

## ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH (CCJ)

30 May 2025

English only

### CCJ statement on the International Day of the Potato

From the Advisory Council on Youth we would like to make use of the International Day of the Potato to highlight the importance of ensuring that public policies — and democracy itself — reach all territories and respond to the realities of young people in rural areas, including young farmers, who play a vital role in sustaining our communities.

Across Europe, rural youth continue to face structural barriers to accessing rights, services, democratic participation and opportunities, despite their essential contributions to local economies, food systems, cultural heritage, and social cohesion. As the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the social, economic and political participation of rural youth recognises, rural youth have long been marginalised in policymaking, and their experiences must no longer be treated as peripheral.

In some villages, people say — half jokingly, half seriously — that “potatoes don’t come from a factory.” This simple phrase highlights a wider disconnect between urban-based decision-making and the lived experiences of young people cultivating the land. Behind every potato harvest are young people facing limited access to land ownership, housing, financially sustainable and fair sources of income, services and recognition.

As the Recommendation stands for, rural areas must not only be seen from their productive or environmental dimension but also from their cultural, innovative, social and aesthetic ones. Thus, as we are celebrating in 2025 the anniversaries of the Council of Europe’s Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society and the Landscape Convention, the Advisory Council recalls that safeguarding rural heritage also means supporting the communities — especially the youth — in having agency over their own territory and resources.

The Advisory Council on Youth calls on Council of Europe member states and regional authorities to fully implement the Recommendation on Rural Youth as a concrete and timely tool to tackle territorial inequalities, strengthen rural democracy, and enable young people to remain in, return to, and revitalise rural areas.

We remain committed to amplifying the voices of rural youth — including, but not being limited to, young farmers — and to ensuring that their rights, needs, and aspirations are reflected in the Council of Europe’s youth and broader policy agendas.

There can be no truly democratic and inclusive Europe without its rural youth.

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