

NETWORK ON YOUTH AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Summer Universities 2024

“#Fortheculture

of Human Rights and the Rule of Law”

Concept Note

The Network on Youth and Global Citizenship is a partnership facilitated by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe that gathers youth-led organisations, international youth platforms and governmental institutions from different regions in the world. The Network was set up in 2011 as an informal platform of dialogue and multilateral cooperation at interregional level in the youth field.

Every year, **the Network promotes international youth events called “Universities”**. In each “University” several youth-led and youth-oriented organisations have the possibility to run their own activities (trainings, seminars, board meetings...) with a dynamic and participatory approach which encourages networking, cooperation, and peer-to-peer education within a context of intercultural learning.

Every year **the Network on Youth and Global Citizenship proposes a theme** representing the thread that connects all the activities taking place in the framework of the Universities that same year. The plenary sessions and all the other common moments of the University (the “Joint Programme”) explore the annual theme, connecting all partners’ activities and engaging all the participants involved in them.

Towards **a neighbourhood of values and a global youth partnership for development**. The Universities are built around the overarching policy framework of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a transformative agenda and universal call for action that acknowledges the central role of youth to ensure global justice, human rights, sustainable development, and democratic participation. Youth is mentioned in ten areas of the agenda and over a third of the 169 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets. Within this framework, the Universities rely on the added value of the North-South Centre, as part of the Council of Europe, to share expertise and work on human rights, democracy, and rule of law issues of common concern that, in our interdependent societies, are not restricted to Europe.

The UYD is organised in the framework of [iLEGEND III: Intercultural Learning Exchange through Global Education, Networking and Dialogue](#), a Joint programme of the European Union and the Council of Europe: co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. The overall objective of the project is to increase the active engagement of EU member States, candidates, and potential candidate countries’ citizens (in

particular young people) in safeguarding sustainable development and confronting global challenges and inequalities at local and global level.

#Fortheculture of Human Rights and the Rule of Law

Today we witness alarming signs of erosion of the rules-based global order that was established 75 years ago, and that placed human rights at the heart of international relations.

While governments implement regulatory frameworks to combat corruption, violence, and crime, these issues often transcend national borders and are increasingly interconnected worldwide. To ensure the safety, dignity, and human rights of all individuals, many governments are enhancing efforts to uphold the rule of law through public institutions nationally, but also internationally.

International conventions for instance, play a pivotal role in promoting the Rule of Law at the national level and among young people. They set standards, drive legal reforms, strengthen judicial systems, and ensure accountability. Countries that ratify these conventions commit to adhering to these standards, helping to harmonize legal systems globally. This can lead to significant legal reforms and the modernization of legal systems. Furthermore, many international conventions include mechanisms for monitoring and reporting, ensuring that countries are held accountable for their commitments. This fosters transparency and adherence to the Rule of Law.

Taking the example of the Council of Europe, as a European regional organisation for the protection of human rights in Europe, with the European Convention on Human Rights as its main reference, the Council has adopted more than 220 conventions to protect fundamental rights, many of which are open to accession by non-European countries. Instruments such as the Convention on Prevention of Corruption, the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest), the Convention on Data Protection or the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul) help to promote human rights in Europe and beyond.

International conventions can also inspire and support youth-led advocacy and activism. Young people are often at the forefront of movements for social justice and legal reform, driven by the principles enshrined in these conventions. Movements for climate justice, gender equality, and human rights in general, frequently draw on the frameworks provided by international conventions to advance their causes.

It is in this context that education plays a critical role in promoting a culture of human rights and Rule of Law and there is a growing international consensus on the need that that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote human rights, or global citizenship, which is also at the core of education for rule of law¹. The Council of Europe's Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (the Charter) highlight the relevance of this education approach.

¹ SDG 4, target 4.7.

The 2024 University on Youth and Development will focus on the importance of education for human rights and the Rule of Law among young people. This initiative aims to raise awareness among representatives of youth organizations about leveraging international conventions to promote a global culture of human rights and the Rule of Law, especially among young people.

The North-South Centre and the Africa-Europe Youth Cooperation

Key instrument of the external dimension of the [Council of Europe](#), the [North-South Centre](#) serves as a vector for transmitting its values, standards, and tools beyond the European continent through political dialogue, networking, and the implementation of cooperation projects. As an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe, it brings together several European, Middle East and African countries to exchange ideas and take action on shared issues. With decades of expertise in the fields of global education, intercultural dialogue, and youth sector cooperation in Europe and beyond, and a broad geographical mandate with a focus on the Southern Neighbourhood and Sub-Saharan Africa, the NSC, through its institutionalised “quadrilogue” approach, engages high-level representatives from governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities, as well as civil society from different regions of the world to work together on issues of common interest. The forefront role played by civil society, thanks to a robust network of youth organisations, ensures a structured, inclusive, and sustainable participation with a multiplier effect.

With this experience and expertise the NSC is well placed to contribute to the implementation of the [Reykjavik Declaration](#) and contribute to enhance the external dimension of the Council of Europe by disseminating the values and standards of the Council of Europe among the youth, a cornerstone to ensure the sustainability of reforms; develop further and gradually cooperation with Sub-Saharan African countries that demonstrate an interest in the standards of the Council of Europe; act as a facilitating platform for dialogue between Europe and other regions of the world on the priorities of the Council of Europe.