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On the International Day for Democracy, the Advisory Council on Youth calls for more efforts to restore and increase confidence in the democratic system in Europe

The sustainability of democratic values and systems relies on the creativity, competencies, social commitment, and contribution of young people as well as on their confidence in the future. However, across Europe we are observing worrying developments in this regard. The prevalence of disinformation has increased over recent years making it more difficult for citizens to form their opinions based on reliable information. New, technology-based means of campaigning, that deliberately spread incorrect information to those receptive to it, amplify the effect of disinformation. At the same time, we see insufficient engagement of states and a lack of resources for civil society to successfully build the capacities needed to recognise and effectively counter the spread of incorrect information. These developments undermine the ability and willingness of people to participate in democratic life and weaken citizens' confidence in democratic institutions. To counteract this, quality public debate must be promoted, inclusive narratives must be at the core of politicians' messages, civil society organisations must be supported and information on political topics must be presented in an accessible and neutral way. The Advisory Council on Youth has started a debate on how to counteract the shrinking space for civil society.

Moreover, young people still struggle to have an equal say in democratic decision-making processes – often due to a lack of political rights – which significantly restricts the inclusivity of the democratic system. The Advisory Council on Youth highly appreciates the Council of Europe's efforts to include young people in decision-making processes and reiterates its importance for the inclusivity and sustainability of the work it does. The Advisory Council on Youth calls upon the Council of Europe member states to intensify efforts to include young people in decision-making processes and endorses the spread of the principles of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life as a tool to promote young people's meaningful contribution to the democratic system.

Young people's confidence in the future, their possibility to enjoy rights and to be agents of change continue to be crucial for the development of a society based on the values of human rights and democracy. To live up to this aim, more human rights education, stronger youth organisations and improved youth work practices are required.

The Advisory Council on Youth therefore calls for the active implementation of the Council of Europe recommendation "Young people's access to rights" and its recently adopted guidelines in all member states. We also reiterate the importance of efforts made to ensure the independence of democratic institutions and call upon member states to ensure sufficient measures are undertaken to restore and increase confidence in the democratic system in order to preserve it for the generations to come.

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.