



## ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH

1 August 2020

*English only*

### **Safeguarding the fundamental freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression for young people on the streets of Europe**

The Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) is concerned by the unrest on the streets in Belgrade and other Serbian cities expressing concerns related to human rights and democracy, in particular as many of those protesting were young people. Similar concerns have been expressed by the Parliamentary Assembly's monitoring co-rapporteurs for Serbia and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

As stated last April by the Council of Europe Secretary General, Marija Pejčinović Burić, when she issued her toolkit for governments across Europe on respecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, "the virus is destroying many lives and much else of what is very dear to us. We should not let it destroy our core values and free societies". At this very challenging time, member states should ensure they safeguard Europe's founding values.

The right to freedom of peaceful assembly is a fundamental right in a democratic society and, like the right to freedom of expression, is one of the foundations of such a society (articles 11 and 10 respectively of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)). Young people have the right to exercise their democratic citizenship by taking part in peaceful assemblies and giving voice to their views. They also should not be submitted to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (article 2 of the ECHR).

As such, the Advisory Council on Youth calls on all Council of Europe member states to adopt a human-rights approach to policing assemblies which is guided by the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination and which adheres to applicable human rights standards. In line with the Guidelines on freedom of peaceful assembly of the Council of Europe Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR, reasonable and appropriate measures should be taken to enable participants to take part in peaceful assemblies without fear of physical violence.

*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.*