YOUTH PLEDGE

Why Journalists Matter to Us

We, young people from across Europe and beyond, believe that our freedom to think, question and choose depends on reliable information and on journalists who can work freely and safely.

On social media, verified reporting, opinion, advertising and AI-generated content often reach us without clear distinction. Popularity is no proof of accuracy. Algorithms and commercial incentives can amplify outrage and manipulation while making trustworthy information harder to find. This urgently needs to change.

We pledge to help build an independent, pluralistic and accessible information environment where evidence matters, different voices are heard and power can be questioned. We will continue to challenge the systems that shape what information reaches us.

We stand for independent journalism

Journalists investigate, verify and explain what we cannot always see for ourselves. Their work helps us understand complex realities, expose injustice and participate in democracy, during elections and between them.

We stand for independent, pluralistic and accessible journalism, including local reporting and voices from different communities. Our lives and concerns deserve to be represented, wherever we live.

We defend journalists' freedom and safety

When journalists are threatened into silence, we may never hear the story. Their safety protects our right to know. We reject violence, censorship, unlawful surveillance, online harassment and abusive lawsuits intended to silence reporting, including in conflict and crises.

We defend journalists' right to work freely and safely while recognising that journalism must remain open to legitimate criticism and accountable to professional and ethical standards. Disagreement must never justify intimidation or violence.

We believe in journalism that builds trust

We ask journalists and media organisations to be transparent about verification, editorial choices, uncertainty, corrections, ownership and funding; to distinguish reporting from opinion and advertising; and to protect confidential sources.

Listen to us, report with us as well as about us, and involve young people as equal partners. Make journalism accessible through captions, transcripts, screen-reader-compatible content and formats suited to different needs, without sacrificing depth, context or accuracy. Open pathways for young people to contribute to journalism and enter the profession, including through youth-led, grassroots journalism initiatives.

We demand technology that supports informed choices

AI and algorithms must serve people under meaningful human oversight, respecting privacy, human dignity and freedom of expression. They must support our judgement, not replace it.

We call on platforms and technology companies to explain why content reaches us, offer meaningful choice and control over recommendation systems, promote pluralism and interoperability, and make original sources and credible journalism easier to find. Stop rewarding manipulation and outrage at the expense of reliable information.

Clearly identify AI-generated or manipulated content; make sources traceable, credit original reporting and ensure corrections reach those exposed to false claims. Enable independent scrutiny and audits, accessible reporting of harassment and effective public oversight and regulation that safeguards fundamental rights. Protect young people from online harms without excluding them from digital spaces where they learn, communicate and participate.

We demand practical media and information literacy

Telling us to "just be critical" is not enough. We need practical, inclusive learning from an early age and throughout life, in formal, non-formal and informal education: schools, universities, youth organisations, youth information centres and communities. It must reach young people outside formal education and those facing social, economic, linguistic, disability-related or other barriers.

Help us trace claims to original sources, compare independent reporting, check context, recognise manipulation and deepfakes, understand algorithms and commercial interests, and question our own biases. Use real examples and direct dialogue with journalists.

We pledge to act and to demand accountability

We pledge to question, verify and share responsibly; acknowledge and correct our mistakes; use AI transparently and critically; seek perspectives beyond our feeds; support independent journalism, including local reporting; and speak up against harassment and intimidation. We will use our voices, networks and communities to promote media literacy, challenge manipulation without attacking people and hold those shaping our information environment accountable.

We call for shared responsibility

Our actions alone cannot solve these challenges. We call on governments and public authorities to protect journalists, investigate attacks effectively, uphold media pluralism and ensure platform accountability. Responses to disinformation must protect freedom of expression, legitimate disagreement and human rights.

We call on educators, youth organisations and youth workers to make media and information literacy part of everyday learning. We call on institutions, newsrooms and platforms to give young people genuine opportunities to influence decisions about journalism, media policy and digital environments, not merely to be consulted, including young people from marginalised and underrepresented communities.

Democracy depends on our ability to access reliable information, form our own opinions and question those in power. Defending independent journalism, demanding accountable digital platforms and enabling meaningful youth participation contribute directly to the Council of Europe's New Democratic Pact for Europe.

Our pledge

We pledge to be a generation that values truth, stands up for independent journalism and refuses to accept a world where manipulation, intimidation or silence prevail. Through youth initiatives, peer learning and cooperation in our communities, we will turn these convictions into action and make our voices heard in shaping a more informed, inclusive and democratic future.

Journalists matter to us because our freedom to know, question and participate in democracy matters to us.