

# MARIENTHAL STATEMENT



By the **Network of Council of Europe Quality Labelled Youth Centres**

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## A European Network of Learning and Solidarity

The Council of Europe's Quality Label for Youth Centres is the highest mark of excellence for youth centres.

It is a symbol of commitment to shared values, collaborative learning, and continuous improvement in youth work across Europe. This programme connects youth centres to a vibrant pan-European network grounded in the values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Centres that hold the Quality Label are united by a common purpose: to create spaces where young people can thrive, learn, and participate meaningfully. Rather than working in isolation, these centres collaborate across borders—sharing best practices, co-creating educational tools, and inspiring innovation in youth work. The network enhances the local impact of each centre while amplifying young people's connections to universal values and democratic movements.

Through this collaboration, the network strengthens the capacity of youth centres to respond to current and emerging challenges with creativity, competence, and resilience.

**We are committed to upholding the values of human rights and democracy in all that we do.**

**We strive to strengthen our contribution to the European Network of Quality Label Youth Centres.**

**We invite youth centres that agree with the principles and criteria of the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres to join our network - fostering international cooperation, sharing knowledge and contributing to a common vision for quality youth work across Europe.**

**Finally, we call on decision-makers at all levels—local, regional, national, and European—to recognize and support centres that hold or aspire to the Council of Europe Quality Label.**

**Safeguarding and investing in quality youth spaces is essential to fostering genuine youth participation and ensuring the future of democratic, inclusive, and resilient societies.**



## The IMPORTANCE of YOUTH SPACES

Today, more than ever, young people need spaces where they can connect, collaborate, and belong. Yet, such environments are becoming increasingly scarce due to growing challenges, including shifting policy priorities and limited investment.

Youth centres provide essential environments for non-formal education, personal development, and social engagement. They are places where friendships form, ideas grow, and youth potential is unlocked. They offer stability and possibility.

**We are committed to creating safe, inclusive and empowering environments for all young people.**



## Spaces of DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, and HUMAN DIGNITY

In a time of growing social division and political polarisation, youth centres serve as beacons of, diversity and inclusion. They are built on the belief that every young person—regardless of background, identity, or status—has the right to feel safe, respected, and valued.

Through human rights education, intercultural dialogue, and daily practices of openness, solidarity and equity, these centres challenge discrimination and foster mutual understanding. They are places where a culture of human rights is created, experienced and nurtured.

**We are committed to building inclusive spaces where every young person can participate meaningfully and contribute to a more just and cohesive society.**

## Hubs of DEMOCRACY and ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Youth centres are not simply buildings. Grounded in the Council of Europe's values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, they offer young people opportunities to engage in participatory governance, develop leadership skills, and experience inclusive decision-making in real and impactful ways.

Here, young people speak up, listen with an open mind, learn to navigate their differences and take collective responsibility for their present as well as their future. These centres foster essential civic competencies, helping to raise future generations well equipped to shape their societies.

**We are committed to providing young people with the knowledge and skills, as well as the opportunities and support they need to become confident and active members of society.**

## Youth Centres as ENGINES OF EMPOWERMENT

Across Europe, young people are driving change—advocating for human rights, mobilising for climate action, promoting mental health, challenging racism, and standing up for democratic values. What they often lack are the resources, recognition, and structural support to bring their ideas to life.

Youth centres play a crucial role in bridging this gap. Through non-formal education, mentorship and collaborative networks, they empower young people to turn their concerns into concrete action. These spaces foster creativity, entrepreneurship, and social engagement, allowing youth to gain skills, lead meaningful initiatives and make lasting contributions to their communities.

**We are committed to supporting youth-led initiatives and strengthening the capacity of young people to fully participate in and shape the world around them.**