

Summit of the Future Action Days Side Event

Empowering the Future: Making the Social Rights of Youth Real

20 September 2024, 16:45-18:00, UN Headquarters, Room CR2, New York

Organised by the Council of Europe & co-sponsored by Andorra, Lithuania, Mexico, and Morocco, in partnership with the International Labour Office, the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency and the European Youth Forum

Background on the event

The impacts of the global cost of living, pandemic and climate crises on young people and their social rights are wide-ranging and severe – both in terms of their present lives and their future ones. Despite international standards, such as those set out in the Council of Europe’s [European Social Charter](#) and other international human rights treaties, gaps in implementation persist. Many young people still face barriers in terms of education, healthcare, employment, and social protection, underscoring the need for a thorough reassessment of current policies and practices from a rights perspective. The event "[Empowering the Future: Making the Social Rights of Youth Real](#)" brought together human rights experts, youth leaders, government representatives, and international organisations to assess the effectiveness of international standards and mechanisms with regard to ensuring youth social rights, highlighting both successes and limitations thereof. The discussions focused on the value of youth rights under international law as well as proposals to strengthen international mechanisms for the protection of youth social rights in practice. The event highlighted the need for greater cooperation between international organisations, governments, civil society and youth organisations to advance youth social rights and to ensure that young people’s rights are reflected in the [United Nations Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025](#).

Key issues discussed

- What do national governments need to do to bridge the gap between their obligations to young people under international law and the lived realities they experience.
- What initiatives can international organisations take to uphold social rights of young people within the existing instruments and mechanisms.
- What changes are needed for young people to be able to make their voices heard in an impactful way in law, policy and other decision-making related to social rights.

Key recommendations for action

- **Strengthen legal frameworks:** Governments should ensure that international human rights standards on the rights of young people are incorporated into national legislation.
- **Strengthen national authorities' capacities with regard to youth social rights:** Provide training for government officials and policy makers on youth rights and related legal obligations to improve decision-making and service delivery.
- **Enhance young people's awareness and knowledge on their social rights:** Raise awareness and knowledge of social rights among young people under national and international mechanisms so as to enable them to exercise these rights effectively and access associated protection mechanisms.
- **Guarantee monitoring and accountability:** Strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure that governments deliver on their commitments. This includes real-time data collection and transparent reporting to track progress and assess the effectiveness of youth-related policies and measures.
- **Ensure meaningful youth participation:** Create and institutionalise mechanisms for young people to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes in relation to their rights by developing and maintaining nimble and stable structures and processes for dialogue, by incorporating their views into policies and decisions affecting them and by supporting youth-inspired initiatives and projects. This also includes representation in governmental structures and processes to ensure that young people's views influence policies that affect their lives.
- **Commit to a human rights-based approach to youth policy** and mainstream youth rights explicitly and systematically in and across national and international strategies and policies. This also consists of including a youth perspective into all levels of policy design, implementation and evaluation.
- **Focus on financing mechanisms to implement effective youth policies and initiatives** that call for child- and youth-specific budgeting to substantiate such policies, also considering the needs of children and young people in situations of particular and/or multiple vulnerabilities, e.g. Roma, migrant children, children with disabilities etc.
- **Address without delay issues such as education, employment, mental health and climate justice:** Prioritise investment in accessible, quality education and meaningful employment opportunities for young people. Ensure that education systems adapt to changing labour market needs, focusing on skills development and inclusiveness. Integrate mental health services into health systems, making them accessible and affordable for young people. Additionally, recognise the right to a healthy environment as fundamental to youth social rights and address climate change as a key issue affecting their future.
- **Promote a positive narrative on youth:** Shift public perceptions of youth by highlighting their potential as active participants and rights holders. Create awareness campaigns to foster a supportive environment for youth engagement in policy making and community development.
- **Strengthen international collaboration:** International organisations and human rights monitoring bodies must enhance collaboration, utilise existing instruments, and develop innovative initiatives to uphold and protect the social rights of youth, making their inclusion and empowerment central to global governance frameworks.

Webpage to find more information

[Empowering the Future: Making the Social Rights of Youth Real - Social Rights \(coe.int\)](#)