

Keynote, YPAC conference 2021, Kantonsschule Trogen

Politics needs the young

Andrea Caroni, Herisau, 20 March 2021

Dear young politicians

My dear colleagues

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this YPAC conference of 2021, and my great pleasure is founded on two reasons :

1. First of all I am amazed by your political engagement and especially by your active participation in the youth parliament of the Alpine convention. When I was your age, I knew so much less about politics than you do now. In fact, I was only just learning how to pronounce the word «**politician**» in English (not **politician**) at this very school.
2. Secondly I am proud that this conference is taking place for the second time in my home canton, the great state of Appenzell Ausserrhoden, which so far has been the only Swiss venue in YPAC history. In 2011 – when I was not even yet in parliament – your predecessors were gathering in Herisau, today you are meeting virtually in Trogen, both in this canton. Since that year 2011 I am representing this great state in the federal parliament, and since you're parliamentarians as well, I salute you as my dear colleagues.

I have two thoughts for you:

1. My first thought: Every political system needs you – the young generation.
2. My second thought: If you want to play your role in politics, you need courage and perseverance – just like the Mars rover by that same name.

My first point: The Swiss national parliament with its two chambers counts 246 seats. 40% of those are occupied by people between 51-60 years of age, who only represent 20% of the population. People between 18-30 years of age also make up 20% of the population, but they are only have 2% of the seats in parliament. I am already 40 years old but the fifth-youngest member of the Swiss senate. I am quite certain that similarly dramatic numbers apply to the other countries of YPAC, from France to Slovenia. The young perspective is therefore vastly missing. Therefore I am glad to see that the next generation is on its way. And I am sure that the children, whose rights you discuss these days, are glad, too, because you also give *them* the voice that they are lacking even more.

My second point: How do the young succeed in politics ? You are yourselves an impressive example. You have come together to form and experience a youth parliament among the Alpine countries. I congratulate you on this committment. And committment is just what young politicians need. Sometime the « adults » applaude and promote young committment, sometimes they don't. In either case I encourage you to let your voice be heard and your actions be seen. For example, you may run for a seat on a municipal committee, you may write online posts or a letter to the editor. Ask your schools for political education and pracice. Join a young party or movement, or

found one yourself (I did that many years ago ; I am too old for them now, but they're still having fun I hear).

There is also scientific groundwork: A Swiss university just published a report on young adults in municipal councils, and the youth parliaments of Eastern Switzerland have recently published a « toolbox » on how to promote young people's political engagement. In 2018 the Swiss Government even published its report, fulfilling a postulate that I had submitted earlier.

Dear colleagues : To become not only a political movement, but a political force, you'll need courage and perseverance. Just like your organization committee is doing so impressively today, use your digital skills and tools – they give you a competitive edge against the older generations with their fax machines.

I wish you a wonderful convention, filled with as much hard work as with fun, because in the end that's what politics is about, too.