



DFD-YD/ETD (2025) 132

Strasbourg, 10 July 2025

World Forum for Democracy 2025

Democracy at risk: how can we revive it?

YOUTH DELEGATION IN THE WORLD FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY

Strasbourg, 3-7 November 2025
European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, France

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

Deadline: 04 August 2025

About the World Forum for Democracy

The [World Forum for Democracy](#) is an annual gathering of policy-makers, academics, activists, youth representatives and democracy innovators, in the Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg (France).

The Forum serves as a unique platform for political decision-makers and activists to debate solutions to key challenges for democracies worldwide. By identifying and analysing experimental initiatives and practices, the Forum highlights and encourages democracy innovations at the grassroots and their transfer on a systemic level to strengthen the foundations of democratic societies. The Forum thus contributes to the evolution of democracy towards more participatory and inclusive structures and institutions.

Organised on an annual basis, the programme of the Forum features inspirational talks by thought leaders. Breakaway sessions and creative workshops will challenge proposed new solutions and identify ideas worth spreading. Moreover, the Forum will actively foster the creation of networks and communities of practice, serving as incubators for turning ideas into action.

The Forum contributes to the implementation of the Reykjavik Principles of Democracy adopted by the Heads of State and Government of Council of Europe member states at their [Fourth Summit in Reykjavik](#) in May 2023.

The 2025 Forum: Democracy at risk: how can we revive it?

According to global survey data citizens are increasingly dissatisfied with democracy for reasons which include, inter alia, the growing economic inequality, the seismic shifts in technology, and the feeling that citizens' voices are ignored. The lack of trust in democratic institutions and processes undermines democratic legitimacy, stability and resilience to external and internal threats. When citizens are no longer invested in democracy, they may gradually withdraw from voting and other forms of participation in civic life, leaving the fundamental freedoms that underpin democratic institutions increasingly vulnerable. This vulnerability creates an environment in which populists and autocrats have greater latitude to weaken institutional checks and balances, undermine constitutional protections, and restrict freedoms such as freedom of expression and association. These actions further weaken the democratic culture necessary for safeguarding public authorities' accountability and pluralism, entrenching autocrats' hold on power.

Journalism, arts, and culture are essential elements of democratic resilience, serving as vital channels for pluralism, inclusiveness, and public engagement. Quality journalism and creative pursuits contribute to a deeper understanding of societal realities, help shape values and perspectives relevant to political choices, and enable informed public participation. However, these actors are often among the first targets of authoritarian regimes which further undermines the pluralistic and informed public debate and democratic opposition.

In addition, advanced digital technologies such as AI can enable autocrats to use sophisticated forms of (electoral and other) manipulation, disinformation campaigns, and the amplification of divisive and polarising content. Large technology companies and social media platforms have significant power to determine what users access on these platforms; they can limit exposure to diverse viewpoints and create a narrow version of reality for their users, driven by their owners' corporate interests or external pressures such as the demands of autocratic regimes. Moreover, the business models of large social media and other platforms reward engagement above all else and incentivise the spread of polarising content. These issues underline the need for platforms

to be better aligned with democratic values also because these same platforms, if effectively governed, have immense potential to process information efficiently, support complex participatory processes, amplify reliable information, and help build more cohesive and resilient societies.

Young people are the most active users of digital platforms but also are, in many societies, a demographically declining group which raises many questions about ways in which their participation in, and influence in democratic institutions and processes, can be reinforced, and how their engagement can help safeguard democratic freedoms.¹

The role of the “youth delegation”

The Council of Europe youth sector aims at enabling young people across Europe to actively uphold, defend, promote and benefit from the Council of Europe’s core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Youth for Democracy programme reflects this in four work priorities:

- Youth revitalising democracy
- Young people’s access to rights
- Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies
- Youth work

The Reykjavik Declaration strengthened the role of youth policy by including a youth perspective in the Organisation’s intergovernmental and other deliberations. This dimension is in addition to the principle of youth participation in decision-making which the Council of Europe has been implementing in its co-managed youth sector for more than 50 years. The Reykjavik Declaration demands a youth perspective and youth participation in decision-making processes in public policies and democratic institutions in general. The youth perspective should include:

- *Thinking* with youth
- *Learning* from and with youth
- *Participating* with youth
- *Acting* with youth and for youth

The World Forum for Democracy is not just a platform for discussion but a call to action. As an annual gathering of policymakers, academics, activists, youth representatives and democracy innovators, in the Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg, it contributes to the implementation of the [Reykjavik Principles of Democracy](#).

The participation of a youth “delegation” in the Forum is rooted in the history of youth participation and of the inclusion of a youth perspective in the work of the organisation and of the Forum itself. The role of young people and youth civil society organisations in contributing to the revitalising of democracy has been recently most visible in the campaign [Democracy Here, Democracy Now](#) as expressed in the Call for Action, and in the youth event [Confidence in Tomorrow](#) organised on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe.

Youth participation in the World Forum for Democracy is widely recognised as essential. The ideas shared and generated during the Forum represent a valuable contribution, with young people speaking on their own behalf, sharing perspectives, proposing solutions, and enriching breakout sessions and discussions with youth perspective lens.

To support this, the Youth Department has, for several years, organised the composition and preparation of the youth delegation.

¹ [Concept note of the World Forum for Democracy 2025](#)

The participants of the youth delegation will gather at the European Youth centre in Strasbourg two days before the start of the Forum to learn about the Council of Europe and its work with youth, to get to know each other, to develop their ideas, work together and prepare for the Forum. During this time, participants will be well informed about the setting of the Forum, about the programme with its different formats, where they will be invited to choose their preferred side events for attending.

During the Forum, the youth participants will join the Plenary sessions in hemicycle of Palais de l'Europe and will be actively engaged in different breakaway sessions, creative workshops and side events. Participants may be given roles in different breakaway sessions, creative workshops and side events according to their interests and competences (rapporteurs, discussants, moderators, etc.).

Altogether, the youth delegates should be active partners and contributors to the Forum, bringing in their own ideas and experiences. Beyond the breakaway sessions, creative workshops and side events, the participants may organise parallel activities to make their voices heard and present their visions on democracy.

Timeline of the 2025 Youth Delegation				
September-October	2 November	3-4 November	5-7 November	8 November
Preparations	Arrival of participants	Preparation of Youth Delegation	Participation in the World Forum programme	Departure of participants
Online	European Youth Centre Strasbourg (EYCS)		Headquarters and EYCS	

Objectives of the activity

The organisation and participation of the youth delegation in the World Forum for Democracy pursues the following objectives:

- To secure a meaningful participation of youth leaders and young people in all the aspects of the World Forum for Democracy
- To promote a youth perspective in the work of the Forum, on matters related to democracy at a risk
- To identify and share current trends, concerns and priorities of young people across the globe regarding democracy, and the challenges it faces
- To enhance intercultural dialogue and cooperation by young people within a framework of democratic participation and human rights.

Profile of the youth participants

The youth delegation will bring together up to 50 participants who reflect the diversity of young people around the world and offer a wide range of perspectives on democracy, including those already engaged in finding solutions and developing ideas to revive democratic systems where they are at risk.

Note: Special consideration will be given to applicants who are recognised within the Council of Europe's youth sector for their active involvement in promoting democracy and youth activism.

To be selected and participate in the World Forum for Democracy 2025, the youth applicants must be:

- Between 18 and 30 years of age;
- Able to communicate and work in English;
- Actively involved in youth organisations or other civil society organisations working with young people on issues reviving democracy via new creative solutions;
- Motivated to share their experiences on democracy and to contribute to developing new ideas on reviving it;
- Available to participate fully in the World Forum for Democracy 2025 and in the preparation process beforehand (i.e. online preparation and onsite presence in Strasbourg arriving on 2 November and departing on 8 November).

This selection process ensures a balanced representation of youth delegates, reflecting diverse world regions, with a focus on participants from Council of Europe member states and giving priority to applicants with prior experience in Youth Department activities which help build on existing engagement and strengthens the network.

The Council of Europe welcomes applications from all candidates who fulfil the above-mentioned profile, irrespective of gender, disability, marital or parental status, racial, ethnic or social origin, colour, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

Application procedure and selection of participants

It is in the interest of applicants to provide complete information, especially about their involvement with the issues of democracy. The secretariat of the Council of Europe uses AI-recognition software; applicants are strongly advised *not to* make use of artificial intelligence software in filling in their applications.

The selection committee may organise interviews or other forms of enquiring further about the applicants. The selection will also consider balance between genders, geographical regions, as well as different types of experiences, organisations, institutions and projects.

A waiting list may be established. Candidates will be informed around mid-September 2025 if their application has been accepted or rejected, and if they have been put on the waiting list.

Working language

The common working language of the event will be English. Candidates must be able to use English independently to be able to work and communicate efficiently.

Financial and practical conditions of participation

All selected participants should arrive on 2 of November and depart on 8 of November. The preparation programme for the Youth Delegation is obligatory for all selected participants and will take place on 3 and 4 November at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg prior to the beginning of the Forum on the 5th of November 2025.

Travel expenses

Travel expenses and visa costs will be reimbursed upon presentation of the relevant receipts, according to the rules of the Council of Europe. Only the participants who attend the entire event (pre-Forum preparation and World Forum for Democracy) can be reimbursed. The payment will be made by bank transfer after the Forum. Prepaid tickets for travel can be arranged in case prior request.

Accommodation

Board and lodging are provided and paid for by the Council of Europe **during the dates of the activity** (arrival on 2 November and departure on 8 November 2025). Participants will be accommodated at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg.

The youth centre is accessible to young people with disabilities and ready to adapt to young people's special needs to ensure full inclusion and quality working conditions.

Deadline for applications

The application form must be completed online before **04 August 2025, 23:59 CET**.

Potential applicants are strongly advised to apply well in advance before the deadline to check that their registration is complete and to solve any possible technical problems. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Application form: <https://forms.office.com/e/PmjZg203c6>

In case of technical problems with the use of the platform, please send an e-mail to youthapplications@coe.int, before 16:00 CET, on 04 August 2025.

For any further inquiries, please contact WFDYouth@coe.int, before 16:00 CET, on 04 August 2025.