



DDP-YD/ ETCD (2026)109

Budapest, 22 July 2026

CONCEPT NOTE

TRAINING COURSE **Strength and resilience of International Non-Governmental Youth** **Organisations (INGYOs)**

Residential seminar: **09 – 14 November (4 working days)**

European Youth Centre Budapest

Introduction and institutional context

The Council of Europe youth sector launched a reflection process in 2025 to determine how to support international non-governmental youth organisations (INGYOs) in sustaining their democratic governance, enhancing their role within broader civil society, and improving the effectiveness of their actions. This initiative is rooted in the principle that freedom of assembly and association is a fundamental human right, as laid down by the [European Convention on Human Rights](#), and serves as a prerequisite for a functioning democracy. [The Reykjavik Summit of Heads of State and Government \(2023\)](#) committed to maintaining a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and civil society to adequately operate. This commitment was reaffirmed during the [10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth in October 2025](#), which stressed the necessity of integrating youth perspectives into all thematic areas of the Council's work.

In January 2026, the Council of Europe organised a [Consultative Meeting on Strength and Resilience of Youth Organisations](#), held at the European Youth Centre Budapest. The event gathered youth leaders, practitioners, researchers and representatives of international youth organisations to examine the strengths and barriers encountered by International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs) and generate concrete proposals for institutional support to strengthen the sector's resilience.

Throughout the discussions, the following main challenges for INGYOs were raised: financial instability linked to short-term project funding and heavy administrative burdens; high turnover among volunteers and staff leading to loss of institutional knowledge; tension between remaining mission-driven and adapting to donor requirements; shrinking space for civil society and youth activism under restrictive political climates measures; and the difficulty of long-term volunteer engagement in a precarious context.

Organisations are often navigating a difficult dilemma between maintaining professionalised engagement in policy advocacy and project management while continuing to serve as community spaces for activism and meaningful relations. The high pressure to deliver results has led to significant issues regarding volunteer and staff burn-out, requiring more regular and specific support to ensure these organisations can sustain their operations and democratic principles.

Based on the proposals made by the organisations regarding their specific capacity building needs, the Youth Department has designed a training course that directly addresses the priorities and challenges identified by the participating organisations, tailoring it to maximise its impact and usefulness for the youth sector.

Training course 2026

The 2026 training course on strength and resilience of INGYOs builds upon the findings of the consultative meeting and prior reflections in the youth sector, responding to the urgent need for strengthening organisational resilience. It recognises youth organisations as democratic laboratories, partners in governance, and drivers of change, whose operational effectiveness depends on accessible funding, robust support systems and continuous capacity development. The programme will bring together a group of 30 participants selected among board members, senior staff, and leaders of INGYOs active in the Council of Europe programmes.

The training process is structured as follows:

1. Residential training course (4 days, 10 – 13 November 2026, Budapest):
 - Sessions on leadership, governance, community management, embedding AI in organisational life, complex financial grants management and advocacy.
2. Foreseen e-learning and mentoring (December 2026 – April 2027) – dependant on course development:
 - Adapting learning from the seminar to the local and organisational context.

Aim and Objectives

This training course aims to strengthen the resilience and operational capacity of international youth organisations by developing the competences of board members, senior staff, and leaders in managing sustainable operations in complex settings. It seeks to ensure these organisations are capable of sustaining democratic governance, financial stability, and their role within civil society, thereby upholding the priorities of the Council of Europe.

Objectives:

1. To engage participants in a reflection on organisational needs among international youth organisations, particularly in areas of organisational management.
2. To build capacity on essential competences, skills, and attitudes for leaders and advocates, focusing on democratic governance and engagement with member organisations.
3. To develop and share strategies for sustainable organisational management, translating vision into action, including sustainable budgets and funding models, and access to educational tools and peer learning spaces.
4. To propose forms of support for international youth organisations—including capacity building, mentoring, peer learning, educational tools, advocacy and funding—to overcome challenges to resilience and operational effectiveness.
5. To foster mutual understanding and collaboration between youth organisations and the Council of Europe towards shared objectives in youth policy, democratic practice, and resilient civil society.