



Confidence in tomorrow? ●

CONFIDENCE IN TOMORROW! ●

This statement summarises the conclusions of the Youth Event [Confidence in Tomorrow](#) that took place in the context of Liechtenstein's Presidency of the Council of Europe from 14-16 May 2024 at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. The event marked the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe and its contribution to safe-guarding human rights, democracy and the rule of law and aimed to renew and strengthen partnership between the Council of Europe and young people. Young people, representing a variety of youth civil society organisations, and representatives of the governments of the member states of the Council of Europe, shared their concerns about, commitment to and aspirations for the revitalisation of democracy in Europe.

Making a future full of confidence, requires action and partnership today.

Young people are hit hardest by many of the issues facing the world today, whether armed conflict, abuse of human rights, austerity, or the negative consequences of AI. Young people want to be confident in tomorrow but need duty-bearers to step up and act in partnership with us. The burden of power-sharing with rights-holders is upon governments, institutions, and representatives of young people. Young people and our institutional allies have spoken up time and again, producing recommendations, engaging in decision-making, and proposing solutions to shape our common democratic future. Today, shared commitment to creating confidence in tomorrow is needed like never before.

How can we have confidence in tomorrow when we cannot contribute to it today? Young people risk losing confidence in institutions, when their capacity to protect and uphold human rights and the rule of law, to promote peace, or prevent war is undermined. Having signed so many petitions, protested and campaigned continuously, successive generations are getting tired. To build confidence we need mutual trust. That requires work.

We are concerned about human rights, the only universal standard for respecting human dignity. Their centrality in our societies is threatened when they exist on paper but are not implemented in practice. A culture of impunity is absolving duty-bearers of their responsibility and accountability. Rights holders feel left behind in an increasingly polarised and oppressive political space. We must stand strong together for these values, especially when it becomes popular to argue for some people's rights over others. Human rights belong to us all by virtue of our existence as humans and it is a joint fight not to lose this humanity.

We care deeply about democracy. We fight and risk our lives for democracy. When we protest in the streets and prove to be inconvenient, this is democracy. Our civic space is not only shrinking but it is being attacked, with authoritarianism and anti-democracy as the new trend. We want to make robust and pluralistic democracy cool again. We are passionate and we demand to be listened to. We should not be silenced because we are not participating in conventional ways. We all must be listened to because it is our right. There is no space for exclusion or discrimination because we all belong in an equitable tomorrow. Apathy and inaction are not an option.

Our hope is not abstract. It is a political mission. Young people have always been the most precise compass for where democracy and human rights need to be. From youth and student movements in the 1960s, to our movements and protests today, we have been at the forefront. We have shown shared commitment and determination in the face of the climate crisis and democratic backsliding. Young people contribute to our understanding of contemporary issues with the knowledge and expertise we produce. We have proven to be on the right side of history. Allyship with our institutional partners has created structures like co-management through which rights are exercised and elaborated upon. Let's continue to be allies, revitalising mutual trust, to facilitate constructive deliberation.

To create tomorrow, basic needs must be met today. Better socio-economic conditions are the prerequisite for young people to participate in society. Inequalities in terms of employment, health, education and housing are pervasive and intersect to cause marginalisation and disadvantage. We need a level playing field and investment in youth. Conflict, insecurity, and our environment are also fundamental challenges for youth, peace and security. There is an urgent need for peace - when there are rockets in the sky, young people cannot focus on tomorrow.

We need to free education from its misuse as an instrument for social control. Education should respond to the needs of young people today, especially in equipping more young people with the civic skills to participate actively in society. Human rights education through formal and non-formal education helps socialise young people with human rights and democratic values. Young people need safe spaces to learn informally, develop critical thinking and break down barriers. All education needs to be academically free, accessible, inclusive and safeguarded from threats posed by disinformation and artificial intelligence.

This message is more than a call to action, more than mere words. It is itself a form of power. Use this message to promote our values of democracy and human rights. Each of us has power as individuals and as stakeholders of the Council of Europe to shape our society and how we think about the future. Young people need allies in governments and institutions to share in our hope and help us overcome structural constraints. Let's adopt radical humanity and democratic conviction and use our power to create a tomorrow we can be confident in.