

**ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH****International Youth Day, 12 August 2019**

Today we celebrate International Youth Day, “today, we celebrate the young people, youth-led organizations, Governments and others who are working to transform education and uplift young people everywhere.” — **UN Secretary-General António Guterres**

On 12 August, the United Nations shines a light on young people. This year’s overall theme of the International Youth Day is “Transforming education”. When looking at the figures, it becomes clear why youth should be the centre of attention of society as a whole. Young people under the age of 30 make up almost half of the world’s population. However, they represent fewer than 2% of the world’s lawmakers. More than half of all children and adolescents aged 6-14 lack basic reading and maths skills, even though the majority of them attend school.

This needs to change. The world today is facing tremendous challenges: climate change, urbanisation, digitalisation, growing anti-democratic populist and nationalist movements and an increasing divide between rich and poor globally and locally, to name just a few. All of these challenges will have a huge impact on the future of young people if society fails to involve them. Youth is the catalyst for change and the source for bold, innovative and creative solutions to these problems. Education and support are key in this process.

As the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, we are working on youth-led solutions and support for young people each and every day. Since 1972, the year when the Council of Europe European Youth Centre in Strasbourg and the European Youth Foundation (EYF) were established, we have been at the forefront of innovative youth policies, instruments and participation mechanisms. We promote co-management in decision-making processes at all levels as a good practice for youth participation, democracy and inclusion. The European Youth Foundation finances youth organisations and youth projects all over Europe. Its annual budget of almost four million euros is dedicated only to projects run by, for and with young people: international youth meetings, trainings, campaigns or seminars. It offers both operating grants, allowing youth organisations to function, and project grants, allowing youth organisations to organise shorter-term projects.

In order to tackle the pressing issues of our world today the United Nations has developed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Young people need to be at the heart of each of the 17 goals. Not in the future to come, but right now.

The opinions expressed in this statement are those of the Advisory Council on Youth and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe or its member states.

Watch the United Nations’ video: **[Youth realizing the Sustainable Development Goals](#)**