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ACCESS! - Training Course for Local Action on Young People's Social Rights

long-term blended learning process combining a residential seminar (6-11 October 2026, European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, France), online learning, mentoring, and local action phases

Concept Note Call for Participants

Deadline to apply: 19 July 2026

Background

Across Europe, many young people are growing up in a time of uncertainty and rapid change. Rising living costs, unstable employment, wars, climate anxiety, discrimination and unequal access to opportunities are making it harder for many to build secure and fulfilling lives. While these challenges affect society as a whole, young people are often among the most impacted, especially those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities affected by poverty, exclusion and limited access to quality services, participation opportunities and public support.

In this context, growing social insecurity is increasingly linked to declining trust in democratic institutions and reduced participation in civic and political life. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, in his annual report "[*The New Democratic Pact for Europe in Times of Rupture*](#)" (2026), highlights that democratic resilience cannot be separated from social justice and that equal access to social rights is a precondition for democratic stability, social cohesion and meaningful participation in public life. The report further underlines the importance of enabling people, particularly young people, to understand, claim and exercise their rights in practice through inclusive policies, education, participation and local democratic engagement.

[The European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life](#), adopted in 2026 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, highlights the essential link between meaningful youth participation and the realisation of social rights. It calls for young people's social rights to be guaranteed, including housing, education and training, health, employment and work, leisure, and culture, without discrimination on any grounds.

At [the High-Level Conference on Social Rights](#) held in Chişinău in March 2026 member States recognised that combating poverty and social exclusion is fundamentally a matter of human dignity and acknowledged the disproportionate impact of the cost-of-living crisis on vulnerable groups, including children and young people. [The Declaration](#) also stresses the need to strengthen child and youth participation in policies and measures aimed at realising social rights through institutionalised, regular and meaningful participation mechanisms at all levels of governance.

Adopted by [the Committee of Ministers in 2015, Recommendation CM/Rec\(2015\)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights](#) (hereafter "the Recommendation") provides a comprehensive policy framework for addressing these challenges. The Recommendation recognises that many young people encounter multiple and intersecting barriers when accessing their social rights during the transition to adulthood. These barriers may include inadequate housing, limited access to quality education and training, precarious employment conditions, poor physical and mental health outcomes, weak institutional support, restricted access to cultural and leisure opportunities and limited participation in democratic decision-making processes.

The Recommendation promotes a holistic and rights-based approach recognising that social rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. It calls for coordinated public policies addressing education and training, employment, housing, health and mental health, information and counselling, culture, sport, leisure and participation. Importantly, the Recommendation recognises young people not merely as beneficiaries of policies but as rights holders and active contributors to democratic societies whose participation is essential in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies affecting their lives.

A central dimension of the Recommendation is its emphasis on the role of local and regional actors in ensuring effective implementation. Access to social rights is experienced primarily at local level, where young people interact daily with institutions, services and opportunities. Effective implementation therefore requires coordinated local ecosystems capable of bringing together youth policy, housing, social services, education, health services, youth organisations, community actors and young people themselves in developing sustainable and participatory responses to social inequalities.

The second review of the implementation of the Recommendation, conducted in 2026, identified several structural challenges limiting its impact. One of the key findings concerned the limited visibility and recognition of the Recommendation itself. More than half of responding civil society organisations and public authorities reported being unfamiliar or only superficially familiar with the Recommendation, despite often carrying out work closely aligned with its principles. This visibility gap weakens opportunities for shared understanding, peer learning, policy coherence and the systematic development of evidence-based practice across Europe.

[Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe](#) is uniquely positioned to support the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 at territorial level, where access to social rights is experienced most directly by young people. Through its monitoring activities, policy recommendations and ongoing political dialogue with local and regional authorities, the Congress has consistently promoted the protection and realisation of social rights, youth participation and inclusive local governance. It has also regularly addressed developments related to social rights, democratic participation and youth inclusion, highlighting the central role of municipalities and regions in combating inequality, exclusion and discrimination. The review further acknowledged that the Congress, given its close cooperation with local and regional authorities across Europe, is particularly well placed to support and reinforce capacity-building efforts linked to this training course, notably by fostering political commitment, cross-sectoral cooperation and the dissemination of good practices for implementing youth social rights at local level

The review also highlighted persistent coordination deficits between sectors and institutions. Despite the interconnected nature of young people's realities and needs, youth policy frequently operates separately from housing, health, employment and welfare systems.

Importantly, the review underlined the need for practical training and capacity-building initiatives capable of translating the principles of the Recommendation into operational local practice. It specifically highlighted the importance of tailored training opportunities for front-line youth workers, local administrators and other local stakeholders, as well as stronger cooperation mechanisms capable of developing coordinated local policy responses to challenges affecting young people's access to social rights.

The training course

In response to these challenges - ACCESS! - Training course for local action on young people's social rights is proposed as a capacity-building and policy-support initiative aimed at strengthening local implementation of the Recommendation through multi-stakeholder cooperation.

Building on the experience and legacy of [the Enter! long-term training courses](#), ACCESS! introduces a renewed approach focused on local policy development, intersectoral cooperation with active participation of young people and youth workers in shaping local action for social rights. The course is designed to support local ecosystems capable of addressing barriers to young people's access to social rights through coordinated and rights-based responses.

ACCESS! is based on the participation of **small local teams** composed of representatives of local authorities, youth organisations, youth work providers, social and community services and other relevant local actors. Participants engage in the course as local partnerships working on concrete policy challenges affecting young people in their communities.

The course combines training, peer learning, mentoring and local action processes. It supports participants in analysing local realities, strengthening cooperation across sectors, involving young people meaningfully in decision-making and developing policy responses addressing social inequalities and exclusion. Through this approach, ACCESS! aims not only to strengthen individual competences but also to reinforce institutional cooperation, local democratic participation and long-term implementation capacities at community level.

Objectives of the course

The ACCESS! training course aims to strengthen the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights at local level

Objectives of the training course are:

- support local authorities, youth organisations, youth work providers and other stakeholders in developing coordinated and participatory local responses to challenges affecting young people's access to social rights;
- enhance cooperation between youth policy, social services, housing, education, health and other relevant sectors at local level.

- strengthen the capacity of participants to apply rights-based and youth-centred approaches in local policy development and service provision.
- support meaningful participation of young people in local decision-making processes related to social rights and inclusion.
- promote sustainable local partnerships capable of addressing inequalities, discrimination and social exclusion affecting young people.
- create a European network of local actors committed to advancing young people's social rights through local democratic action.

Competencies addressed

The course addresses following competencies. The competence model presented below is indicative and will be further adapted during the planning stage to take into account the needs, experiences, and profiles of the participants, as well as the specific learning context of the course.

1. Knowledge and understanding of European human rights standards and the social rights framework, and the ability to relate them to young people's social rights as defined in the Recommendation (housing, education, employment, health, participation, culture and leisure).
2. Capacity to analyse structural inequalities and intersecting barriers that limit young people's access to social rights, particularly those from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and those facing multiple discrimination.
3. Ability to identify, assess and interpret local needs and living conditions of young people in relation to their access to social rights, with active participation of young people and local stakeholders.
4. Design participatory, rights-based and evidence-informed local responses aimed at improving young people's access to social rights, in line with the holistic approach promoted by the Recommendation.
5. Knowledge of local governance systems and social policy frameworks, and the ability to translate social rights principles into local strategies, services and coordinated action.
6. Ability to build and sustain intersectoral cooperation between public authorities, services and civil society actors to ensure integrated responses to young people's social rights.
7. Capacity to develop and support advocacy processes aimed at improving the realisation of young people's social rights and addressing structural barriers at local and regional level.
8. Ability to create and facilitate meaningful participation processes that enable young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to influence decisions affecting their social rights.
9. Knowledge and understanding of youth work as a key actor in the implementation of social rights, and the ability to use youth work approaches to support inclusion, empowerment and access to rights.

10. Ability to plan, implement and evaluate local action processes that strengthen young people's access to social rights, including participatory monitoring and assessment of impact in line with the Recommendation principles.

Methodology and features of the course

ACCESS! is designed as a long-term blended learning process combining a residential seminar, online learning, mentoring, and local action phases.

The training course is composed of the following features:

1. participation in local teams of 2–3 participants representing different sectors and institutions.
2. a capacity-building seminar of 6 working days. The seminar will take **on 6-11 October 2026 (6 working days)** at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg. The seminar focuses on bringing teams together, establishing common ground, and developing essential foundations for the design of local action for youth social rights.
3. an e-learning module offered prior to the seminar, delivered in a self-directed format with an estimated time commitment of 1–2 hours per week, taking place during the last two weeks of September 2026
4. mentoring and coaching support throughout the course, available to participants and teams in need of additional support.
5. local action processes developed and implemented by participant teams in their communities. First initial steps towards the local action implementation should be taken after the residential seminar.
6. after the seminar in Strasbourg, participants' learning needs and support requirements for local action implementation will be mapped. Based on this assessment, some teams may be offered direct mentoring, targeted coaching, or additional institutional support from the Council of Europe and its partners. This support may include facilitation of contacts with relevant Council of Europe bodies and representatives, including the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, as well as opportunities for dialogue with local and regional authorities and other relevant stakeholders. Depending on the nature and development of local actions, institutional support may also include visibility opportunities, support letters, connections to relevant Council of Europe initiatives or networks, and encouragement to promote local actions as promising practices contributing to the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 at European level.

A tailor-made advanced seminar, responding to participants' needs, will be offered in 2027. This follow-up module will focus on specific aspects of local action development, such as advocacy. Participation in the 2026 module is a prerequisite for invitation to the 2027 module.

The course intends to create conditions for sustainable institutional learning and long-term local cooperation, rather than only isolated individual learning experiences.

Methodological approach

The methodology is grounded in the principles of non-formal education, peer learning, participation, and experiential learning. It places strong emphasis on connecting European standards and policy frameworks with local realities and practical implementation.

It combines a variety of approaches and resources developed within the youth sector of the Council of Europe, with particular emphasis on:

- Experiential learning, recognising participants' professional experiences and supporting learning grounded in practice and reflection.
- Intercultural learning, whereby participants actively contribute to each other's learning and strengthen cooperation and communication competencies in the intercultural environment of the European Youth Centre.
- Blended learning approaches, where e-learning complements and consolidates learning from the residential seminar and group processes.
- Holistic learning, integrating personal development with professional competences, and combining youth work practice with reflection and critical thinking skills.

Local action component

During the course, each team is expected to develop a local action initiative for the social rights of young people, in line with Recommendation, with the active participation of young people and a focus on addressing specific challenges they face in accessing social rights. These local actions should be clearly grounded in youth participation and respond to identified local needs related to social rights. They should serve as concrete and practical examples of the local implementation of the Recommendation and contribute to strengthening rights-based, participatory and cross-sectoral approaches at community level.

Particular emphasis should be placed on ensuring that local actions directly contribute to the implementation of the Recommendation's principles and priorities through coordinated local responses involving youth policy, social services, education, housing, health and democratic participation mechanisms. Teams are encouraged not only to develop and implement meaningful local initiatives, but also to approach their actions as potential promising practices that can contribute to broader European efforts on youth social rights. In this regard, participants should be motivated and supported to promote the visibility, documentation and possible multiplication of their initiatives at international level, including through peer-learning processes, cooperation networks and future Council of Europe activities related to the implementation of the Recommendation.

Local actions should be implemented with the active leadership and involvement of local authorities, youth organisations and other relevant stakeholders in order to strengthen their sustainability, institutional ownership and impact at community level.

The Council of Europe will not provide funding for local action projects. This responsibility lies with the participants, their sending organisations, and/or relevant local authorities. However, information on potential funding opportunities may be provided, and in some cases, guidance may be available alongside capacity-building in project management competences

Profile of participants

ACCESS! targets local actors directly involved in developing, implementing or supporting policies and practices related to young people's access to social rights.

Participants apply as local teams composed of 2–3 representatives from different sectors or institutions within the same municipality, city or local community. Teams should ideally combine institutional and civil society perspectives and demonstrate commitment to strengthening cooperation at local level.

Participants may include:

- representatives of local or regional authorities responsible for youth policy, social affairs, participation, housing, education or inclusion (or any other measure covered by the Recommendation).
- youth workers representing organisations working with youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- representatives of youth organisations including young people with lived experiences of exclusion and isolation.
- professionals from youth social services and community services.
- representatives of educational, housing, health or employment support structures working with young people.
- coordinators of local participation structures or community initiatives.
- other local stakeholders involved in promoting young people's social rights.

All participants must also:

- be able to work in English or French (simultaneous interpretation will be provided);
- be residents of one of the [States Parties to the European Cultural Convention](#), with due regard to applicable limitations.

Particular attention will be given to teams working with or representing young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods or those facing exclusion and isolation.

Participant teams are expected to identify a concrete local challenge related to young people's access to social rights and to engage throughout the course in developing cooperative and sustainable local responses.

It is mandatory that each team (minimum 2 and maximum 3 members) includes at least one representative of a local or regional authority, or its relevant substructure.

Applicants from outside local authorities are encouraged to reach out to their local authorities to form a team, and vice versa.

Application procedure and selection of participants

All teams must apply online by completing a joint application form at: <https://forms.office.com/e/vrypfzMA3A>

Deadline to apply 19 July 2026, 23:59 CET.

Each team is expected to submit one common application presenting their proposed local action idea. The application should include:

- a) an outline of the local action idea (maximum 300 words, in English or French), developed jointly by the team, focusing on improving young people's access to social rights at local level;
- b) a short description of the team composition, including the roles and institutional backgrounds of each member, and how the team reflects a multi-stakeholder approach.

Support letters from organisations or institutions are not mandatory at the application stage. However, the selection committee may request additional information or confirmation of institutional support as a condition for final participation, in order to ensure the feasibility and sustainability of the proposed local action and the engagement of relevant local actors, including local or regional authorities.

All applications must be submitted online by the indicated deadline. Any additional documentation, if requested, will be communicated to shortlisted teams.

A group of pre-selected teams will be announced following the selection process. The selection will take into account the relevance and coherence of the proposed local action, the composition and balance of the teams, and the overall diversity of the group in terms of geographical representation, gender, types of institutions and organisations, and professional experience. A waiting list may also be established.

The Council of Europe welcomes applications from all eligible teams that fulfil the profile of the activity, regardless of gender, disability, marital or parental status, racial, ethnic or social origin, age, colour, religion, belief, or sexual orientation.

Practical and financial information

Venue and accommodation

The residential seminar will take place in Strasbourg, where accommodation and meals will be provided by the Council of Europe.

Travel and subsistence expenses

Travel expenses to and from Strasbourg will be reimbursed according to the rules of the Council of Europe. Selected candidates will be informed in due time regarding travel procedures

Participation fee

Each participant is expected to pay an enrolment fee of 72 euros. This amount will be deducted from the travel reimbursement amount or paid at the EYCS during the training course.

Working languages

The course will be held in English and French, with simultaneous interpretation during seminar.

Visas

Where applicable, visa costs will be reimbursed by the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe secretariat will issue invitation letter that should facilitate the delivery of visas to attend the seminars.

Other Courses of the Youth Department

If you are interested in a training course in international youth work, but your profile does not fully correspond with the requirements of this course, you can seek information about other courses of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe at <http://www.coe.int/youth>

Further information and contact

For any other information, please contact eyc.programme@coe.int