

**DEMOCRACY
HERE NOW**



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Strasbourg, 22 May 2023

Seminar

**The role of local youth councils
in strengthening democracy**

27-29 June 2023

European Youth Centre, Strasbourg

Rationale

Call for participants

Deadline: 5 June 2023, 14:00 CET

Rationale

Initiated by the Joint Council on Youth, the youth campaign [Democracy Here | Democracy Now](#) aimed to restore the mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions and processes, focusing on three key themes: access to rights, meaningful youth participation and digitalisation.

The campaign placed an emphasis on activities to be organised at local and national level and had a democratic approach. Young people, youth civil society and other stakeholders in the youth sector explored the challenges of the democratic system at local and national level, particularly for young people, identified proposals for action and tested interventions. The work at national level was supported by national contact points, nominated by the member states, and with the role to mobilise and coordinate the campaign at national level. Several national campaigns are still running activities in the end of 2022 and in 2023.

To support the work of youth organisations for democracy, the European Youth Foundation supported the implementation of 34 pilot activities and 7 international activities in the framework of a special call. The projects are being implemented until the end of the 2022 and cover all three of the campaign's themes.

The flagship activity of the campaign and of the 50th anniversary of the youth sector was the Youth Action Week: Democracy Now! that took place in Strasbourg between 28 June and 1 July 2022. The Youth Action Week brought together 450 participants from Europe and beyond (Canada, Morocco, Tunisia and Palestine), many of whom were attending their first Council of Europe activity. The Week was organised with the patronage of the Irish Presidency of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers and in partnership with the City of Strasbourg, the European Youth Forum, and in co-operation with the World Forum on Democracy. The Youth Action Week resulted in a [Call for action comprising 50 priority actions](#) addressed by the participants to young people, youth civil society, the member states and the Council of Europe to be implemented in the framework and follow-up of the campaign.

In October 2022, the Joint Council on Youth adopted a proposal for a follow-up project to the campaign, building on the results achieved in 2022 and to be implemented between October 2022 and December 2023.

The follow-up project remains grounded in the Youth sector strategy 2030 which defines revitalising democracy as one of the key priorities and takes into account the changes in the political, social and economic context in Europe since the beginning of 2022: ongoing war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the economic and social crisis, the consistent decline of trust of citizens in democratic institutions and processes all over Europe, as well as the persistent challenges faced by youth civil society.

The project aims to continue to strengthen the mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions and processes.

The project objectives are:

- ✓ To provide support to young people, youth civil society and national and local authorities to uphold and expand the standards and practices of democratic youth participation, particularly at local and national levels.
- ✓ To develop and support activities of democratic citizenship and human rights education that respond to the current challenges faced by democratic systems (e.g. the need to develop digital citizenship competences) and integrate new developments (i.e. digital participation).

- ✓ To raise awareness of the barriers to youth participation, particularly the discrimination and racism faced by minority youth, and advocate for equality and inclusion of all young people.

The Call for Action first proposal is that:

“Independent a youth-led youth councils should be created and supported in every municipality in every Council of Europe member state. Participation in decision-making is a cornerstone of democracy and human rights.”

The Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life remains the key reference in respect to youth participation at local level. The Charter preamble defines that youth participation is about:

“having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society. [so called RMSOS model]”

The ways in which local youth participation is organised (or not) at local level in the Council of Europe member states varies greatly. Some countries have national laws that require the existence of a youth council in every municipality, in others it depends on each municipality to organise it, the overall picture being even more complicated by questions of age range of young people involved in local youth councils, representativity and ways of composing the local youth councils, the mandate, the level of independence, the support it receives.

The creation of independent youth-led youth councils in the member states is dependent on both political will and competence and capacity of the local authorities, as well as of the young people and their civil society. In this context, the Youth Department of the Council of Europe organises a seminar to learn from already existing experiences and initiatives as a first step to the implementation of the Call for Action.

Aim and objectives of the seminar

The seminar aims to support learning and sharing from the different experiences of local youth councils in strengthening democracy at local level in Europe and to develop proposals that will support both local authorities and the youth sector of the Council of Europe to further strengthen local youth participation.

The objectives of the seminar are:

- To review existing standards for local youth participation at European, national and local level;
- To share and learn from different European projects/initiatives addressing local youth participation;
- To share and learn from different forms of local youth councils with a view to identify good practices in respect securing the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and the support necessary for youth participation;
- To review the role and function of local youth councils in the broader landscape of youth participation at local, national and European level;
- To further develop proposals for follow-up in the framework of the Council of Europe work, notably the Youth for Democracy programme and the Youth revitalising democracy project, to strengthen local youth councils and local youth participation.

Programme and methodology

The programme of the activity is being developed and will be shared with participants. The activity is conceived to be an experience of participatory approaches characteristic to non-formal education and youth work. The programme will feature both plenary sessions, networking and sharing practices moments, as well as planning working groups around the key elements of the follow-up project.

Participants' profile and selection

The seminar will bring together approximately 30 participants. All the interested candidates must fulfil the following profile:

- Be resident in a Council of Europe member state.
- Be able to attend the activity for its entire duration.
- Be able to communicate independently in English or French.
- Aged between 18 and 30 years, exceptions can be made if justified.
- Be motivated to be involved in the follow-up of the campaign and of the seminar and be in a position to do so.
- Belong to one of the following categories:
 - o Representatives in local youth councils and/or associations/networks of local youth councils
 - o Representatives of local authorities or associations of municipalities either supporting local youth councils or interested in developing a local youth council
 - o Representatives of youth groups, youth organisations, youth centres, or civil society with work relevant on the key themes of the follow-up project.
 - o Representatives of national and local authorities with responsibilities concerning youth participation.
 - o Current and former youth delegates to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

Application form

All interested candidates should duly complete the application form at <https://youthapplications.coe.int> by **5 June 2023, 14:00 CET**.

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

Practical aspects

Board, lodging and venue

The conference will take place at the [European Youth Centre Strasbourg](#), where participants will also be accommodated and have meals.

Travel

Travel costs will be reimbursed for all participants in the conference via bank transfer after the activity, provided the rules of the Council of Europe are duly respected. Participants are expected to arrive on 26 June and depart on 30 June 2023.

Language

The conference will take place in English and French with simultaneous interpretation.

Further information

For further information, please contact the secretariat at youthdemocracy@coe.int