

**DEMOCRACY  
HERE NOW**



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# Training course Young activists for democracy

European Youth Centre, Strasbourg  
Residential seminar: **28 May – 4 June 2023**

Online learning: 20 April – 20 June 2023

**Call for participants**  
**Deadline: 6 April 2023, 14:00 CET**

The Council of Europe Youth Department runs a project entitled [Youth revitalising democracy](#), that follows-up on the results of its 2022 youth campaign *Democracy Here | Democracy Now*. The project aims to restore the mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions and processes. It involves activities at European and national level, organised with the support of partner national authorities and youth civil society, advocating for increased political youth participation through lowering the voting age at 16 and for the implementation of the Council of Europe recommendation [CM/Rec\(2022\)6 on protecting youth civil society and young people, and supporting their participation in democratic processes](#).

In this framework, the Youth Department organises a training course for young activists for democracy with a view to develop the competences of young activists in advocating for revitalising democracy and to create a group that further supports advocacy actions at European and national level in the framework of the project.

All those interested are requested to read further the call for participants and apply online by 6 April 2023 at <https://youthapplications.coe.int/>

## The Project Youth revitalising democracy

The youth campaign *Democracy Here | Democracy Now* was run by the Council of Europe in 2022 as a response to the challenges face by democracies in Europe: rise of populism, *demotatorships*, shrinking space for civil society, economic and social crises, war against Ukraine, all contributing to a climate where young people fear retribution when exercising freedom of expression and, at the same time, “show a high degree of political interest but a low degree of engagement with essential democratic processes”<sup>1</sup>. The campaign involved national campaigns in 27 member states, more than 50 projects and initiatives implemented with the support of the European Youth Foundation and partners. The flagship activity of the campaign, the [Youth Action Week: Democracy Now!](#), brought together 450 young activists in Strasbourg, and resulted in a [Call for Action](#) with 50 proposed actions to be taken by young people, youth civil society, member states and the Council of Europe. The Call for Action was further endorsed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Following the success of the *Democracy Here | Democracy Now* youth campaign, the Joint Council on Youth decided in October 2022 to continue the work initiated through a follow-up project, *Youth revitalising democracy*, and keeping *Democracy Here | Democracy Now* as its slogan.

Building up on the [Call for Action](#) that resulted from the Youth Action Week, the follow-up project aims to restore the mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions and processes. Its specific 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;

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<sup>1</sup> State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law – A democratic renewal for Europe, Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, 2021, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/secretary-general/reports>

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

The project is run in partnership with national authorities responsible for youth and youth civil society active at European, national and local levels. The implementation of the project is overseen by a Follow-up Group composed of representatives of the Advisory Council on Youth, the European Steering Committee for Youth, and the European Youth Forum.

The project covers several areas of advocacy to strengthen youth participation in processes for revitalising democracy:

- Political participation of young people:
  - lowering the voting age at 16;
  - increasing the number of young candidates in election for public office.
- Strengthening youth participation beyond elections:
  - implementing the recommendation CM(2022)6 on protecting youth civil society and young people, and supporting their participation in democratic processes;
  - establishing youth-led youth councils in every municipality in the Council of Europe.

Activities foreseen in 2023 at European level are designed to support the project objectives and the advocacy areas in three main directions:

- advocacy for the implementation of the Call for Action, including seminars and research on the role of local youth councils and youth political participation, common action months and days, cooperation with the key institution of the Council of Europe such as the Congress of Local and Regional Activities or the Parliamentary Assembly;
- training and capacity-building, including training for activists and development of educational materials;
- support for processes and activities at national and regional level.

For further information, please visit <http://democracyherenow.coe.int>

## The training course

The training course for young activists for democracy is organised to develop the competences of young activists in advocating for revitalising democracy and to create a group that further supports advocacy actions at European and national level.

Objectives of the course:

- To learn about democracy and human rights and the Council of Europe standards and relevant work.
- To explore the causes and effects of democratic decline in Europe today and the role that young people can play in revitalising democracy.
- To develop their competences in activism and mobilisation of young people and youth civil society with a view to uphold democratic values, including advocacy for the objectives identified by the partners involved in the project, strategies, tactics and tools for action offline and online.
- To familiarise the activists with the Call for Action and the project *Youth revitalising democracy*.
- To develop plans for the involvement of the activists in the project activities, notably the Common Action Days and actions at national level.

## Methodology and structure of the course

The training course is based on blended learning, combining a residential training seminar with distance online learning. The training seminar is based on principles of non-formal education, being learner-centred and highly participatory. The overall course will give participants the opportunity to experience, reflect and discuss issues related with democracy and human rights, particularly the role of young people and youth participation. The entire course is designed as a mutual learning situation in which, with use of diverse methods, participants can compare their approaches and ways of action.

Contributions from different experts in democracy, human rights, youth participation and activism will further support the course and participants' learning in the e-learning and the seminar.

The training course will be based on the approaches on democratic citizenship and human rights education, being designed to be an experience of mutual learning and sharing among participants. The course will also feature e-learning modules focused on learning about the Council of Europe, its standards for democracy and human rights, as well as about the Youth Department and the project. The residential training course will allow for skills and attitudes development, as well as network development and connecting with other stakeholders in the project as well as organising collaborative work in the framework of the Common Action Days and at national level in the framework of the project.

Calendar:

20 April – 26 May – preparatory e-learning modules focused on learning about each other, the Council of Europe and relevant standards, as well as the project.

28 May – 4 June - residential training course, focused on competences development

5 - 30 June – e-learning module focused on follow-up preparation, focused on the designing follow-up activities in the framework of the project,

May – December – involvement in activities and actions in the framework of the project.

## Profile of participants

The training course is designed for participants who are:

- aged between 18 and 30 years, exceptions can be made if justified;
- already have experience with democracy, human rights or youth activism, showing capacity to mobilise and multiply information and opinion among other young people. Involvement in the *Democracy Here | Democracy Now* youth campaign will constitute an advantage;
- committed to the values of the Council of Europe, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and to youth participation and are interested in taking further action;
- motivated and able to take active part in all phases of the project;
- are supported by a youth organisation and/or a national campaign contact point and/or an informal youth group;
- able to work autonomously in the English language;
- are resident in one of the state parties to the European Cultural Convention; exceptions can be made if justified.

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.

## Application, procedure and selection of participants

All candidates must apply on-line at <https://youthapplications.coe.int>.

The Council of Europe will select up to 35 participants on the basis of the profile outlined above. It will try as far as possible to respect the organisations' priorities, but also to ensure a balance between genders, geographical regions, different types of experiences, cultural backgrounds and organisations, institutions and projects. A waiting list may be established. Candidates will be informed whether their application has been accepted or rejected, and if they have been put on the waiting list, by 17 April 2023.

The full application form including the support letter from sending organisation must be submitted on-line **before 14:00 (CET), 6 April 2023**.

## Financial and practical conditions of participation

### Travel expenses

Travel expenses and visa fees for the training seminar in Strasbourg will be reimbursed according to the rules of the Council of Europe. Only the participants who attend the entire training seminar can be reimbursed.

### Accommodation

Board and lodging for the residential training seminar will be provided and paid for by the Council of Europe at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg. The European Youth Centres are accessible to people with disabilities and can take measures to accommodate for any access needs of participants in this respect. Please provide the necessary information in your application form.

### Working languages

English will be the working language of the training course, both for e-learning and the residential training seminar. Participants are required to be able to express themselves autonomously in English.

## Further information

For any questions, please contact us at [youthdemocracy@coe.int](mailto:youthdemocracy@coe.int).