

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH (CCJ)

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English only

The Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe calls for an enabling environment for youth participation

The Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) expresses concern over the recent developments in Türkiye, including the restriction of peaceful demonstrations, the narrowing of space for democratic civil society engagement and the reported arrest of elected officials. These developments also affect young people's ability to participate meaningfully in public life and exercise their democratic rights.

Youth organisations play a central role in fostering youth participation, building democratic resilience, and supporting civic dialogue, especially during societally difficult times. Yet, these organisations now operate under heightened scrutiny and the threat of repression, severely limiting their capacity to function effectively and independently. This shrinking civic space for youth actors is particularly concerning, as youth participation is a cornerstone of a healthy and vibrant democratic society.

In this regard, the Advisory Council reaffirms the importance of ensuring that youth organisations, including democratic and representative national structures, can operate freely, independently, and in accordance with Council of Europe values.

The Council of Europe has long championed meaningful youth participation and, more recently, young people's fundamental rights of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, as guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights and reaffirmed in the 2023 Reykjavík Principles for Democracy. These rights are also at the core of several Council of Europe youth policy instruments, including *Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights*, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights* and *Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)6 on protecting youth civil society and young people and supporting their participation in democratic processes*. These instruments call for the development of enabling environments for young people and their organisations to ensure they can participate safely and meaningfully in democratic processes.

The Advisory Council underlines the need for youth civil society to be protected from undue pressure, interference, or parallel institutional structures that may undermine their democratic legitimacy and independence. The existence of a pluralistic, autonomous youth sector is fundamental to the realisation of young people's rights and democratic innovation.

We take note of the decision by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe¹ to undertake further examination of the situation in Türkiye, including through a planned fact-finding visit. In this regard, the Advisory Council encourages such efforts to incorporate the experiences and perspectives of youth organisations working on the ground, including those with a recognised democratic mandate. Listening to the voices of young people and their representative structures is essential to fully understanding the state of civic and democratic space in the country.

Furthermore, we encourage the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe to investigate the situation of youth civic space and the safety of youth organisations and young activists in Türkiye as part of any future assessments or engagements.

¹ [Declaration 12 \(2025\)](#), Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Lastly, the Advisory Council on Youth reaffirms its support for young people and youth organisations in Türkiye and across Europe, committed to promoting human rights and democratic values. Creating and safeguarding space for youth participation is not only a matter of rights; it is a strategic investment in the future of democracy.

The statements of the Advisory Council are published for the purpose of informing the public about the activities of the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe youth sector. The statements reflect the opinions and positions of the Advisory Council and its members. The views expressed therein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council of Europe.