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REJUVENATING  
**POLITICS**

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The Congress  
  
Le Congrès



A Congress  
initiative  
to support youth  
participation

# GUIDELINES AND CODE OF CONDUCT for youth delegates

Andreas Kiefer,  
***Secretary General of the Congress***



Dear youth delegates,

You have been selected to be part of the Rejuvenating Politics initiative. Welcome!

For one year you will take part in the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe; we expect this to be a valuable and exciting opportunity for you.

In order to help all those involved in the initiative to co-operate as smoothly and effectively as possible, this document will guide you through the work you will be doing over the following months. It will outline your rights and your responsibilities.

You are expected to commit yourself to the behaviour and values outlined in this document, which are those of the Council of Europe, and we ask you to sign the last page as a token of that commitment.

Young women and men have been participating in the work of the Congress since 2014 when the initiative was first launched in order to give young people the opportunity to see first-hand how an international assembly such as the Congress works and to build their capacity to become part of the decision-making processes and policy making at local and regional level.

We hope you will enjoy and get the most out of your time with us in the Congress as your predecessors (over 320 youth delegates as of 2021) have done, and we hope that you will remain in touch with us as Congress alumni when your role as youth delegate is over.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Andreas Kiefer'.

## INTRODUCTION

### About the Congress

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The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 46 member States and assessing the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. As the voice of Europe's municipalities and regions, it works to foster consultation and political dialogue between national governments and local and regional authorities, through co-operation with the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.

The Congress is made up of two chambers: The Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It has 306 representatives and 306 substitutes, all appointed for five years, representing over 130,000 local and regional authorities in the Council of Europe's 46 member States. The Congress' statutory work is prepared by three committees: the Monitoring Committee, the Governance Committee and the Current Affairs Committee.

The Congress was given the responsibility by the Committee of Ministers to monitor the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, a legal instrument that lays down standards for protecting the rights of local authorities and requires states which have ratified it to comply with a number of conditions, principles and practices. The Congress conducts country-by-country monitoring visits which provide information about the situation of local and regional democracy and prepares reports and recommendations to the Committee of Ministers approximately every five years. It also regularly observes local and regional elections.

The Congress has long been committed to promoting the active participation of young people in civic life as a means of securing social cohesion and anchoring democratic principles in a society based on respect for human rights.

In 1992, the Congress adopted the European Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life. This text, which was revised in 2003, can be used as an instrument to plan and implement public policies and tools for youth participation at local and regional level. Further to this, the Council of Europe's Youth Department developed "Have Your Say", a training manual on the European Revised Charter.

### About the Rejuvenating politics initiative

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The youth delegates initiative was launched in October 2014. Since then, the Congress has invited a group of young people from across Europe to participate in all of its sessions. Since 2015, youth delegates take part in the two annual sessions of the Congress (in spring and autumn). During the spring and summer youth delegates develop activities and projects to promote the values of the Congress among Europe's local and regional communities.

## WHO IS WHO IN THE CONGRESS?

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This section provides an introduction to the different actors within the Congress you will be working with or meeting during your participation in this initiative.

### The Congress Secretariat

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Each member of the Congress Secretariat has a different role to play within the Congress' work on youth. Their objective is to ensure as much youth involvement in different aspects of the Congress work as possible and to look for different opportunities for your participation. Some of them will also be directly involved in your work through support for your preparation and participation.

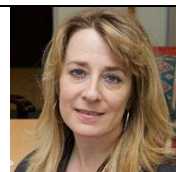


**Andreas Kiefer, the Secretary General of the Congress**, is responsible for the proper functioning of the Congress and its organs – such as the President, the Bureau, Statutory Forum, the committees – and the follow-up to their decisions, for providing leadership and guidance to the colleagues in the Secretariat, to manage the financial resources in order to achieve the political and thematic objectives defined by the Congress in its priorities. His responsibilities also comprise maintaining constructive relations between the Congress and its institutional partners in the Council of Europe (notably the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers, the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights), as well as its national delegations, political groups and external partners, notably national and international associations of local and regional authorities and the Committee of the Regions of the European Union.



**Rafael Benitez is the Director** of the Congress. He is responsible for assisting the Secretary General with the management of the Congress Secretariat and with the fulfillment of the Congress mandate, providing support for its various bodies, and to contribute to the development and the implementation of the objectives of the Congress.

The Director is appointed by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe following consultation with the Bureau of the Congress.



**Dolores Ríos Turón is Head of the Congress Table Office**, the department responsible for the 46 national delegations and for the Bureau of the Congress and the sessions. She is the person responsible for the Rejuvenating Politics Initiative within the Secretariat.



**Nata Chikovani** is your contact person; she will take care of your travel and will keep you informed of all the logistical aspects of your participation – and much more!



**Stephanie Poirel is Acting Head of the Statutory Activities Division and Head of the Monitoring Committee and Observation of Local and Regional Elections Unit** which is responsible for organising monitoring visits and drafting reports and recommendations on the state of local and regional democracy and observation of local and regional elections in the member States concerned.



**Inge Hannon is Secretary ad interim of the Current Affairs Committee**, the committee which is responsible for youth topics (reports, events, etc). Her committee has taken up several youth delegate suggestions for future work and invites youth delegates to their events.



**Roman Chlapak is Secretary of the Governance Committee**, which has also invited youth delegates to participate actively in several of its meetings and to comment on ongoing reports.

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## **The trainers**

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The role of the trainers is to facilitate your preparation and communication with the Secretariat. The trainers are invited to translate information given by the Congress into youth-friendly language as far as possible, and to make sure that all information needed for your participation is there and explained to you. They will also facilitate your participation throughout the entire year, making sure you get the support you need to enhance your Congress experience.

Trainers are not there in an expert role. They will not give you lectures or expertise about issues on the agenda. They are asked by the Congress not to influence your opinion on topics and their role is not to provide you with content for your speeches, questions or interventions. Their role is to support your own preparation process and help you come up with your own ideas; this participation is about your ideas, not the expertise of others.

Your trainers for 2022 will be **Dzhafer Saatcha** and **Carly Walker Dawson**.

## **Members of the Congress**

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Members have either been directly elected and hold a general mandate in a local or regional authority or are politically answerable to a directly elected assembly.

Representatives and substitutes are appointed for a five-year term in accordance with each individual member State's own procedure.

Members meet twice a year for the sessions and several times a year for committee meetings and other events organised by the Congress.

### Members of the Congress



**Congress Spokespersons on Youth:** The Congress appoints one or two spokespersons on youth for each mandate.

The current spokesperson is: **Thomas ANDERSSON from Sweden**.

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## **National delegations**

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National delegations to the Congress comprise representatives of local and regional authorities from the Council of Europe's 46 member States. Within national delegations, members are distributed between the Congress' two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions.

[List of national delegations \(coe.int\)](#)

## **Bureau of the Congress**

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The Bureau is the Congress' executive organ, responsible for preparing proposals relating to general policy of the Congress and the budget.

The Bureau is also responsible for preparing the Congress sessions and for coordinating the work of the chambers and committees. It may also draw up reports and submit these to be considered and voted on by the chambers and the Congress. Comprised of the Bureau of the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions, the Bureau's task is to ensure that work is carried on in between meetings of the Congress or the Statutory Forum.

[Bureau \(coe.int\)](#)

## **Secretaries of national delegations**

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Each national delegation chooses its own secretary of delegation or secretaries, for example separate ones for local and regional members. Like the head of the delegation, the secretary is a special intermediary for the Congress Secretariat. He or she plays a key role in information exchange, especially when national delegations come up for renewal every five years and following local or regional elections.

Delegation secretaries also assist and advise members and act as facilitators for members participating in the work of the Congress during sessions, in committees, at conferences, in working groups, during election observation missions, etc.

[Delegation secretaries \(coe.int\)](#)

## BEING A CONGRESS YOUTH DELEGATE

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This section will be devoted to an explanation of your role and the different types of participation and activities you will have during your time as youth delegate.

### Your role

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Being a youth delegate is an exciting activity. For a year you will have the opportunity to participate and experience from the inside the life of one of the main institutions of the Council of Europe - the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

We would like to underline that you are a youth delegate of the Congress and the Congress alone, not of the Council of Europe or any other part of the Council of Europe. This means that your role is focused on the Congress. There are some key issues you should understand about this role:

1. You have been selected as a youth delegate from your country. This means that you have been selected from among a group of young people who applied for this initiative, but you are not elected to represent your country. The exact title that you will bear this year is: youth delegate of the Congress from (name of the country). Please avoid presenting yourself as “representative” of your country.
2. Your main focus is the work of the Congress during its two sessions. You will focus on preparing your individual and group interventions in the different debates. Time spent in Strasbourg during in-person sessions should therefore be devoted exclusively to issues related to Congress work.
3. Attendance in all parts of this activity (preparation day, debates and evaluation) and the development of the grassroots activity is compulsory.
4. Between the two sessions you will develop a project focusing on your work in the Congress. This aspect of the programme is obligatory, and you will be asked to develop it in your capacity as Congress youth delegate. Remember, during this work you are not representing but presenting the Congress.
5. You can use the specific “Rejuvenating Politics” logo that has been developed for your projects. You may not use the official Congress logo on your projects, documents, CV or elsewhere.
6. Trainers are the contact point between you and the Congress Secretariat. If you wish to contact members of the Secretariat, please keep the trainers informed at all times.
7. You will be working within the Congress for a year and your possible activities linked to other parts of the Council of Europe will be initiated and coordinated by the Congress. This means that, in your capacity as youth delegate you may not contact other institutions linked to the Council of Europe or international organisations without prior consent from the team of trainers and the Secretariat. Meetings outside of the Congress that you should attend will be coordinated and agreed upon by the Congress.

8. Communication and keeping a link with the trainers are an essential part of your work. Not complying with set deadlines and lack of communication during any part of the process could result in cancellation of your participation.
9. With your role, come certain responsibilities; you are expected to understand this and to act accordingly, with respect for all the actors involved.
10. Any form of disrespectful behaviour towards any person or institution involved will immediately result in cancellation of your participation in this programme. For more on this, see the Code of Conduct below.
11. Systematic or serious non-compliance with these rules will result in cancellation of your participation in this programme.

## HOW TO ACT

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The Rejuvenating Politics Initiative is intended to be an opportunity to empower young people and a chance to enable them to grow as leaders and as human beings. For this reason, the Congress wishes to make this a safe space where growing and learning together is possible.

As it is a Council of Europe activity, participants in the Rejuvenating Politics Initiative are expected to abide by the Organisation's core values as enshrined in the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) and the [Rules and Procedures of the Congress](#), see in particular *Appendix I: Code of Conduct of Congress members*. In accordance with the founding values of the Council of Europe and the Congress, participants are expected to act with respect, integrity, honesty and in keeping with the responsibilities of their role.

The Code of Conduct of Congress Members also applies to youth delegates (see Code of Conduct section). It applies to online and offline activities, as well as to formal and informal settings.

Any aggressive behaviour towards peers, trainers, Congress Secretariat or members and third parties will not be tolerated.

Participants commit themselves to acting with respect towards their peers and to avoiding any acts of violence, whether verbal or physical. Acts of harassment, bullying, sexual misconduct or disrespect will be reacted to in an appropriate manner as will any acts of discrimination based on age, citizenship, gender, nationality, disability or impairment of any kind, educational or socio-economic background, political convictions, race, religion or any other matters of identity.

As a programme based on values of non-formal education, a positive attitude, teamwork and respect for different points of view is expected. Acts that consistently and repeatedly endanger teamwork and a team environment, will be considered a breach of this Code.

If a participant experiences or witnesses any verbal or non-verbal act of violence, discrimination, hate or any action that is contrary to this Code of Conduct, she or he can inform the trainers or the responsible person in the Secretariat.

Trainers and members of the Secretariat, based on the situation's requirements will take immediate action, ranging from a reminder of behaviour in plenary, engaging in a one-to-one conversation with the



victim and the offender, facilitating a dialogue between them or suggesting the cancellation of the offender's participation in the programme and asking the offender to immediately leave the activity.

As a youth delegate, you can contact your trainers or relevant member of the Secretariat verbally, or in writing (paper or e-mail).

Any behaviour that goes against the Code of Conduct may result in participants being expelled from the programme. This doesn't preclude taking the necessary legal measures.

## Your participation

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### How to prepare for the sessions?

Before your first session the trainers will provide you with all the necessary information related to your preparation. Information will be provided through different channels depending on the content. **It is your personal responsibility to read all the information provided and properly prepare for the Congress session.** There is only one day for preparation in situ in Strasbourg before sessions and it is impossible to absorb all the documents and information upon arrival. For this reason, you are strongly advised to come prepared so that this day can be used for clarifying doubts, not for starting from the beginning with information flow.

#### Find documents and read them

All the documents and information for the session can be found on the [Congress website](#) as well as the youth delegate [Hub](#). Take your time and research both sites, as many answers already exist there. Specific information that is important for the session is always shared by the trainers and the Secretariat of the Congress. All other public documents related to youth participation produced by the Congress [can be found here](#) (type "youth" in the search bar).

#### Contact your national delegation

All national delegations have received an e-mail from the Secretariat about your selection, with your contact details. From past experience we know that some delegations contact their youth delegate right away while, in many cases, it is the youth delegate that establishes contact. Please consult the [list of national delegations](#). We strongly advise you not to wait to be contacted but to take a proactive role in this process and contact the secretary of delegation or deputy head/head of delegation. Many of the national delegations are linked to a national union or association of municipalities and we advise you to contact them as well.

#### Contact former youth delegates from your country

There are already 7 generations of youth delegates (alumni) who have experienced the same process that you are about to experience. They can help you prepare for the sessions and get information about work

already done in your country. We will be sharing the list of new youth delegates with the alumni and their contact details with you upon request.

### **Complete the tasks list on the youth delegates info HUB**

Please consult the [tasks section on the HUB](#) regularly. Youth trainers and Secretariat will let you know in the youth delegates' Facebook group when a new task is posted.

## **The preparation day**

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### **Session 1 preparation:**

Before the spring and autumn sessions you will participate in a preparatory activity, taking place on the eve of the first day of the session<sup>1</sup>. The aim is to help you become familiar with the Congress and its working methods, promote group confidence and help you prepare your interventions during the session.

More specifically, in March we will work on teambuilding and help you get acquainted with the main Congress documents, the Congress' structure and working methods. You will also become familiar with the main areas where you will be working at the Palais de l'Europe and, if possible, the Youth Centre.

During this preparation day you will also devote some time to preparing for your interventions.

Please note that in a one-day preparation there is no time for introduction of topics, only for basic introduction to what is going to happen during the session. It is your personal responsibility to prepare yourself for topics to be debated during the session. When you applied to this programme you presented yourself as having a set of knowledge and skills to be the youth delegate of your country and our approach to you will be based accordingly. You will not be taught how to speak, act or prepare yourself for public speaking. Your participation in this process is with a goal to share with the Congress your ideas and the knowledge acquired through your work and activism and the entire programme is shaped in such a way as to facilitate and not to direct your process of doing so.

In addition, the afternoon of the last day of the first session will be devoted to helping you prepare your in-between session projects.

### **Session 2 preparation:**

In October, the preparation day will focus more on preparing your interventions for the different Congress, chamber and committee debates. The last day will be centered on evaluating the programme and preparing a link with the following generation.

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<sup>1</sup> This applies to sessions held in person. Other arrangements will be made in case of remote sessions.

## The Congress session

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During all agenda debates there are different ways in which you can participate:

1. **You can ask questions and make interventions:** the usual speaking time allocated per speaker is 3 minutes. This may be reduced, depending on the number of speakers. In the plenary as well as in the chambers, you must register to speak. The chair of the session or meeting will give you the floor by calling your name. You have to stick to the speaking time allotted to you.
2. **Ask pre-prepared, written questions** to ministers or other official or high-level guests who have requested to receive questions directed to them before the start of the session. These specific debates are always marked in the agenda, indicating deadline for sending questions if applicable.
3. **You can participate in the work of the committees.** Their work is less formally structured, and you can ask for the floor by raising your hand. The chair decides when to give the floor and the speaking time. Committees have their own agenda and documents that you will receive in the preparation phase. You can find out more about committees and their role on the [Congress website](#).
4. **You can also participate in different side-events and meetings.** Side-events happening during lunch time and after sittings are also marked in the agenda. Side-events linked to a specific topic will be organised by the Secretariat and you will be informed about this event by the trainers.
5. **Act as speaker in a debate and give a 10-minute speech from the podium.** This is always pre-prepared during the preparation day and speakers (usually 1 and never more than 4) are democratically elected to represent the whole group of youth delegates.

Sessions usually start early in the morning with a meeting of the three committees (Monitoring, Current Affairs and Governance) on the first day. In committees you are allowed to intervene on the spot, without the need to request your intervention in writing in advance. Just raise your hand, and when the chair gives you the floor say that you are a youth delegate (mention your country) and make your speech.

What you can't do: eat and drink in the room, leave the Palais without permission, wear or wave political messages...

## Where you will work during an in-person session

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**European Youth Centre:** The EYCS is part of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. In addition, it is a youth centre where youth delegates will usually live and work together. When the EYC is not available a hotel not far from the Council of Europe is reserved.

**A meeting room (usually 11 or 14)** situated on the second floor of the Palais de l'Europe is set aside as your working room during the Congress sessions and as the place where you will meet as a group if needed. Trainers will be there during the day in case you need them or when preparation meetings with specific youth delegates are scheduled.

**Hemicycle** is the assembly chamber where Congress members meet in plenary and debate. There will be specific seats allocated for youth delegates. Please be mindful that eating, drinking or waving political messages is forbidden in the hemicycle.

**Documentation distribution centre:** This is the room where all documents concerning the session can be found. It is on the first floor, behind the main stairs of the Palais.

## Work in between sessions

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As part of your participation as a youth delegate you will be required to develop a local or regional activity or project. The objective of the project is to promote the work of the Congress or to promote values of youth participation and democracy. You can develop your activity in the framework of projects that you are already developing with your organisation.

Some examples of projects are the presentation of the Congress and its “Rejuvenating politics” initiative at schools, universities or youth clubs, trainings on human-rights related issues, the creation of local youth councils, studies on youth participation, and, in 2020, reports on the challenges of the pandemic at local level.

Furthermore, it is possible to promote and present Congress work and activities to your local authorities, such as the toolkit for organising intercultural and interreligious activities, organising European Local Democracy Week activities in your municipality...

Projects can be individual or carried out in co-operation with other youth delegates. Please note that no financial compensation or grant will be provided by the Congress.

The timeline for the development of projects will follow these steps<sup>2</sup>:

- ✓ Last day of the Spring session: leave Strasbourg with a general idea of the type of project you would like to develop
- ✓ Mid-April: Send trainers a template on the activity you want to develop
- ✓ End April - May: Skype call with trainers to prepare the activity
- ✓ May - September: Development of your project
- ✓ Beginning October: Send trainers an activity report, and visuals of the activities you have developed.
- ✓ October session: presentation of selected projects

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that this timeline applies to in-person meetings. In 2022 the trainers will give you a slightly adapted list of steps if necessary.

## The support you will receive

For the development of your projects, you will receive support from the training team and the Secretariat.

**Trainers** will have a Skype conversation with you once they have received your template. They will help you in planning the activities and will mentor you on how to implement and evaluate them.

Mentoring will continue via e-mail during the implementation phase.

The **Secretariat** will provide you with a letter of support, stating that you are a youth delegate and asking local/regional authorities to support you in the implementation of your activities. They can also help you in contacting your local and regional authorities.

As a reminder, please be clear that you may not contact other sectors of the Council of Europe without previous authorization.

## On communication

Communication between you and other actors involved in the process (mainly trainers and the Secretariat) will take place using two main channels: a Facebook page, the Hub, and e-mail addresses provided in this guide.

The Facebook page will be used for communicating group messages, such as reminders for meetings, publishing opportunities to participate in side-events or preparing pre-prepared questions for Congress debates.

E-mails will be used for communicating personally with youth delegates or with specific groups of youth delegates. Communication for the different phases of project-development will also take place using e-mails. It is your own responsibility to make sure that you check these two channels of communication and keep yourself updated about new developments. Each piece of information sent will be considered information being received by you and reading it will be seen as your own responsibility. **Please remember to answer e-mails. Communication is always a two-way process and failure to answer e-mails over an extended period of time may result in cancellation of your participation.**

Please refrain from contacting trainers or members of the Secretariat using other direct messages means such as Facebook messenger, Viber, WhatsApp, telegrammes or phone calls.

## Representation - Additional events

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During your term as youth delegate, you will have the opportunity to participate in Congress-related activities taking place outside the framework of the Congress sessions. Some of these activities can be:

- Conferences and forums: During the year the Congress and other Council of Europe institutions organise conferences, seminars and forums on a wide variety of issues. Sometimes youth delegates may be called upon to take part in these events **as representatives of all the youth delegates**. As examples, in previous years youth delegates took part in the ENTER! Forum, the Lisbon Forum and

the Symposium on the future of young people's political participation, organised by the Partnership between the EU & the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

- Committee meetings: The Congress committees meet twice a year prior to the opening of the spring and autumn sessions. You are allowed to take part and intervene in these meetings. Furthermore, committee meetings may take place outside Congress sessions in several European locations. Youth delegates may also be invited to attend and contribute to these meetings on an ad hoc basis.

How it will work:

Once the Congress Secretariat takes a decision on inviting one or more youth delegates to an event, a call for candidates will be posted on the Facebook page stating the required profile and a deadline for applying. In addition to those selected, the youth delegate from the country where the activity takes place may also be invited.

### CONSENT TO PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

Once the selected youth delegates confirm their participation in the 2022 edition of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities' "Rejuvenating politics" initiative, a photo and short information of each delegate will be posted on the [Congress Facebook page](#), therefore, in addition to signing the code of conduct you are kindly requested to fill in [the online consent form](#).

### CODE OF CONDUCT OF CONGRESS MEMBERS

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read and understood it and that I commit to complying with the [Code of Conduct of Congress Members](#) (starting at page 123 of the Rules and Procedures). Any breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in withdrawal of the youth delegate status.

SURNAME:

FIRST NAME:

COUNTRY:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_