopolitical, democratic, economic, social and environmental challenges that increasingly require common European responses;
- The requirement for unanimity in certain fields such as foreign and security policy allows individual governments to block common European action even where a broad majority exists among Member States;
- Further enlargement towards Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and the Western Balkans makes institutional reform increasingly urgent, while internal EU reform must not become an excuse to delay the accession of candidate countries that fulfil the necessary criteria;

Believes that

- The principle of subsidiarity requires decisions to be taken as close to citizens as possible, while also ensuring that decisions are taken at the level capable of effectively addressing the challenge concerned;
- Moving away from unanimity should therefore strengthen rather than weaken European democracy and must be accompanied by stronger democratic accountability, transparency and parliamentary scrutiny;

[1] https://www.youthforum.org/policy-library/motion-towards-an-enlarged-european-union

- EU enlargement and institutional reform must reinforce each other. A larger Union requires more effective decision-making, while candidate countries must retain a credible path towards full EU membership;

The European Youth Forum therefore calls on

The European Union and its Member States to:

1. Turn the existing commitment to gradually eliminate unanimity into concrete action, progressively replacing unanimity with Qualified Majority Voting in EU decision-making in the Council;
2. Make immediate use of the possibilities available within the existing Treaties to overcome the unanimity requirement, including through the use of passerelle clauses, constructive abstentions and enhanced cooperation;
3. Put on the agenda of the European Council the process of EU Treaty reform, following up on the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe and the European Parliament's proposals for amendment of the Treaties adopted on 22 November 2023, in particular in relation to:
    a. a more bicameral system with fewer deadlocks in the Council, through more decisions by qualified majority voting and the ordinary legislative procedure;
    b. a fully-fledged right of legislative initiative, and a co-legislator role for the European Parliament for the long-term budget;
    c. an overhaul of the rules for the Commission’s composition, including the election of its President with the nomination to be done by the European Parliament and the approval by the European Council, and a mechanism to censure individual Commissioners;
    d. significantly greater transparency in the Council by publishing EU member state positions on legislative issues; and
    e. more say for citizens through an obligation for the EU to create appropriate participatory mechanisms and by giving European political parties a stronger role;
4. Ensure that institutional reforms and enlargement proceed in parallel, so that the accession of new Member States does not increase institutional paralysis while internal reform is not used to delay the accession of candidate countries fulfilling the membership criteria;
5. Create stronger safeguard instruments to ensure that fundamental rights are upheld in all member states, and that such a process be best ruled on by the Court of Justice of the European Union;
6. Guarantee meaningful representation of young people and youth organisations in any future Convention or comparable process on EU Treaty and institutional reform, with clear mechanisms ensuring that their proposals receive political follow-up;

European political parties and their youth organisations to:

9. Develop concrete positions and strategies for overcoming unanimity and strengthening European democratic decision-making;

10. Bring the debate on EU institutional reform into national political spaces, recognising that European reform ultimately also depends on decisions taken by national governments and parliaments;
11. Build political majorities across party lines for European institutional reform, identifying areas of agreement while maintaining a clear commitment to democracy, human rights, the rule of law and meaningful youth participation.

Itself and its member organisations to:

12. Advocate for the gradual elimination of unanimity rules in the Council and transition towards Qualified Majority Voting when engaging with the European institutions and Member States;
13. Facilitate dialogue among its Member Organisations on concrete pathways towards overcoming unanimity, EU Treaty reform, enlargement and the future of European democracy;
14. Advocate for formal and meaningful representation of organised youth civil society in future processes concerning EU institutional and Treaty reform.

Europe's institutional architecture was developed for a different political and geopolitical reality. As the Union prepares for further enlargement today, and faces challenges that no European country can effectively address alone, maintaining decision-making structures that enable individual governments to repeatedly prevent common action is increasingly unsustainable.The question is therefore no longer whether Europe needs to overcome the veto, but how and when this commitment will be translated into political action.

It is time to #EndTheVeto.