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Strasbourg, 9 April 2024

### **Consultative meeting**

Improving the accessibility of the European  
Youth Centres and the activities of the  
youth programme of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre, Strasbourg

**19-21 June 2024**

## **CALL FOR EXPERTS**

Deadline for registration: 1 May 2024, 23.59 CET

## CONTEXT OF THE ACTIVITY

The Council of Europe Youth Department has a strong track record of supporting the work of European networks and federations of young people with disabilities, notably through study sessions at the European Youth Centres, co-funding of activities by the European Youth Foundation, and support to youth-led civil society organisations working for equality and independent living. Youth organisations advocating for the rights of young people with disabilities are regularly represented in the Advisory Council on Youth and, consequently, in the co-managed decision-making of the Youth Sector. This is also reflected in the decision of the Joint Council on Youth to have a [Rapporteur on Mainstreaming Disability Issues](#) to support and monitor developments in this area.

The European Youth Centres in Budapest and Strasbourg are educational establishments of the Council of Europe and instruments for the participation of young people in the building of Europe. They are the home of most of the activities in the Youth for Democracy programme and are or aspire to be centres of excellence and innovation for non-formal educational activities with an intercultural dimension. As the venue of activities dedicated to citizenship and human rights education and democratic youth participation, they must be safe and accessible spaces for all young people who want to take part in their activities.

The concern for accessibility and inclusiveness of the centres, and of the activities that they host, has been present ever since the centres were established. Accessibility has notably been at the heart of the major renovations made to the centres in Budapest (2005) and Strasbourg (2008).

The logistical and environmental conditions at the youth centres play an important role in the accessibility of the activities, but other factors are equally important. These include the attitudes of all those involved in activities and the way that the activities are designed and implemented (content, approach, formats ...).

The question of accessibility has been addressed in educational resources developed by the Youth Department. These include [the Manual on Promoting Accessibility of the Training and Education Programme](#) and the [Quality Standards for Education and Training Activities of the Council of Europe Youth Department](#). Ableism, as a challenge to human rights, is addressed in '[Compass](#)', [the Manual on Human Rights Education with Young People](#). This serves as a resource for educators and trainers and includes practical activities and background information on Disability and Disablism.

In recent years, the programme of activities of the European Youth Centres has included activities aimed at enhancing the participation of young deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing and visually impaired people, as well as of young people with mobility challenges or cognitive or intellectual disabilities. Those young people often take the lead in organising and facilitating the activities. This is beneficial for both the youth sector of the Council of Europe and the young people themselves.

Yet, accessibility and inclusiveness are still not sufficiently applied across the whole programme, whether by the Council of Europe Youth Department or by the various stakeholders involved in the activities. Effective accessibility and real equality of access to all human rights in the context of the Council of Europe youth programme requires permanent attention, and specific action on policy and educational practice.

Against this backdrop, and to further the active and effective participation and inclusion of young people with disabilities, the Council of Europe Youth Department has launched a project to enhance the accessibility of its facilities, services, activities, publications and information

resources. This project includes measures to improve the accessibility and safety of the two European Youth Centres and of the Youth Department's communication and educational resources. Furthermore, the Youth Department will organise a consultative meeting on accessibility of the European Youth Centres and the activities of the youth programme of the Council of Europe.

## **ABOUT THE CONSULTATIVE MEETING**

The Consultative Meeting will bring together an interdisciplinary group of expert stakeholders with real life experience of the accessibility challenges, concerns and needs of young people with disabilities. The aim will be to build comprehensive understanding of such, and of the implications for the European Youth Centres and the youth programme of the Council of Europe, with the view to agreeing on a plan for improving accessibility.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the meeting are to

- jointly reflect on the needs of young people with disabilities and the challenges they may face when engaging with the Council of Europe youth programme and the European Youth Centres, be that in the context of participation in activities (including online or hybrid activities), in the context of using publications or websites, or in any other Youth Department context;
- make proposals for ensuring more fully inclusive, supportive and accessible environments and conditions for young people with disabilities to be able to take a full and active part in the activities of the European Youth Centres;
- identify policy measures and action to further enhance and promote the equal access to rights of young people with disabilities in the Council of Europe youth programme, and the wider activities of the European youth sector.

The meeting will

- map the needs and challenges of young people with disabilities in accessing and using the Council of Europe youth programme;
- consider inclusive language/terminology and its role in supporting inclusion and equality;
- assess existing barriers to participation in activities (in-person and online) and explore tools or measures to overcome such (e.g., assistive technology devices/applications for learning purposes interpreting, captioning, translation, accessible media, equipment, loop system, etc.);
- assess existing barriers to accessing publications and websites and identify tools or measures to overcome such (translation, software, accessible digital content, equipment, etc.);
- review the recommendations of the [Consultative Meeting on Inclusion of Young People with Disabilities in Youth Activities of the Council of Europe](#) and update as necessary;
- discuss the possible content of an action plan to achieve improved accessibility of the Youth Department's programme of activities.

The meeting will review existing practices and standards and take into account the results and recommendations of studies currently being carried out about facilities, services, activities, publications and information resources of the Council of Europe Youth Department.

## PARTICIPANTS

The consultative meeting will bring together up to approximately 30 experts representing a wide range of stakeholders engaged with/representing young people with disabilities, or working on accessibility of youth programmes and activities, including:

- youth and civil society organisations working with or advocating for rights of young people with disabilities;
- youth and civil society organisations implementing programmes, research on accessibility and inclusiveness, or related fields;
- representatives of the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe Youth Department;
- service providers and educators actively engaged in the work of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and involved in the activities and services provided by the European Youth Centres.

## PRACTICAL AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The meeting will start at **09:30 on Wednesday 19 June and finish at 13:00 on Friday 21 June 2024**. A detailed daily programme is under preparation and will be sent to the meeting participants in due time.

Travel expenses and visa fees for accessing Strasbourg will be reimbursed according to the rules of the Council of Europe for expert travel.

Board and lodging for the seminar will be provided and paid for by the Council of Europe at the European Youth Centre.

The European Youth Centre Strasbourg is accessible to people with disabilities and can take additional measures to accommodate specific needs of participants in this respect. Please provide all the necessary information in your registration form.

The working languages of the meeting will be **English, French and International Sign Language**, with simultaneous interpretation.

## REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

To express your interest in participating in the Consultative Meeting, please fill in the online Registration Form no later than **Wednesday, 1 May 2024, 23:59 CET**.

The Council of Europe secretariat may pre-select and prioritise participants in view of complying with the available financial resources, securing diversity and representation of various stakeholders and areas of expertise as well as geographical representativity of the whole group.

The Council of Europe welcomes applications from all candidates who fulfil the specific profile of the activities, irrespective of sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic or social origin, disability, religion or belief.

## FURTHER ENQUIRIES

If you need more information about the meeting and or technical assistance with the registration form uploaded at the Council of Europe Youth Department platform, please contact: [eyc.programme@coe.int](mailto:eyc.programme@coe.int).