



Priorities 2024-27 of the Council of Europe youth sector (“Youth for Democracy” sub-programme)

As adopted by the Joint Council on Youth during its 48th meeting

1. Priority 1: Revitalising pluralistic democracy

Immediate outcome:

Youth organisations and member States have increased their capacity to develop youth policy and youth work for the democratic participation of young people.

The sustainability of the Council of Europe’s core values relies also on the creativity, competences, social commitment, and contribution of young people as well as on their confidence in the future. Youth policies and youth work practice must support young people to realise their full potential as autonomous members of society, enabling them to develop life plans and exercise their democratic citizenship. Youth workers should also be helped to develop their competences and skills to create and develop spaces where they can support young people’s participation. Special attention will be paid to young people’s participation in political processes; follow-up to the Democracy Here | Democracy Now campaign and its Call for Action. Throughout this priority, the participation of minority groups and young people with disabilities will be promoted, thanks to improved accessibility of decision-making processes, instruments and communication channels. Inclusive youth work will be promoted as well.

Key guiding reference documents:

- *First thematic priority of the Council of Europe Youth sector strategy 2030;*
- *Committee of Ministers’ declaration, adopted at its 129th Session (Helsinki, May 2019): reference to a “meaningful and transparent dialogue with civil society at all levels”;*
- *Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)6 on protecting youth civil society and young people, and supporting their participation in democratic processes;*
- *Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 on the need to strengthen the protection and the promotion of civil society space in Europe;*
- *Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe;*
- *Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation Rec(2006)14 on citizenship and participation of young people in public life;*
- *Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation CM/Rec(2006)1 on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development;*
- *Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation CM/Rec(2004)13 on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life;*
- *Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2192 (2017) on youth against corruption;*
- *Congress Resolution 386 (2015) Bringing down barriers to youth participation: adopting a lingua franca for local and regional authorities and young people;*
- *Congress Resolution 387 (2015) Voting at 16 – Consequences on youth participation at local and regional level;*

- *Congress Resolution 346 (2012) Youth and democracy: the changing face of youth political engagement;*
- *Conference of INGO's roadmap for youth participation (2018-21).*

Programme orientations:

- 1.1. Advocating a sustainable enabling environment and an expanding civic space for youth civil society in which young people can exercise their right to assemble and to freely form, join and be active in associations, in line with the requirements of CM/Rec(2022)6 and the conclusions of its review process;
- 1.2. Supporting/advising/building the capacity of other Council of Europe entities in youth participation and integrating a youth perspective in their working methods and deliverables, for instance through training, development of check-lists/benchmarks for youth-friendly policies;
- 1.3. Supporting democratic youth civil society organisations, both in national contexts and in exile, who are defending the Council of Europe's core values, including those from Belarus and the Russian Federation, and which are taking a stand against autocratic regimes;
- 1.4. Advancing young people's participation in political processes;
- 1.5. Supporting member States and youth organisations to implement the principles of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and the CMJ guidelines on young people's participation currently under preparation; further disseminating the "Have your say" manual to public authorities and the non-governmental sector;
- 1.6. Supporting the capacity of youth organisations to participate and facilitate the participation of young people in decision-making processes, both online and in-person, at local and regional levels, with a renewed focus on youth organisations working with young people in rural areas, from minorities, or vulnerable groups;
- 1.7. Supporting youth policy actors to understand and address the impact of the climate crisis and environmental degradation on young people and democracy;
- 1.8. Supporting youth policy actors to understand and influence the impact of artificial intelligence on young people, and supporting youth participation in artificial intelligence and Internet governance processes;
- 1.9. Supporting youth policy actors to understand and address the impact of socio-economic inequalities and injustice on youth political participation;
- 1.10. Building on past experiences and current developments, strengthening the strategic co-operation between the Youth Department and its statutory bodies and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

2. Priority 2: Young people's access to rights

Immediate outcome:

Young people and youth organisations have increased their capacity to access their rights and advocate for human rights and citizenship education.

Young people's access to rights depends on their capacity to exercise them, which presupposes knowledge of them gained through awareness raising and capacity building. The promotion of access to rights for all young people, including from minority groups and people with disabilities, will be pursued with member States and youth organisations through measures to support the implementation (at local, regional, national and European levels) of the Committee of Ministers' recommendations CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights and CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights, following on from the reviews of implementation of these texts. Special attention will be paid to the continuation of the Human Rights Education Youth Programme – both on- and offline, the follow-up to the review of the implementation of the EDC/HRE Charter and to the Turin Forum, as well as any evaluation of and latest developments by the Council of Europe in the Internet and media literacy fields.

Key guiding reference documents:

- *Second thematic priority of the Council of Europe Youth sector strategy 2030;*
- *Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights;*
- *Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights (ENTER! Recommendation);*
- *Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education;*
- *Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)10 on developing and promoting digital citizenship education;*
- *Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 215 (2013) on young people's access to fundamental rights;*
- *Congress Resolution 319 (2010) on the integration of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods;*
- *Congress Resolution 442 (2019) on social rights of young people: the role of local and regional authorities;*
- *Congress Resolution 414 (2017) Forever young? The role of youth policies and youth work at local and regional levels in supporting young people's transition to autonomy and working life;*
- *Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-27;*
- *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.*

Programme orientations:

- 2.1. Implementing the roadmap on the dissemination of Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights and follow-up of its first five-year review;
- 2.2. Implementing support measures to member States, local authorities and youth organisations to promote the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights (ENTER! Recommendation);
- 2.3. Continuing the Human Rights Education Youth Programme, and follow-up to the review of the implementation of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education and the Turin Forum;
- 2.4. Supporting young people's right to information by developing sources of knowledge, data and media literacy with and for children and young people;
- 2.5. Increasing the understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic and other important challenges facing young people, such as the health, economic and other crises, and addressing their impact on youth and their exercise of social rights;
- 2.6. Further introducing rights-based approaches into youth policies, programmes and projects;
- 2.7. Ensuring an increased focus on mental health and mental well-being, including the provision of accessible and free mental health services, taking an intersectional approach;
- 2.8. Exploring and reinforcing the Youth Department's work on the sustainable development of youth mobility schemes in Europe, especially their economic, environmental and social aspects;
- 2.9. Supporting young people's rights to live in sustainable societies and to benefit from a healthy environment which are intrinsically linked to their well-being.

3. Priority 3: Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies

Immediate outcome:

Youth workers and young people have gained knowledge and skills to work on peacebuilding and intercultural dialogue to prevent and combat discrimination, different forms of oppression, exclusion, and violent extremism.

Preventing and counteracting discrimination, to allow the democratic participation of all young people, remain central to the Council of Europe's youth policy and a permanent concern of its partners. These are necessary steps to strengthen social cohesion, respect for diversity and human rights, inclusiveness and equity. A specific focus is also needed on developing intercultural competences and detecting, preventing and combating all forms of discrimination, on whatever grounds, taking an intersectional

approach, and enhancing the participation of vulnerable and young people with fewer opportunities. Throughout this priority, inclusive youth work and the participation and inclusion of young people with disabilities, will be promoted, including by improving the accessibility of the youth sector's instruments and communication channels.

The lives of too many young people are still shaped by armed conflicts and their consequences, many thousands of young people in Europe live in war zones, have fled war or live in areas of frozen conflict and are deprived of their fundamental human rights. Youth organisations and youth workers play an important role in supporting young people in these situations and in promoting the application of the Council of Europe's standards and values in peacebuilding activities. Youth organisations and youth workers also play a role in intercultural dialogue with neighbouring regions and involving young people in confidence-building and conflict-transformation activities in the spirit of the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and of the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue.

Key guiding reference documents:

- *Third thematic priority of the Council of Europe Youth sector strategy 2030;*
- *Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood;*
- *Committee of Ministers' recommendation CM/Rec(2023).. on Roma youth participation;*
- *Parliamentary Assembly resolution 2378 (2021) on strengthening the role of young people in the prevention and resolution of conflicts;*
- *Congress Resolution 366 (2014) on empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels;*
- *Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue;*
- *Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-23;*
- *Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-23;*
- *Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;*
- *Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Travellers Inclusion (2020-25).*

Programme orientations:

- 3.1. Combating all forms of discrimination, racism, oppression and exclusion, including structural forms and integrating an intersectional approach, with a specific focus on:
 - 3.1.1. Roma youth participation and combating antigypsyism;
 - 3.1.2. social inclusion of young refugees and their transition from childhood to adulthood;
 - 3.1.3. multiple discrimination and intersectionality (including race, ethnicity, gender equality, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability).
- 3.2. Enabling young people, through capacity-building and education, to play an active role in and promote peaceful societies by providing them with opportunities for:
 - 3.2.1. intercultural dialogue and intercultural learning;
 - 3.2.2. peace education, peacebuilding and conflict transformation, as well as participation in related processes;
 - 3.2.3. co-operation with neighbouring and other world regions;
 - 3.2.4. convening institutions, representative bodies, community groups and the wider society for dialogue;
 - 3.2.5. volunteering and solidarity actions at local, national, regional and international levels;
- 3.3. Enhancing the inclusion and social, economic and political participation of young people from rural areas and from disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- 3.4. Promoting the access to quality services for mental health and well-being, as well as opportunities for personal development for young refugees and all young people in and from war zones, with particular focus on young people facing multiple forms of discrimination.

4. Priority 4: Youth work

Immediate outcome:

Youth organisations and member States have increased their capacity to strengthen, recognise and advance youth work policies and practices, in line with applicable European standards and policies.

Youth work as a social practice makes an important contribution to active citizenship and youth participation by providing opportunities to acquire the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding required for effective civic engagement and social action in democratic culture. In this respect, special attention will be paid to the dissemination of Council of Europe standards in relation to the training of youth workers and to the quality of youth work provisions, as well as to the follow-up to the review of CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work.

The quality and innovation of non-formal education and training activities for young multipliers, notably through the European Youth Centres, need to be permanently developed and reviewed, in particular their role as inspirational support to youth organisations.

Key guiding reference documents:

- *Fourth thematic priority of the Council of Europe Youth sector strategy 2030;*
- *Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work;*
- *Committee of Ministers' Recommendation Rec(2003)8 on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people;*
- *Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio;*
- *Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres: [criteria and procedure; role, value and impact of youth centres](#);*
- *Quality standards in education and training activities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe;*
- *Congress resolution 463(2021) on youth work: the role of local and regional authorities.*

Programme orientations:

- 4.1. pursuing the dissemination and implementation of Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work and follow-up to its review;
- 4.2. contributing to the wider European Youth Work Agenda in co-operation with the European Commission;
- 4.3. developing support measures to youth work in war zones and areas of conflict, with a view to strengthening youth workers' capacity to help young people living in such zones;
- 4.4. supporting access to the quality development and recognition of youth work and non-formal education and learning and their dissemination to member States (e.g. through the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres and the Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio);
- 4.5. pursuing quality development and innovation (including digitalisation) in the capacity-building activities of the Youth Department, in particular through the programmes of the European Youth Centres.

5. Priority 5: Developing and strengthening youth policy based on Council of Europe standards

Immediate outcome

The fifth priority focuses on supporting the member States to improve and develop their youth policy in line with Council of Europe standards. The terminology suggested is slightly different to that used for the biennium 2022-23, which is *intergovernmental co-operation on youth policy*. The new formulation

focuses more on the desired outcome, while it is understood that intergovernmental co-operation will continue to be an important means to achieve this.

As mentioned earlier, this priority falls within the remit of the CDEJ and is funded through the Ordinary Budget, and it is given here for information only.

Member States have increased their capacity to develop and strengthen youth policies promoting Council of Europe standards.

Programme orientations:

- 5.1. assisting member States to integrate Council of Europe standards into national youth policies, develop their youth work policies, action plans and strategies through a diversified package of assistance measures, and encouraging them to do so in close co-operation with national youth organisations and networks;
- 5.2. supporting the capacity building of relevant public authorities to implement national youth policies in accordance with the Council of Europe's standards and approaches, and fostering their co-operation with various groups of young people and youth NGOs;
- 5.3. ensuring the dissemination and implementation of Council of Europe standards, with a special focus on the Council of Europe Youth sector strategy 2030 (Resolution CM/Res(2020)2) and on Committee of Ministers' recommendations (CM/Rec(2019)4 on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood, CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work, CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights and CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights);
- 5.4. carrying out the mid-term review of the Council of Europe Youth sector strategy 2030 and follow-up to its conclusions;
- 5.5. developing the network of centres holding the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres and assisting interested member States to develop national quality standards for youth centres;
- 5.6. encouraging the enlargement of the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres programme, taking into account its geographical balance.