



Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe

Youth Strategy

(adopted by the General Assembly on 16 October 2024)

and Appendix "Proposal for implementation programme" (2024-2025)

Engaging, Connecting and Empowering Youth Through Participation

Overview:

Youth participation and active citizenship are crucial components of democratic societies, as emphasized in various international treaties and conventions. According to François Audigier, citizenship involves more than just rights and duties; it encompasses membership and identity within groups, requiring an ethical and emotional commitment. The engagement of young people in political and social processes is vital, as it enriches decision-making with their unique perspectives.

However, youth participation faces challenges such as differing legal definitions of "youth," socio-economic barriers, and varying cultural contexts. To overcome these, initiatives must ensure that young people are genuinely involved in decision-making processes, supported in their civic activities, and recognised as active contributors to society.

This aligns with the CINGO Youth Strategy and Program's objectives to engage, connect, and empower young people, fostering active citizenship and democratic participation. Youth participation is a cornerstone for the thriving of democracy, the rule of law, and the advancement of human rights. Engaging young people in civic activities and decision-making processes not only strengthens democratic institutions but also fosters a culture of active citizenship.

According to the Council of Europe, democracy requires the active involvement of all citizens, including the youth, to ensure diverse perspectives are considered in the governance process. Moreover, youth participation contributes to the development of a vibrant civil society, which is essential for the protection and promotion of human rights. The participation of young people in political processes enhances the legitimacy of democratic institutions by reflecting the voices and needs of a significant segment of the population. Additionally, engaging youth in law-making and policy implementation processes ensures that legal frameworks remain responsive and relevant to contemporary societal issues. Empowering young people to exercise their rights and responsibilities fosters a sense of belonging and commitment to democratic values.

Therefore, initiatives like the CINGO Youth Strategy and Program play a crucial role in promoting active citizenship, enhancing democratic engagement, and safeguarding human rights by ensuring the meaningful inclusion of youth in all aspects of societal development.

The CINGO Youth Strategy and Program aims to engage, connect, and empower young people across Europe and beyond, fostering active citizenship and participation in the digital era. The program includes a series of panels and initiatives designed to bring youth together, enhance their skills, and promote civic engagement. CINGO Youth Strategy and program is a program consisting of 3 main sessions: Engage, Connect and Empower the young people through civil society to increase the active citizenship participation in young people.

Target Group: Decision-makers, Young People, Youth Workers, and Researchers

The CINGO Youth Strategy and Programme strives to:

- Enable young people to be architects of their own lives, build their resilience and equip them with life skills to cope in a changing world.
- Encourage young people to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change for communities across Europe, inspired by EU values and a European identity.
- Help prevent youth social exclusion.
- Improve the impact of policy decisions on young people through dialogue and addressing their needs across sectors.

Reaching out to all young people: it should strive to improve the prospects of all young people regardless of their background or social status.

Straddling levels from global to local: young people are committed to address global challenges, particularly the sustainable development goals. Conversely, youth empowerment starts at the grassroots level and depends on the diverse situation of young people. EU youth cooperation should better connect with policy makers and practitioners at regional and local level and encourage grassroots initiatives by youth.

Digital Revolution: digital technologies have revolutionised young people's lives in many ways and policies need to consider both opportunities and challenges, by tapping the potential of social media, equipping youth with digital skills, and fostering critical thinking and media literacy.

ENGAGE: Fostering youth participation in civil society.

Main Goals of Engaging:

- Stepping up youth participation in democratic life including access to quality information validated by trusted sources and promoting participation in European and other elections.
- Supporting 'learning to participate' and raising interest in participatory actions across.
- Promoting dialogue and participatory mechanisms at all levels of decision-making, paying special attention to feedback mechanisms and outreach to youth with diverse backgrounds.
- Encouraging social and civic engagement of young people including participation in youth organisations or online activism.
- Exploring innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation.

CONNECT: Bringing young people together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity, and intercultural understanding. Young people in Europe are getting more and more connected.

Connections, relations, and exchange of experience are a pivotal asset for solidarity and the future development of the human rights, democracy, and law.

This connection is best fostered through different forms of mobility and intercultural learning.

Main Goals of Connecting:

- Increasing participation in cross-border learning mobility and solidarity with an emphasis on those with fewer opportunities.
- Encouraging young people's engagement in solidarity: Promoting support schemes and capacity-building of organisations active in this area, raising awareness of opportunities, and providing information about rights and benefits when volunteering or in a civic service.
- Promoting recognition of volunteering experiences and validation of learning outcomes: the skills that volunteers develop deserve to be recognised in the labour market, besides the intrinsic value volunteering brings to society.

EMPOWER: Supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation, and recognition of youth work. Youth work brings unique benefits to young people in their transition to adulthood, providing a safe environment for them to gain self-confidence, and learn in a non-formal way. Youth work is known for equipping youth with key competences and skills such as teamwork, leadership, intercultural competences, project management, problem solving and critical thinking. In some cases, youth work is the bridge into education, training, or work, thus preventing exclusion. To reap these benefits, there is a greater need for recognition of non-formal learning through youth work, especially beneficial to those with little formal qualifications, to improve employability and entrepreneurial skills.

Main Goals of Empowering:

- Supporting mutual learning and evidence building on digital youth work, youth worker skills and financing of youth work.
- Promoting recognition: to underpin the value of youth work for those young people involved in it, appropriate and accepted recognition tools will be developed in line with the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning and the agenda on skills development.
- Reaching out to all young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities: youth work has a unique potential to reach out to the most vulnerable ones and address their individual needs.

Important Dates for Youth Participants of the CINGO:

- World Forum for Democracy (November)
- 5th December International Volunteering Day
- 27th February World NGO Day
- 12th August International Youth Day
- CINGO General Assemblies (April and October)

Appendix

Proposal for implementation Programme (2024-2025)

July 2024:

- Finalise the project's framework and identify key participants and stakeholders.
- Publicise the project through various channels, including social media, websites, and newsletters.

August 2024:

- Kick-off Event, setting the stage for the year's activities.
- Youth Summit preparation for the CINGO October General Assembly.
- Begin workshops and training sessions.

September 2024:

- Continue workshops, training sessions, and youth-led initiatives.
- Host Intergenerational Dialogue Forums, fostering inclusive discussions.

October 2024:

- Review and assess the project's progress, gathering feedback from participants and stakeholders.
- Adjust the project's direction and activities as needed.
- CINGO General Assembly and Youth Summit

November 2024:

- Report findings and recommendations to the Standing Committee.
- Plan actions for the next year, including new initiatives and collaborations.
- Attending World Forum for Democracy

December 2024:

- Evaluation and planning for 2025 schedule.
- Continue implementing the project, expanding initiatives and collaborations.
- Regularly assess and communicate progress to the Standing Committee.

February 2025: 27th February 2025 World NGO Day at the Council of Europe

Event: Round Table Meeting on Sustainable and Social Impact Civil Societies

Theme: Strengthening Sustainability in Civil Society Organisations

Overview: In celebration of World NGO Day, this roundtable will bring together civil society organisations and experts to discuss strategies for building sustainable and socially impactful organisations. The event will focus on how NGOs can

increase their long-term impact, ensure financial stability, and adapt to changing societal needs. CINGO members will have the opportunity to reflect on their current practices and explore new ways to foster sustainability in their initiatives.

Guest Speakers tbc

March 2025: Round Table with CINGO Youth Organisations

Event: Youth Strategy and Needs Reflection Session

Theme: Empowering Youth Organisations Voices with Cooperation

Overview: This roundtable will bring together representatives from various CINGO youth organisations to reflect on the youth strategy and identify key needs for young people in today's global landscape. Attendees will engage in discussions about the importance of youth leadership, opportunities for greater involvement in decision-making processes, and potential improvements to CINGO's youth-oriented initiatives. Feedback from this event will be used to enhance CINGO's long-term youth strategy.

March 2025: CINGO SC Members' Visit to Brussels Youth Centre

Event: Youth Centre visits and Workshops with ATD, INGLO and KIYO

Theme: Youth Empowerment through Hands-On Collaboration

Overview: CINGO SC members will visit a youth centre in Brussels for a day of workshops and collaborative activities with local youth organisations, including ATD, INGLO, and KIYO. The focus will be on skill development, leadership training, and exploring creative ways for youth to engage in social and civic matters. These workshops will give young people the opportunity to learn from experienced leaders while sharing their ideas on how to shape a more inclusive and supportive society.

April 2025: 7-9 April CINGO General Assembly

Event: Presentation of Youth Activities and Future Plans

Theme: Celebrating Youth Contributions to Global Change

Overview: During the CINGO General Assembly, the youth sector will present its activities and discuss future initiatives aimed at increasing youth involvement in CINGO's mission. The assembly will highlight successful youth projects, share insights from previous engagements, and outline the upcoming priorities for enhancing youth participation in international development and social innovation.

April 2025: 10 April CINGO Youth Event

Event: Youth-Driven Solutions for Global Challenges

Theme: Innovating for a Sustainable Future

Overview: This youth-led event will provide a platform for young leaders from across the CINGO network to present innovative solutions to global challenges, including climate change, human rights, and economic inequality. Participants will have the chance to showcase their projects, exchange ideas, and network with international organisations, fostering collaboration and inspiring new approaches to tackling these pressing issues.

May 2025: Field Visit to Turkey (Earthquake-Affected Cities)

Event: Engaging with Earthquake-Affected Youth in Turkey

Theme: Rebuilding Communities through Youth Empowerment

Overview: CINGO Standing Committee members will visit earthquake-affected cities in Turkey to connect with young people impacted by the disaster. This visit will focus on understanding their experiences, providing psychosocial support, and empowering them to take part in rebuilding their communities. Workshops and community activities will be organised to help the youth develop practical skills and resilience as they navigate the post-disaster recovery process.

August 2025: 12th August 2025 International Youth Day

Event: Celebration of the International Youth Day

Conclusion

Youth participation is indispensable for the vitality of democracy, the robustness of the rule of law, and the promotion of human rights. As outlined by the Council of Europe, involving young people in civic and political processes ensures that governance is inclusive and reflective of diverse societal needs. By empowering youth to actively engage in decision-making, we not only enhance the legitimacy and responsiveness of democratic institutions but also cultivate a generation of informed and committed citizens.

The CINGO Youth Strategy and program exemplifies the potential of structured youth engagement to foster active citizenship, bridge the gap between young people and policymakers, and address contemporary challenges through innovative solutions. Such initiatives are crucial in creating a culture where young people are not merely future leaders but active participants in shaping the present and future societal landscape.

The Youth Strategy and program seeks to empower and engage young people, providing them with the tools, support, and platform needed to contribute meaningfully to society. Through workshops, training sessions, and collaborations, the project aims to create a diverse and inclusive network, fostering dialogue and

youth-led initiatives. Consequently, promoting youth participation is essential for the continuous development and reinforcement of democratic values, legal integrity, and human rights protections.