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CONFIDENCE IN TOMORROW

Shaping democracy and human rights together with young people



CONFIANCE EN L'AVENIR

Façonner la démocratie et les droits humains avec les jeunes

Centre européen de la jeunesse | European Youth Centre
Strasbourg, 14-16 mai 2024

DRAFT REPORT

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14-16 May 2024, European Youth Centre, Strasbourg

Report

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... [O]f course: "we have lost the way

...

More than machinery, we need humanity
More than cleverness, we need kindness and gentleness
Without these qualities life will be violent, and all will be lost"

In the stillness of our complacency,
We turn away from cries unheard,
As bombs tear through homes and hearts,
Leaving scars unseen, yet deeply felt.

Our silence echoes in the hollows
Of hungry bellies and empty streets,
Where famine's cruel grip tightens,
Yet our voices remain muted, indifferent.

So: "To those who can hear me, I say
Do not despair

...

The hate of men will pass, and dictators die
And the power they took from the people will return to the people
And so long as men die, liberty will never perish"

Freedom runs wild in our essence
the power to build and communicate led us to an amazing adventure
in the multi-cosmos
full of a marvelous existence that can't be summed up in the material world

so, today, here, I stand on the shoulders of the old in order to behold the future
today, here, I'm not Diogo, I'm not even a person
I'm just an existence, a strong intention
I'm just an energy driven to unfold the truth within anyone,
to everyone

Today I say I'm sorry
Today I'm love, just pure and magnified love
love that flows in a deep level of powerful words
words of hope, words of liberty
words that can change people that can change the world

so, today: "In the name of democracy, let us all unite"

Extract from slam poem presented during Confidence in Tomorrow youth event

Diogo Divagações

Executive Summary

Throughout its history, the Council of Europe has recognised the vital role of youth organisations and young people in safeguarding its core values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. To ensure confidence in the future of democracy and human rights in Europe, supporting a confident, hopeful, and committed youth is essential. The Council of Europe prioritises youth revitalising democracy, as outlined in the Youth Sector Strategy 2030. The Declaration of the Reykjavik Summit of Heads of State and Government, [United in our values](#), reaffirms this commitment, emphasising youth participation and ongoing efforts to uphold democratic principles.

The Confidence in Tomorrow youth event took place from 13- 16 May 2024, in Strasbourg, in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe under the Presidency of Liechtenstein. The event aimed to strengthen the relationship between the Council's mission and young people, emphasising values and principles inherent to the Council of Europe and guided by the Reykjavik Principles of Democracy. It provided a space for young people to share their aspirations for a democratic Europe and make proposals to shape a brighter future for democracy and human rights. During the event, participants engaged in plenary sessions, working groups, and dialogues with permanent representatives of member states to the Council of Europe, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and Secretaries of State attending the Committee of Ministers meeting. This report offers an overview of the key findings and conclusions drawn from the discussions of the event. Chapter 1 of this report provides the background context to the event.

In Chapter 2, the importance of the Reykjavik Declaration in the context of democratic 'backsliding' across Europe was underlined, with the significant role of young people in implementing the Declaration discussed in detail. The participants and invited speakers were not completely 'confident in tomorrow', with many responding highlighting a diverse number of challenges and reporting that they felt concerned, confused, uncertain and curious about the future. Nevertheless, many also felt confident, courageous and optimistic for the future of Europe, particularly because of such events and the work of youth across different member states and "because we are together in the process", as highlighted by Liliya Elenkova, the vice-chair of the European Steering Committee for Youth.

Chapter 3 explores the perspectives of the youth participants and invited speakers on creating confidence for tomorrow through youth participation, who provided several proposals and insights into what is important and actions to take forward. Eight thematic working group sessions were conducted during the event, later discussed in section 3.2. These themes included: peace and war, climate crisis and environmental degradation, equality and non-discrimination, social and economic progress, democratic participation, digitalisation and AI, access to quality education, and health and mental well-being. Calls for action and recommendations related to these themes are then outlined, which target youth organisations/ national youth councils, member states, and the Council of Europe.

Chapter 4 provides details of the conclusions of the event, including the Message of the event and the speeches given at the Council of Europe's 75th anniversary on the 16 May by Advisory Council chair, Nina Grmuša, and bureau member, Maurizio Cuttin.

1. Introduction

This report, which does not claim to be comprehensive, offers an overview of the discussions in the plenary sessions, and the main results of the working groups during the Council of Europe 'Confidence in Tomorrow' youth event. It also includes excerpts from participant input as well as examples of good practices which were highlighted during the event.

1.1. Background

The founding of the Council of Europe on 5 May 1949 in London was seen as "[something new and hopeful in European life \[...\] the establishment of a common democratic institution](#)" at a time of great uncertainty for Europe and in the aftermath of the Second World War (Council of Europe, n.d.). The [Statute](#) of the organisation proclaims that "the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international cooperation is vital for the preservation of human society and civilisation" (Council of Europe, 1949) – words which have not lost any relevance 75 years on.

From the Congress of Europe in The Hague in 1948 throughout the life of the Council of Europe, youth organisations and young people have been playing a crucial role in safeguarding the values of this organisation. To have confidence in the future of democracy and human rights in Europe, one must support a confident, hopeful and committed youth, able to participate in all democratic life and decision-making processes. This requires addressing the challenges and issues together with young people, particularly those that are of most concern to them, such as climate crises, intergenerational injustices, and lack of trust in democracy and democratic processes.

Young people revitalising democracy is a priority of the Council of Europe, as also laid out in the Youth Sector Strategy 2030 adopted by the Committee of Ministers [CM/Res(2020)2]. The [Call for Action](#) by participants of the 2022 Youth Action Week gives testimony to the young people's creativity, energy and resolve to revitalise democracy based on individual freedom, political liberty, human rights and the rule of law (Council of Europe, 2022). Against this backdrop, the 75th anniversary in 2024 represented a further, important opportunity to strengthen the mutual commitments between the Council of Europe and young people.

The Reykjavik Declaration

The fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe held in Reykjavík in May 2023 declared to invest in the democratic future by ensuring that everyone can play their role in democratic processes. The [Reykjavik Declaration](#), which emerged from this Summit, recognised the important role of youth participation in enhancing the effectiveness of public policies and strengthening democratic institutions through dialogue with young people. It renews emphasis on youth with their role of revitalising democracy, encouraging their active involvement in shaping policies that are transparent, responsive, and inclusive. It also holds a call for action to youth to be at the forefront of democratic renewal (Council of Europe, 2023). For the first time in writing, the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy express the commitment to include a youth perspective in the intergovernmental and other deliberations of the Organisation. Appreciating the significance of young people and youth policy, they call to support the “participation of young persons in democratic life and decision-making processes, including through education about human rights and core democratic values, such as pluralism, inclusion, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability (...)” (Council of Europe, 2023, p. 16).

1.2. The youth event

The Confidence in Tomorrow youth event was organised in the framework of the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe under the Presidency of Liechtenstein. The event sought to further renew and strengthen the close relationship between the mission of the Council of Europe and the current and future generations of young people. It created a space for young people to share their aspirations and commitment to a democratic Europe and to contribute, as irreplaceable partners of the Council of Europe, to shaping the future of democracy and human rights in Europe. The youth event developed ideas and proposals for strengthening democracy based on the values and principles of the Council of Europe, part of the common heritage of all people in Europe.

The youth event gathered together 120 representatives of national youth councils, international youth organisations, as well as representatives of the national authorities in charge of youth. They participated in a three-day programme which featured plenary and working group sessions. Specific attention was placed on the application of the Reykjavik Principles of Democracy in the shaping of the mutual roles of the participants and the Council of Europe. There were opportunities provided for young people to engage with decision-makers, namely during a dinner with diplomats from a significant number of Council of Europe member states, and a dialogue session with Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Secretaries of State. Key messages of the youth event were conveyed by the young participants as part of the official programme of the 75th anniversary celebrations in the Strasbourg Opera House on 16 May by Advisory Council chair, Nina Grmuša, and bureau member, Maurizio Cuttin.

1.3. Aim and objectives

The youth event aimed to renew and strengthen the close relationship between the mission of the Council of Europe and the current and future generations of young people. It was primarily designed to bring together participants who were representatives of a national youth council, or national organisations of similar scope, members of the Advisory Council on Youth and of the European Steering Committee for Youth (who were also members of the preparatory team of the event), representatives of international youth organisations, and organisations with an observer role to the Joint Council (e.g., the European Youth Card Association and the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency), young activists for human rights and democracy who have been involved in specific projects of the European Youth Foundation or in the youth campaign for revitalising democracy, and finally, youth delegates to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

The main event objectives were to :

1. Associate young people and youth civil society to the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe and its relevance today.
2. Engage youth organisations, notably national youth councils, as partners in the follow-up to the conclusions of the Reykjavik Summit, in particular the implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy.
3. Identify emerging (youth) issues and explore the approaches for integrating a youth perspective across the work of the Council of Europe and its member states.
4. Strengthen youth participation, by pursuing dialogue between young people, youth civil society and political decision-makers.

The appended programme outline provides a sketch of the main programme flow and contents (see Appendix 1).

1.4. Structure of report

Following this introduction chapter which sets the background, context and description of the event and outlines the youth event aim and objectives, as well as the methods employed. Chapter 2 explores the relevance of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy to young people and discusses the young people's feelings regarding the future and their current realities. In Chapter 3 the potential role of youth participation to revitalise democracy is discussed, exploring current initiatives and offering recommendations and calls for action. Finally, the report concludes by outlining the youth message, the dialogue with Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Secretaries of State and the youth speeches at the 75th anniversary event.

2. Creating Confidence in Tomorrow using the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy

2.1 What is the relevance of the Reykjavik Declaration for the youth sector?

""There is a lot to do, but there is always more to do. Human rights, democracy and rule of law don't just happen, we must win them over and over."

(Marija Pejčinović Burić , Secretary General of the Council of Europe).

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, stressed the need for youth participation in democratic life particularly in the context of current *"clear and present dangers to our environment"*. In her opening speech, the Secretary General highlighted the importance of the Reykjavik Declaration in the context of democratic 'backsliding' across Europe. The first day of the youth event was dedicated to learning more about each other and the Council of Europe, as well as to exploring the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy with participants. Anna Knobbout, a bureau member of the Advisory Council on Youth, underlined the importance of implementing this Declaration in all member states, stressing the need to be united to overcome challenges as well as the key role of youth and their allies for ensuring this. She also specified that the Council of Europe can be a *"vehicle and principle actor so that the voice of young people at national levels can be heard"*, noting that, in October 2023, the [Joint Council on Youth](#), had initiated the development of a Reference framework on the youth perspective that will guide the work of the Council of Europe and of the member states. Domenik Wagner, chair of the Ministers' Deputies and Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the Council of Europe, said that the youth event itself reflected *"our commitment to youth participation and to the principles of Reykjavik Declaration to ensure the continent remains democratic and finds peace again"*.

2.2 Can we have confidence in tomorrow?

Concern, confusion, curiosity

During the event, the participants expressed their concerns about the future, due to a backsliding of democracy, the rise in far-right groups across Europe as well as increased uncertainty. Others felt curiosity and confusion. The President of the European Youth Forum, María Rodríguez Alcázar, explained that young people often described feeling discouraged, highlighting the challenges accessing rights in practice with the current socio-economic situation facing young people, such as poor quality conditions in the labour market, difficulties in participating in society and constraints put on young people's freedom of expression, the closure of long-standing national youth councils, and lack of support for youth organisations. While noting positive developments, such as efforts to improve healthcare in many member states, she further spoke of the many challenges to human rights, outlining several reasons that she is not fully confident about the future. These issues included discrimination faced by young people in many parts of society, the shrinking of youth spaces, new challenges such as the climate crisis and being under-equipped for the "digital revolution". The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty, similarly marked his concern and lack of confidence in tomorrow stating "*I am very worried... in my life I have never been more worried*" as he felt that "*human rights have lost their part at the heart of life*" and risk becoming "*optional*" rather than front and centre of our lives and societies.

Cautious confidence and hope

Nevertheless, many participants also reported their positive feelings, including those of courage and optimism, which they associated with the opportunities provided by such events which bring together many young people and different stakeholders.

"Even though the future is concerning, we still remain optimistic and confident in tomorrow, because we know young people can bring change for tomorrow. Looking at this room I can only be more confident"
(Participant, Plenary Day 1).



Other invited speakers echoed similar feelings, with, for example, Domenik Wanger sharing many of the concerns raised by the young people. However, he also stated that he had confidence in tomorrow for several reasons, including the institutionalisation of international cooperation, young people's involvement in the Council of Europe co-management system, and young people's dedication and commitment to taking on challenges of our times, such as equality, disinformation, democratic backsliding. Marija Pejčinović Burić, similarly, told that *"I have confidence in tomorrow because I have confidence in you [young people]"*. She described the *"confidence that we share"* marking the opportunities for the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe. However, she stressed the need for increased political will to ensure that *"we can go forward, and forge together"*, calling on political decision-makers to respond to the demands, energy and ideas of young people. She also called for cooperation that *"must ensure that the rights should be applied"* to guarantee that *"our norms prevail long term"*.



2.2.3 Understanding the realities of young people

The Commissioner of Human Rights expressed his commitment for the integrating young people's perspectives in the Office's work, stating "*I want you to tell me what I should be doing and how I should do my job*". Several issues were raised by participants in response such as concerns about the provision of rights of LGBTI+ persons and the rise of the anti-gender movement across Europe; challenges in accessing education and employment; intersectional issues present in for young people in island contexts such as 'les Outre-mer français'; the shrinking of civic space, particularly youth civic spaces, with for example, British youth council risking closure; limitations to freedom of expression and to associate, with examples related to ongoing Georgian protests and young people across Europe risking their safety during peaceful protests and encampments; outdated election laws limiting young people's ability to vote and be elected; ensuring representation of marginalised young people in democratic processes; and fears of repercussions of activism related to data gathered on young people. Participants also had several questions regarding the role of the Council of Europe in addressing such issues.

In response, the Commissioner acknowledged the essential role of youth organisations. . He encouraged young people to "*make sure your voice is heard more generally on all the issues of the planet – not just youth issues – need a voice on climate, on the conflict in Middle East, regulation of AI. Ministers need to hear you on those issues as well*". The Commissioner stressed the need for a youth perspective across all thematic areas and organisations, as well as a recognition of intersectionality.



He underlined the importance of standing up for those most at risk of being forgotten, including young people on islands, and committed himself to "*engage with the full basket of issues*". He also gave the example of the inaccessibility of education during the pandemic for Roma children and young people, highlighting the importance of including Roma youth voice in planning for future pandemics.

Furthermore, the Commissioner discussed the need to stand up for all human rights including those of marginalised groups including the rights of the LGBTI+ community. He specifically noted discrimination against transgender persons to be "*horrible*" and his commitment to "*stand up for these communities with every breath I have*". Finally, the Commissioner stressed his concern about shrinking civil society space and gave the example of foreign funding laws which are tools to close civil society to limit its engagement. Here, he highlighted four key areas for action:

1. Stop the inappropriate controls of funding of civil society organisations,

2. Stop the over-regulation of civil society organisations,
3. Create structured spaces to share and reflect on perspectives in structures
4. The need to ensure people are, and feel, safe.

Different aspects of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy were discussed in Working Groups to better understand the relevance of these principles mean for the realities experienced by young people in Europe. Topics covered included:

1. Democratic participation through free and fair elections
2. Democratic participation: beyond voting
3. Equal chances to participate: combating exclusion, discrimination and violence
4. Effective democratic institutions are youthful
5. Separation of powers is core to Democracy
6. Access to justice
7. Free to express
8. No one is born a democrat, we all learn!
9. Free to associate: civil society and democracy.



The workshops highlighted several key challenges that young people confront, described below. These challenges were acknowledged to be of particular concern in the context of rising polarisation and populist movements across Europe pose a threat to young people, particularly marginalised youth, as well as democracy in general. For example, national minorities, Roma, migrant youth, young people with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ youth, among others, are excluded from society in a range of ways and face increased risks of discrimination. Gender-related issues were also described as a key general concern, with, for example, gender-based violence considered by participants to be a prevalent issue impacting young people across Europe. Other issues found challenges in the democratic participation of youth, civil society spaces, and young people's interactions with institutions and governmental bodies. These are described below:

A. Democratic Participation

1. Limited Access to Rights

Young people confront difficulties in benefiting from rights such as the right to assembly, protest, access to information and the justice system, or access to human rights education. A lack of education and understanding exacerbates these issues.

2. Lack of education

Limited opportunities for education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are available to young people, combined with limited opportunities to practice democracy while learning about it.

3. Underrepresentation and lack of opportunities

Young people feel unheard and underrepresented within large institutions. There are insufficient opportunities and a lack of appropriate infrastructure for young people, particularly marginalised youth, to participate in democratic processes and principles. There is also a lack of a supportive environment to encourage their participation.

4. Tokenism

Token representation of young people undermines genuine participation.

5. Engagement on decision-makers terms

Young people are often made responsible for systemic barriers to their participation, frequently expected to engage in ways presumed (but often not) inclusive by policymakers.

6. Disconnect

There is a disconnect between the communication of decision-makers and young people, with young people often sharing their viewpoints online on platforms that are not leveraged by decision-makers who often focus on more formal communication approaches which often are successful in reaching young people.

7. Basic Needs versus Politics

Meeting essential socio-economic needs is often a young person's priority over political engagement. For example, financially vulnerable young people may struggle to participate due to time and resource constraints. There is a need to eliminate these obstacles to improve youth participation in democratic processes.

8. Lack of participation

Many young people, particularly before reaching 18 years, are often not engaging in political participation.

9. Challenges with freedom of expression

Young people do not feel safe or comfortable expressing themselves freely, facing, for example, a particular lack of tolerance of different perspectives online.

"Young people have to fight to be heard"

(Working Group rapporteur. Equal chances to participate: combating exclusion, discrimination and violence).

B. Civil society spaces

1. Civic space is shrinking

Civil society organisations (CSOs), democracy, human rights and peace, are under attack. There are insufficient safeguards on civic space, with disparities found across member states. Funding issues / a lack of resources face many in the youth sector.

2. Conditionalities

Reprimands for youth organisations that receive government financial support and have critiqued the government are a challenge.

3. Lack of exchange

There is insufficient intersectional or intergenerational exchange.

C. Interactions with institutions and governmental bodies

1. Lack of trust

Mutual mistrust between institutions and young people hinders the active participation of young people. Corruption, the erosion of democratic systems are among the causes of mistrust.

2. Lack of accountability

Confidence wanes among young people when they witness impunity and lack of accountability/ consequences of decision-makers.

2. Institutional flaws and dysfunctionality

There is a lack of appropriate institutional frameworks for the protection of young vulnerable and marginalised people who experience exclusion.

3. Barriers to justice

Language barriers, complex legal terminology, and difficulties faced by people with disabilities hinder access to the justice system.

3. Creating Hope for Tomorrow: Unpacking the Reykjavik Principles

3.1 Creating confidence through participatory democracy

Further and increased action from the Council of Europe was called for by María Rodríguez Alcázar who stressed a need for more ambition, including, for example, for the Committee of Ministers to further engage as a partner for youth and support the strengthening civil society and young people's rights. She also expressed the need to go further with the implementation and use of Council of Europe mechanisms to ensure human rights of young people are protected, including, for instance, the European Social Charter and the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (CM/Rec(2016)7) on Young People's Access to Rights. She additionally, called on the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty, to focus on addressing the need to update the many outdated laws across Europe which negatively impact the lives of young people:

"We are ambitious and understand you cannot do all yourself. Let's make the work of Michael [the Commissioner] easier, let's ask them to put more ambition in the mechanisms that are there."



The Commissioner also requested the Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth to discuss how they can establish regular, future collaboration which can support him in understanding the situations, perspectives, concerns, and hopes for young people across Europe:

"I need you and the Advisory Council (AC) to have a specific discussion on how you talk to me. I want a regular periodic discussion. I want you to say, 'Wake up'. I fear the condescending space, where I say nice things but I don't mean them. I am therefore formally asking the AC to discuss how we will engage together going forward... This is a cry for help from me"

The chair of the Advisory Council thanked the Commissioner for the formal invitation and said committed to follow up with a formal invitation, noting the importance for young people to be included in all policies: "*Youthless policy is useless policy*".

The need to explicitly talk about young people about human rights and democracy in Europe was underlined as well as the importance of following through on the implementation of Recommendations and other key acquis within member states. Here, the key role of civil servants as youth allies was noted. Democratic participation was also stressed as having a much broader reach than elections. Several important, more specific issues were also raised by participants during plenary sessions as highlighted below:

A. Disability

There is a need to increase the ease of participation of young people with disabilities in Council of Europe activities, through, for example, increased accessibility, barrier-free infrastructure, and support for personal assistance. There is a need to consider quiet spaces and have more free time to care for ourselves during days, for instance. Specific attention should be paid to those with invisible disabilities.



B. Lack of confidence in young people by institutions and decision-makers

Questions were asked on why international institutions do not have confidence in young people and how can young people be supported to make actionable input at expert meetings.

C. Lack of time resources

Young people have a lack of time to participate due to many facing challenging situations. There is also a need to recognise the sacrifices young people are making when seeking to understand young people's participation or lack thereof.



D. Lack of opportunities to participate

The Advisory Council on Youth has unique benefits but most young people's opportunities to participate are significantly more limited. Young people must be provided with more legitimacy and support to express their political participation and opinions in ways and spaces that they feel most appropriate.

E. Gender gaps in democratic participation

Young men and boys are moving further away from supporting human rights. They should be targeted, and supported, with a need to reinforce the message that "*no matter who you are you benefit from equal society*" (Participant, Plenary Day 2).

Despite the many challenges and issues highlighted during the event, there were also several opportunities and positive examples discussed. Nina Grmuša, the chair of the Advisory Council on Youth, for example, commended the momentum that has been created with the Reykjavik Declaration which developed out of a strategic and thoughtful approach and has put youth on the agenda of other bodies. Nevertheless, she stressed the need for young people to also shape these agendas and the necessity of putting forward practices and creating structures to advance onwards. Explaining the role of the Advisory Council on Youth, Nina described the benefits and opportunities of co-management within the Council of Europe. For example, the opportunities of young people, through the Advisory Council to shape different recommendations and frameworks, such as, most recently, work which has been done on Recommendation on Roma Youth Participation, Young People and Climate Action, Rural Youth.

Nina also discussed the need to be strategic in finding ways to advance and Jorge Orlando Queirós, chair of the European Steering Committee for Youth, similarly described the importance of how to engage and put issues forward to ensure the youth perspective and needs are listened to. He highlighted results from the April 2024



Eurobarometer which demonstrated the continuous need to reach other young people and get them involved in democratic processes. Jorge also underlined the importance of young people in Europe but the lack of recognition of their important role in our democracies:

"Young people are the most effective renewable energy but we still have not figured out how to use this".

The important role of young people in democracy was further stressed by the participants:

"Young people have been the most precise compass toward the direction the society is going or should go."
(Participant, Plenary Day 2).

They also highlighted several good practice examples, including, for example:

1. The important impact that the local level organisations and youth councils can have on national democracies, with the example of Morocco which now has a youth board in all municipalities.
2. Innovative ways for young people to take part in democratic processes. For example, the 'Gen Z list' which has been created for the Croatian European Parliament elections demonstrates the young people running for these elections.

The working groups described in the previous section also included a range of proposed actions to support creating confidence in tomorrow. The key themes identified from these proposals have been grouped into several areas, described in the following subsections.

Democratic participation of youth

To ensure young people are supported and empowered to meaningfully take part in decision-making processes several areas of institutional and structural support were proposed.

1. Youth Decision-Making Power

Empower youth to feel ownership of democracy and to have decision-making authority. Active participation of young people in democratic processes to ensure fresh perspectives and ideas.

2. Amplifying Voices and Confidence

Ensure youth perspectives are heard and considered, with their opinions reaching decision-makers. Involve young people in policy development and ensure their inclusion in consultative meetings.

3. Representation and Youth Quotas

Encourage young people to hold positions of power and ensure their participation through quotas. Establish official councils for youth representation.

4. Rebranding Democratic Values

Increase efforts to better communicate through the rebranding of democratic values to make them better understood.

5. Conditions for Engagement

Empower young people, providing infrastructure and emotional support, eliminating symbolic governance, and ensuring genuine impact. Engage with young people through social media for increased youth engagement.

6. Supporting Young Candidates and Civic Society

Foundations and institutions should support young candidates and civil society organisations.

7. Building Trust in Democracy

Use a decolonial perspective and present democracy as a tool of collective liberation. Present democratic values in a youth-friendly, concrete manner. Involve young people in decision-making in meaningful, inclusive, youth-led ways to build trust between institutions and youth.

8. Transparency and Accessibility

Ensure transparency and accountability through translations and user-friendly/accessible information for all.

9. Countering Misinformation

Strengthen journalistic institutions and protest anti-democratic tendencies.

10. Financial Barriers to Youth Engagement

Provide financial support for volunteers to ensure broader participation.

11. Democracy Beyond Voting

Recognise the broader scope of democracy to include expression, youth councils, dialogue spaces, protest rights, and information points, among others.

12. Consultations and institutional representation

Establish official councils for youth representation and use social media for youth engagement.

1.1.1. Systemic issues

The participants also highlighted several systemic issues that they considered need attention to ensure better youth participation in democratic processes.

1. Corruption and Political Participation

Combat corruption to enhance trust in democratic institutions by encouraging meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes.



2. Addressing Power Concentration and Tackling Systemic Threats
Strengthen civil society to counterbalance power imbalances and encourage youth engagement in decision-making / democratic processes. Encourage young people to actively monitor and advocate for transparency, equality, and democratic values.

3. The Importance of Local Prevention Efforts

Address systemic issues and anti-democratic, and conspiracy-spreading messages which pose a threat to democracy. German anti-fascist groups work in small villages to prevent youth from joining extremist groups providing an example of how this can be done.

4. Protection of Marginalised Youth

Create spaces for safe expression and participation for marginalised individuals. Positive discrimination and media visibility can support underrepresented/marginalised youth. Advocate for more inclusive, diverse youth and student councils with higher representation of marginalised youth. Support marginalised youth through reparations, funding, and formal acknowledgement of past discrimination/ violence from institutions for marginalised groups.

5. Human Rights and Fair Elections

Monitor and observe elections to ensure fair and free processes, with transparent electoral procedures.

6. Accessibility and Freedom to Vote

Ensure good information and accessibility for all voters, including addressing barriers faced by minorities and young people abroad. Increase representation of minorities and amplify voices of third-country nationals in democratic processes.

1.1.2. Supports for youth work

1. Capacity Building

Increase the emphasis on building capacity within youth organisations and institutions and governments need to engage in continuous learning.

2. Youth Advocacy Training

Provide training for youth organisations to advocate effectively and engage stakeholders.

3. Efficient Funding Processes

Develop fast-tracked, transparent funding processes, with a particular focus on small youth organisations/ youth-led groups.

4. Collaboration

Increase advocacy for democratic processes at all levels by strengthening collaboration between youth organisations. Create robust social networks and support systems for youth organisations for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and amplifying youth perspectives.

5. Access to resources and training for youth workers

Improve communication from the Council of Europe and other institutions about existing opportunities and resources.

Democratic education

The participants also considered that education can play a key role in supporting youth democratic participation.

1. Inclusive Education for Democratic Engagement

Provision of democratic, political and civic education, human rights education, critical thinking, and digital literacy in formal and non-formal education settings.

2. Educational Entry Points

Schools and youth organisations as starting points for democratic education.

3. Education for Stakeholders

Mandatory education for stakeholders to understand youth perspectives and needs.

Political and Legal Environment

The participants highlighted the relevance of access to a supportive legal system and to justice for all, as well as the importance of ensuring young people understand legal issues, processes and systems.

1. Safe Environment for Civil Society

Take measures to foster a politically and legally safe environment for youth organisations to operate effectively and advocate for causes.

2. Core Elements of Access to Justice

Increase monitoring of impartiality, independence, and effectiveness of the legal system.

3. Legal Education and Awareness

Provide accessible, inclusive education on the legal system, legal tools and processes, including civic education in schools and through civil aid.

4. Equitable Resources

Ensure fairness by providing different resources to accommodate all and removing barriers to the justice system, including those in marginalised groups.



3.2 Navigating Thematic Challenges for Building Confidence

Eight thematic working group sessions explored important themes related to the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy as well as the existing standards and work done by the Council of Europe. Summaries of the key points of each Working Group are as follows (descriptions of each theme can be found on the event [webpage](#)):

Peace and war

"Today young people are not confident in tomorrow because living under circumstances of constant war... Young people can't be focused on tomorrow because our skies are still open. In the skies, there are a lot of rockets... We believe tomorrow will come but when have rockets above your head it's very difficult."

(Working Group representative, plenary presentation Day 2).

Four of the five participants in this Working Group had experienced war in their countries, with the majority feeling unconfident in tomorrow. The shared experience of war was reported by the Working Group rapporteur as:

"profoundly affecting our mental health and outlook on life. The trauma and instability from such experiences contribute to the lack of confidence in the future."

A number of the participants felt disillusioned with political systems that they felt had failed to prevent or resolve conflicts in their regions. This disillusionment was reported to have translated into a broader scepticism among youth in their contexts of the ability of political processes to bring about meaningful change.

"Peace isn't guaranteed; it may seem impossible. However, our mission is to transform the seemingly impossible into reality and strive towards creating a peaceful Europe." (Participant of the group).

The main themes and issues discussed centred on young people's engagement in the decision-making process and the roles of youth organisations, civil societies, governments, and European structures in peacebuilding. The participants also underlined the critical need for support systems that address the unique challenges faced by young people in conflict zones. This includes mental health services, educational opportunities, and platforms for their voices to be heard in political and social dialogues. The disproportionate impact of war on women and children was also noted.

The importance of cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration was stressed, as well as the role of the Council of Europe and of national youth councils, with the work of the Advisory Council on Youth related to this matter positively highlighted.

The impact of young people being drafted into the army, in Ukraine for example, which can have dire impacts on the demographic as well as their assets was described. The fear for Ukraine is that, due to the Russian Federation's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, any advancement or reconstruction can be destroyed at a moment's notice. While international bodies have helped to improve the situation, the war of aggression against Ukraine also has impacted negatively on resources in Ukraine. Young people continue to flee Ukraine, however, there are fears that the young people in Ukraine are being forgotten. While the Ukrainian authorities are cooperating with young people, the participants felt that there are intergenerational challenges limiting youth input in decision making and these barriers may in turn limit the peace-building process.

Climate crisis and environmental degradation

The participants of this workshop had experiences either working or studying this topic, bringing many specificities and approaches to the debate. Importantly, they highlighted the need for recognition that this issue is a transnational problem requiring



global responses, underlining the importance of adopting a long-term approach and embracing an intersectional and common approach to tackling the issue of climate crisis and environmental degradation. Sustainable development was, for example, seen to intersect with several different areas including poverty, construction, social exclusion, political influence, biodiversity loss, and demographics (population growth). Participants stressed the need to raise awareness among the government to commit to long-term sustainable development. They felt that their countries have been slow to take swift action and do not prioritise the climate cause, as evidenced by the quality of construction materials used, lack of funding opportunities for more conscious choices, and inadequate quality and quantity of public transportation, among others. They noted that often new, more immediate priorities arise, meaning that funds allocated to this front are reduced by governments to be invested in others. Participants also were concerned that governments tend to engage in greenwashing practices in their electoral programs, lacking concrete measures on how to combat climate change.

Central to this, participants underlined the importance of needing “*to work internationally to solve these problems.*” Here, they proposed the creation of networks which could provide platforms for local projects to tackle this issue at national and international levels.

Participants also focused on the need to reach out to young people, educate them to adopt more conscious behaviours and provide them with the necessary tools to participate directly in tackling climate change and environmental degradation.

They noted the need for sufficient representation of different groups in the discussion on climate change. For example, ensuring that people with different types of disabilities have access to these discussions.

Finally, participants made recommendations to the Council of Europe for increased sustainable practices during events, calling for improvements related to, for example, travel management and meals.



Equality and non-discrimination

Having all experienced discrimination and inequality of some form, working group participants explained that this topic was particularly pertinent to them:

“We do not have the luxury of not caring about the topic. Because we experience inequality and marginalisation”

(Working Group participant).

Despite the wide range of experiences and perspectives, there was a strong consensus on what should be done:

“It is crucial to include all minority and marginalised groups in all discussions that affect us. As marginalised groups, we have to be on the table. Not only on own topics but [in other areas too], for example, also on the climate crisis and youth peace and security because minority rights should be considered and seen as valuable everywhere.”

(Participant, Plenary Day 3).

Young people affected by these issues described having little confidence in tomorrow due to their insecurity, lack of representation and resulting lack of trust in democracy. These issues also had risked negative outcomes for their mental health and wellbeing, topics which they discussed extensively in the session. Nevertheless, the wider, often systematic social issues which lead to inequality and discrimination were stressed, including the wider power mechanisms in society that are often extremely challenging to address.

Despite these challenges, they acknowledged that the current generation of young people is increasingly aware and sensitive to these issues, and pushing for change was described as a positive factor in creating confidence in tomorrow. Additionally, a large network of allies can support building confidence as well as a strong legal framework both in the Council of Europe and the European Union (for the relevant member states) for discrimination and equal rights. Here, key relevant stakeholders mentioned included: government ministries, namely those centred on education and youth, local municipalities, private businesses (e.g. in the digital/ AI sphere, social media (including so-called 'influencers')), traditional media (for, for instance, campaigns on awareness and distribution of information), equality bodies (e.g. the European Network of Equality Bodies in Europe), the Council of Europe and other regional/ international organisations (European Union, United Nations, etc.). Relatedly, the importance of developing collaboration, awareness of the role and work of these actors, and finding ways to work together was underlined.

While the participants demonstrated that they wanted to fight against discrimination and inequality, they felt that they are often "expected to be active", where high expectations are put on them. In essence, this could be considered the 'individualisation' of the issue, where rather than the focus being placed on systemic issues and solutions, young people who confront these issues are often considered as being the starting point for the solution with their advocacy and activism and expected to "free themselves from discrimination, inequality and marginalisation".

Social and economic progress

Working Group participants highlighted the various social and economic challenges confronting young people today, focusing on three key areas: housing, mental health and employment. Concerning housing, the lack of affordable housing and inadequate social housing policies in many member states were seen to have resulted in many young people struggling to afford a place to live. Participants stressed the importance of allocating more resources towards helping young people to access the housing/ rental market. Some, however, marked their concern of only tackling this issue with short-term policies that focus on immediate needs, stressing the importance of long-term, structural policies that centre on empowering young people to provide for themselves.

The mental health of young people was discussed as being negatively impacted by a range of issues, not least, the highly competitive school and workplace environments, pressure on social life, and stress derived from social media. Despite this, difficulties accessing to mental health services were considered a key barrier. Good practices mentioned included an Italian NGO offering accessible therapy sessions at a lower fee for young people.

Regarding employment, the participants discussed the difficulties facing young people in becoming economically independent due to unpaid internships. This was reported as limiting their autonomy. Young people from disadvantaged or marginalised groups (being immigrants, coming from lower-income households, living in rural/suburban areas, etc.) were considered to confront particular barriers to accessing social and economic opportunities.

Overall, the Council of Europe was considered to have a key role in pushing and advocating for change in member states.

Democratic

The underlined the young people upholding of human rights.

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Working Group).

participation

participants important role of in ensuring the democracy and

“Without young we have nothing, why young people always be heard without exception.” (Participant of

They also felt that democratic structures are not self-evident, but rather stressed that democracy must be cherished and defended, especially in these times of polarisation and growth of extremism. The participants marked their concern of complacency regarding youth participation in democratic processes, where they felt that decision-makers believe that young people are sufficiently heard and consulted. However, they remarked that, in reality, their involvement is often on an ad hoc basis.

Risks of tokenism where participants felt that “*we all know that including youth is often more of a thing on the to-do list than aiming to get that youth perspective implemented*” were also noted. They highlighted the lack of trust that some young people have in democratic processes and decision-making systems and the importance of building trust through communication, involvement in all sectors of democratic processes and supporting youth-friendly decisions. They stressed the need to create increased opportunities for smaller youth organisations and young people active at grassroots levels to participate in democratic processes. They also called for improved representation of different, new young people to ensure new, fresh and innovative perspectives, proposing term limits in roles to ensure an increasing number of youths have the opportunity to participate.

The participants acknowledged the different and unique needs, habits, situations and perspectives of each young person, underlining that they should be offered diverse ways of engaging in democratic processes which reflect the diversity of their situations. They however were concerned that the perspectives of marginalised and disadvantaged young people are often overlooked and ignored, stressing a need for wider inclusion of different groups and a reduction of barriers to the participation of these young people. Practical changes to improve access to public transport, internet connections and inclusive digital platforms, and increase the number of participation opportunities at a local level were highlighted as possible ways forward. Education was also considered essential for the participation of all young people in democratic processes, and increased funding for the youth sector was underlined as central for going forward.

Digitalisation and AI

The workshop covered a range of topics concerning the integration and impact of digital technologies on young people. Central to the discussion was the importance of including young people and giving them enough knowledge about AI and digitalisation, particularly as the participants considered youth as greatly impacted by this issue. Through this, young people are hoped to be better able to make safe and wise decisions and to support them to overcome worries regarding impending technological developments that will happen sooner rather than later.

*“We believe that we are afraid of what we don’t know, by learning we can be confident in the future.”
(Workshop rapporteur).*

Relatedly, the participants felt that the field of AI and digitalisation should be based on human rights and used for the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Nevertheless, they underlined that much work is necessary to better understand what human rights mean in a digital age.

Numerous advantages of AI were discussed during the workshop, including enhanced global connectivity, with digitalisation allowing people across continents to communicate more efficiently and effectively than ever before; advances in technology providing better support for people with disabilities, enhancing their ability to engage fully in various aspects of life; and digital platforms enabling individuals to explore and realise their passions, create content, and showcase talents and offering opportunities that were previously inaccessible. For example, digitalisation can offer significant social and economic opportunities for those from disadvantaged backgrounds that were previously out of reach. In addition, the availability of online courses and certifications has opened new learning opportunities, making education more accessible and flexible.

Despite the potential benefits of digitalisation and AI, the digital divide was considered a significant issue, as digital advancements can exacerbate inequalities, with economically disadvantaged groups often missing out on their benefits. Participants felt that digital technologies advance can offer incredible tools for connectivity and



learning. However, they underlined if these technologies are not made accessible to all segments of the population, they can widen the digital divide. For example, assistive technologies can dramatically improve the lives of people with disabilities, but only if these groups have the necessary access to such technologies. Similarly, the benefits of digital learning were considered contingent on equitable access to the internet and digital devices.

The rapid digital transformation and associated spread and acceptance of misinformation (deliberately or unintentionally) was also noted as a major concern as well as the lack of rigorous source verification by users. Participants criticised the over-reliance on AI tools, particularly in academia, where there is a fear that dependency on technology might overshadow critical thinking and genuine research efforts. Additionally, the limited access of certain AI tools, such as ChatGPT, to updated information and their problematic role in disseminating unverified, outdated or biased content. The spread of misinformation was seen to be exacerbated by a lack of digital literacy. Without the skills to critically evaluate information, users are more susceptible to misinformation, which can spread rapidly online. Conversely, enhancing digital education can empower individuals to better identify credible sources, reducing the spread and impact of misinformation. The participants therefore stressed a critical need for comprehensive digital education to help individuals navigate the digital world, understand digital rights, and recognise misinformation.

Algorithms that personalise content were also seen as a risk to democracy as they can manipulate personal and political views, subtly shaping public discourse and potentially undermining democratic processes. While digital platforms have the power to connect people across geographic and cultural boundaries, the algorithms that drive these platforms often tailor content to individual preferences, potentially isolating users in informational silos and echo chambers. This can limit exposure to diverse perspectives and undermine the broader benefits of global connectivity. Participants therefore stressed that effective use of AI requires not only technological advancements but also stringent ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks to prevent biases and ensure that AI solutions are fair and equitable.

Discussions also touched upon the trust placed in governmental and private digital infrastructures and their vulnerability to cyber threats, where the lack of robust policies to safeguard users in the increasingly digitalised landscape was identified.

The link between social media and mental health and wellbeing was also underlined, where, for example, the showcasing of idealised lives was considered to exert pressure on individuals and lead to stress and diminished self-esteem. Cyberbullying, new forms of crime, and accessibility of potentially harmful content, such as pornography, and their effects on real-life expectations and relationships were also discussed as critical concerns.

The digital economy was considered to offer significant opportunities for economic advancement, particularly for individuals in lower-income contexts (as digital platforms can enable new forms of employment and entrepreneurship). However, participants noted that the pressures and demands of these new digital roles, such as influencers, can also lead to psychological stress and affect mental health. Thus, while digital platforms can provide economic benefits, they also require support systems to address potential negative psychological impacts.



Access to quality education

Working Group participants considered, firstly, that quality education must be understood in all different forms of education, associating it with learning, in any capacity or form. They also underlined its importance for decreasing polarisation, discrimination and oppression, improving mental health, encouraging creativity, and learning soft skills. Moreover, the importance of quality education in ensuring labour market integration was considered central. Participants felt that quality education should start from pre-school as part of lifelong learning and that education should be free for all, with quality standards ensured across all member states. First and foremost, they noted challenges related to inadequate facilities and resources, insufficient teachers, and overcrowded classrooms in many contexts, which was described as particularly affecting young people in marginalised groups and from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Accessibility was raised as a main issue, with participants stressing that inaccessible education cannot be considered high quality. For example, while a learning programme may be acknowledged as being high quality, not all learners may be able to access this due to different barriers, such as being from a marginalised group (Roma, migrant group, person with disabilities etc.), access to the necessary technology, administrative, language or financial barriers. One participant provided an example of the limited access of many migrants to third-level education in Ireland as they must demonstrate that they have been a resident in Ireland for three of the previous five years to access third-level education. For learners with a disability, participants underlined the need for access to different formats of material, differences in how information is processed and absorbed as well as the more practical, apparent aspects of accessibility, such as providing ramps etc. The need to reduce the impact of cultural and gender norms was also raised, with an example of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers given, where, in many contexts, there are typically fewer in these careers due to societal gender norms.

The importance of curricula being reflective of their real-world issues and supporting the development of different skills and competencies was highlighted. For example, the need to teach critical thinking as well as communication skills alongside mainstream subjects such as maths etc. For quality education, participants underlined that curricula must be unbiased, not affiliated with companies or specific parties/ideologies, and free from propaganda. Participants also underlined the need for more non-formal education as part of the formal education curriculums.

The link to the environment was discussed as important for quality education with participants, for example, proposing classes being held outdoors, in nature, with a focus on learning/discussing topics that they don't have the chance to learn inside the classroom, through methods that are not provided in formal education.

Collaboration between different stakeholders, including youth organisations, NGOs and the private sector was also seen as important for accessing quality education. The need to encourage civil society to support by providing non-formal education training was considered key here.

"In the youth sector, we close ourselves in these rooms and don't interact enough with the public space, we need to be out in the public within different constellations of learning such as non-formal education but even farther – totally outside of formal education." (Working Group participant).

Young people's health and mental well-being.

The participants of this working group focused on mental health and wellbeing, raising the vulnerabilities of young people to mental health issues. Young people's lack of trust in the future and many feeling as though there is no future to build upon was considered as a key issue impacting their mental health and wellbeing.

They noted risks of social media and its link to poor mental health among young people, current societal pressures impacting mental health and wellbeing as well as poor living conditions, such as access to adequate housing, and limited access to quality outdoor spaces. The lack of access to mental health services was also stressed, with participants noting the need for increased and more accessible services. They proposed increased access to therapy and funding for mental health services, through, for example, free therapy sessions for young people.

They highlighted particular challenges for those who come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds as well as the ongoing stigma associated with mental illness. They noted the need to tackle such prejudice as many young people may fear being



stigmatised, judged and shamed for asking for help and expressing their needs. One participant stated:

"Stereotypes are like poisoned arrows. Break them for better confidence in tomorrow".

The importance of social relationships was also outlined. Nevertheless, some noted challenges in accessing adequate support as well as the need for holistic, multisectoral and multi-stakeholder responses. For example, they stressed the need to build capacity in understanding mental health issues by including scientific experts, and youth organisations, and build awareness also targeting the social relations (peers, friends, family) of young people.

Participants particularly called for particular attention to be paid to the prolonged impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health; the transition, or lack thereof, between child and adult mental health services; and the need for increased capacity building of teachers and youth workers on mental health issues.

3.2 Calls for action

'During the event, there were several recommendations, proposals and calls for action made by youth participants. These centred on both thematic but also broader issues and targeted actors on different levels from European to national and local levels, including the Council of Europe, member states including both state bodies and service providers, youth organisations, young people themselves as well as others, such as civil society groups, private organisations, and community-based organisations, and churches.



Youth organisations and National Youth Councils

The participants of the event called for a range of actions to be implemented by youth organisations and National Youth Councils, focusing on raising awareness, advocacy and communication, but also capacity building and collaboration with other actors. They also made several proposals which sought to improve the internal processes within the structures of these organisations/ Councils.

A. Raising awareness, advocacy and communication

1. Organise cultural events to help young people become familiar with each other's cultures and histories. For example, participants from the Working Group on Peace and War proposed constructing youth peace centres in conflict/post-conflict areas to increase awareness and the role of youth work in the topic.
2. Leverage media to increase reach to marginalised young people.
3. Raise awareness of the need to make improvements to formal and non-formal education spaces to increase accessibility and inclusivity.
4. Develop strategies to effectively reach and communicate with young people.
5. Promote youth engagement in democracy, human rights, peace and security processes at the political level. For example, the United Nations Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda can serve as a guideline.
6. Emphasise the importance of incorporating AI learning and ethical digital practices, ensuring that young people are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the digital world responsibly.
7. Conduct policy-level activities and contribute to youth, democracy and peace strategies.
8. National Youth Council led campaigns for the democratic participation of youth targeting national, local and regional governments, supported by the Advisory Council of Youth, the Youth Department and the European Youth Forum.

B. Capacity building

1. Teach young people about youth participation, what is meaningful participation and how to avoid being manipulated. Equip them with tools for meaningful involvement in decision-making processes.
2. Develop a common understanding of peacebuilding and maintaining peace within the community by developing and implementing creative and innovative peacebuilding activities in different spaces, with different groups and using a range of tools (art, technology, theatre, film...).
3. Develop and implement non-formal education training (e.g. workshops, gamified learning processes) and awareness-raising campaigns targeted to young people on the climate crisis. These can support to create awareness among youth and empower youth leaders by providing opportunities for them to seek solutions.
4. Develop resources on climate change with simplified, accessible, youth-friendly material.
5. Develop and implement educational activities aiming to support the integration of soft skills in youth organisations, improving digital literacy among young people and youth workers, awareness of a person's digital presence, the risks and applications of AI, and human rights and digitalisation/ AI.
6. Increase capacity-building activities which focus on promoting the rights of marginalised youth.
7. Increase capacity building within youth organisations which aim to increase skills which can harness the positive potentials of digital advancements for youth work while mitigating risks through education and ethical practices. For example, online safety training e.g. on the use of social media, and data privacy for young people.
8. Teach young people about youth participation, what is meaningful participation and how to avoid being manipulated. Equip them with tools for meaningful involvement in decision-making processes.
9. Develop a common understanding of peacebuilding and maintaining peace within the community by developing and implementing creative and innovative peacebuilding activities in different spaces, with different groups and using a range of tools (art, technology, theatre, film...).

C. Collaboration

1. Create and sustain informal and formal networks between different actors to encourage dialogue and support the promotion of democracy, human rights and peace across different localities, regions and countries. Increase and instigate initiatives which encourage dialogue between different actors. For example, connect with and support student organisations to encourage their role in advocacy and action on these issues.
2. Collaborate with different stakeholders to bring different communities together to find common points of interest and potential areas of cooperation, for example, economic interests.
3. Develop a platform of National Youth Councils aimed at collaboration, sharing good practices and building capacities of member organisations to advocate for peacebuilding.
4. Collaborate with other youth organisations on these topics to share knowledge and funding experiences/ opportunities
5. Collaborate with different stakeholders outside the youth sector to develop and implement training so that they can learn from youth organisations as experts
6. Identify marginalised youth affected by war, analyse their needs, and create joint programs with other youth organisations/ National Youth Councils based on these needs.



D. Improving internal processes

1. Develop mechanisms to ensure sufficient representation of young people from disadvantaged communities and rural areas in their work on democratic participation.
2. Develop monitoring and review mechanisms to ensure inclusivity across all aspects of the organisation (e.g. inclusive membership, inclusive debates, etc.).
3. Mainstream the use of pronouns within youth organisations.
4. Adjust age limits in youth organisations/ activities to the reality of marginalised groups (e.g. allow with quota to be older than 30 years)
5. Mainstream wellbeing across youth organisations and funding measures as an indicator of success.
6. Maintain a non-partisan approach in the fight against climate change.
7. Ensure that local young people have a platform to voice their concerns and that their voices are heard. Youth organisations/ National Youth Councils should be supported with resources to encourage this.

Member States

The youth participants made many proposals for implementation by member states. These centred on supporting youth participation, capacity building and educational activities, but also collaboration with non-state actors, such as youth organisations and National Youth Councils. They also made several proposals which sought to improve young people's current realities and future lives by tackling the challenges they face.

A. Supporting youth participation

1. Include young people in reconstruction and recovery in conflict zones, for example, in post-conflict programs on health care. This should particularly be focused on those often excluded from decision-making processes, such as marginalised youth and ensure gender equality in youth involvement.
2. Support for War-Affected Individuals by providing further support for internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and the organisations assisting them.
3. Increase the involvement of youth delegates in major climate change events they participate in, training them and giving them the opportunity to represent their country on this topic at the international level.

4. Support youth organisations to play an active role in EU regulation on climate change and environmental degradation
5. Recognise National Youth Councils and strengthen their role in different youth programmes, for example, Conference of the Parties (COP) youth delegate programmes.
6. Increase the representativeness of young, marginalised groups, such as people with special needs and those from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds in all stages of decision-making processes. For example, regarding climate action and the regulation of AI.
7. Add/ increase the inclusion of youth-relevant topics (climate change, gender equality, AI etc.) to school curriculums.
8. Develop initiatives which aim to support the inclusion of young people from spaces outside of the youth sector in democratic processes—sports, arts, business, and others— particularly targeting less represented groups of young people (e.g. those living in rural areas, border villages, conflict zones, and those who may not demonstrate their motivation to get involved).

B. Capacity building and educational activities



1. Introduce educational activities on non-violent communication, peacebuilding, human rights and democratic participation in schools and universities.
2. Develop high school exchange programs aimed at fostering cultural understanding and respect through collaboration between Ministries of Education of different countries.

3. Improve collaboration between ministries, municipalities, and decision-making regarding avenues for better inclusion of youth perspectives in democratic processes.

C. Collaboration

1. Ensure sustainable collaboration and coordination across all policy areas with a range of different actors, with a particular focus on including the youth sector.
2. Engage with the youth sector on peacebuilding and climate efforts and develop mechanisms to support young people to see advancements to avoid fatigue and disillusionment among young people.
3. Involve a range of actors, youth organisations/ National Youth Councils, international organisations and national churches in peacebuilding processes, for example, to support healing of intergenerational wounds.
4. Create a platform for stakeholders to interact with young people who face discrimination and/or inequality, where decision-makers can better understand their realities, reduce barriers, and where young people can gain more confidence in decision-makers.
5. Collaboration between ministries, and NGOs on best practices could improve access to quality education.



D. Strategies for improving young people's current realities and future lives

1. Prioritise the climate cause across diverse areas. For example, by:
 - 1.1 improving quality construction materials used;
 - 1.2 including sustainability and environmental protection as central to funding opportunities;
 - 1.3 improving the quality and quantity of public transportation.
2. Develop more concrete measures on how to combat climate change, ensuring the issue remains a key priority in all programmes of government. For example:
 - 2.1 introducing sustainable options as the most affordable options for consumers;
 - 2.2 increasing the provision of information, for example, on product labels, to increase awareness of the impact of their consumption;
 - 2.3 taxing private corporations who have a high negative impact on the environment and reward companies with good climate-related practices;
 - 2.4 de-incentivising European companies who seek to relocate their production facilities to other countries to enable them to increase their emissions.
3. Seek strategic solutions which prioritise long-term measures and policies over short-term, immediate solutions. Short-term policies should be considered and drafted paying attention to the longer-term context.
4. Recognise and develop measures to encourage the role of civil society organisations in supporting democratic processes, human rights and the rule of law.
5. Prioritise access to quality education for all by:
 - 5.1 improving accessibility for those with disabilities, infrastructure, teacher training, and funding and resources on democratic participation, human rights and non-formal education.
 - 5.2 ensuring education is free with an increase in scholarships to guarantee free access for all, including for residing non-EU migrants. Scholarships should also include accessible accommodation options.
 - 5.3 Improving working conditions for teachers.
 - 5.4 Introducing measures to support lifelong learning.
 - 5.5 ensuring that the education system is adapted to the realities of young people. For example, incorporate relevant subjects into the school curricula that are relevant to the young people and that support a focus on the development of skills and competencies necessary for their labour market integration and their future needs.
6. Take measures to prevent the influence of political agendas or party-politics education system and resources.

7. Acknowledge and implement measures on the instrumentalization of history and its impact on youth.
8. Improve access to quality, free mental health services.
9. Develop a legislative framework to increase access to adequate and affordable housing, protecting against monopolies of housing markets by private enterprises, such as Airbnb, and including targeted measures for young people.
10. Introduce measures which centre on improving labour market integration of young people, including, for instance, legislation to ensure all internships are remunerated and measures to encourage youth entrepreneurship.
11. Recognise the need for targeted support for marginalised and disadvantaged groups, including those in geographically isolated areas, and introduce improved measures for their social inclusion.
12. Have dedicated measures and programmes to prevent and address discrimination and inequality, leveraging the political momentum of the political/annual budgetary cycle, for example, at the beginning of a mandate or during the budget negotiations, to introduce improved measures to address inequality and discrimination.
13. Create and enforce laws that protect digital rights, for example, regulations and security protocols on AI to foster an environment where young people can thrive in a secure digital ecosystem.



Council of Europe

The youth participants made a range of proposals for implementation by the Council of Europe. These centred on supporting youth participation, but also on actions which focus on member states. Finally, they also made several proposals which sought to improve processes within the institution itself.

A. Supporting youth participation

1. Develop a programme for the implementation of National Youth Council campaigns for democratic participation of youth targeting national, local and regional governments, supported by the Advisory Council of Youth, the Youth Department and the European Youth Forum.
2. Increase support for youth organisations and activities which focus on peace education and youth exchanges related to the area.
3. Train and educate youth trainers on environmental issues so that they can promote change at the local level.
4. Increase the number of activities supported/ implemented by the Youth Department focused on capacity building on advocacy and raising awareness for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, including in areas such as, access to quality education. Develop related educational resources for, NGOs and youth organisations, young people, and government bodies.
5. Develop training courses with youth organisations, National Youth Councils and other civil society organisations on climate action and youth engagement. A central component of these trainings should centre on critical thinking and analysing political discourse. For example, on the true effectiveness of climate actions of member states and private corporations.
6. Plan and implement educational activities on AI, digitalisation and youth within the European Youth Centres, with training on soft skills on digitalisation for youth workers and the inclusion of digital tools in youth work processes a component of these trainings. There should also be a focus on informing young people about the potential risks and benefits of digital technologies, ensuring they are active participants in shaping their digital landscape.
7. Introduce concrete measures to support the implementation of [Democracy Now! Call for Action](#).
8. Conduct consultations with socially excluded communities to gather further knowledge of those directly impacted by the different thematic issues discussed during the event.

9. Map, adapt, update and promote resources and tools that already exist, aiming to avoid “reinventing the wheel”.
10. Conduct comprehensive assessment reports of the role of youth in measures which promote youth participation.
11. Introduce regular youth-focused events on democratic participation to encourage and renew the commitment of the Council of Europe and member states to youth rights and to provide a platform for dialogue.
12. Increase funding for youth projects and actions tackling discrimination and inequality.
13. Develop a new anti-hate speech social media campaign focused on marginalised and disadvantaged youth.
14. Implement comprehensive sexuality and inclusive education programmes.
15. Increase human rights education activities targeted towards marginalised groups which aim to support these young people to better understand their rights and how to defend them.
16. Raise awareness of discrimination and inequality faced by young people so fake news and intolerance do not take up all space in discussions.
17. Develop and deliver a communication campaign on the mental health of young people, including communication kits for other actors and a call for activities with funding.
18. Collaborate with National Youth Councils and youth organisations in member states to support creating awareness of mental health problems and sharing of good practices. Priority should be given to particular issues facing youth, such as the association of internet use with poor mental health and addressed through public campaigns.



Measures addressing member states

1. Call for the recognition of the role and risks of AI in the army and nuclear power, with concrete measures to protect against abuse of AI for these purposes.
2. Call for change in legislation to allow young people to vote and get elected without discrimination, tackling practices which have age limits on election candidates.
3. Expand work on different aspects of conflict and increase focus on issues that may both risk conflict (racism, increase of far-right, polarisation of society) and result from a war (environmental and health issues, human right violations).
4. Call for the termination of bilateral agreements between countries that undermine the climate cause.
5. Call for the protection of youth spaces and support the development of more youth spaces across Member states for young people to participate in democracy, for example, through funding measures and capacity-building activities.
6. Hold member states accountable regarding their climate inaction, introducing measures as necessary. For example, develop international standards for nature protection.
7. Draft a convention on environmental human rights ensuring a youth and human rights education perspective is at the core.
8. Recognise the wider impact of war on the environment recognising that the environmental issues within member states risk having an impact on all member states and promote sharing of good practices.
9. Acknowledge the role of private corporations in tackling the climate crisis, calling for an amelioration of international standards on the environment and human rights and the inclusion of intersectionality and marginalised groups at their core.

10. Using the Reykjavik Declaration as a starting point, draft a standard on youth participation in democratic processes with a focus on support for youth organisations and National Youth Councils. This should:
 - 10.1 take the form of a 'Framework Convention on the rights of young people to actively participate in political and civil rights';
 - 10.2 recognise the role of the Council of Europe in guaranteeing the political and civic rights of young people;
 - 10.3 centre on three principles: representation and legitimise young people in democratic participation, inclusion, and diversity as a common, unifying objective;
 - 10.4 recognise young people as equal partners, ensuring the recommendation is co-designed, co-managed and co-owned by young people and institutions;
 - 10.5 "*explicitly done by and for our young people*" (*Participant from the Working Group on Democratic Participation, Plenary Day 3*);
 - 10.6 have a focus on intersectionality and diversity;
 - 10.7 call for a renewed commitment from member states and the Council of Europe.

11. Implement the current commitments of the Council of Europe and adapt working methods to be more inclusive and representative of youth. As such, expanding the number of youth representatives on the Advisory Council on Youth from 30 to at least one per state (46) as well as providing for a contingent from grassroot organisations. Intersectionality and youth intra-group diversity should also be priorities in all such forums.

12. Map and make available an overview of existing standards relating to equality and non-discrimination.

13. Develop standards to identify and monitor shortfalls in equality and non-discrimination across member states. A structured process/system should be developed to increase the inclusion of youth NGOs in supporting the monitoring of standards.

14. Call for improved access to rights for marginalised and disadvantaged youth, including:
 - 14.1 improved access to healthcare for trans youth;
 - 14.2 improved access to mental health services with a particular aim of equitable access across rural and urban areas;
 - 14.3 developing tools to support young people who face discrimination and inequality to deal with mental health difficulties;
 - 14.4 voting rights for refugees and migrants across all member states;
 - 14.5 addressing discrimination and hate speech targeted at LGBTQI+ migrant groups, religious minorities and others.
 - 14.6 calling for the development of standards for protecting intersex young people.

15. Recognise Roma as a European minority and call for their rights to be upheld across all member states, working with Roma youth towards a recommendation on Roma youth rights.

16. Formally reiterate the need for freedom of expression, assembly and association for young persons in the Council of Europe standards and principles.
17. Call for international standards in digital rights and ensure that digital spaces are inclusive, equitable, and safe.
18. Call for the enforcement of laws and provision of the necessary infrastructure within member states to ensure software developed with public funds should be using public code which is accessible to maximise transparency and ensure that we are using AI and software that we can trust in.
19. Draft a recommendation for member states on the mental health of young people, with a preamble reminding the importance of building human-centred cities and safe environments to reduce individualism, which is a cause for mental health issues.
20. Add the mental health of young people to the agenda of the Congress of Local Authorities of the Council of Europe to recognise the importance of mental health and wellbeing for active citizenship and to promote localised, flexible, person-centred local mental healthcare for young people.



Measures to implement within the institution

1. Become a leader in promoting sustainability and good practices which promote climate and environmental actions. For example:
 - 1.1 buy and distribute local brands or those only from within the Council of Europe;
 - 1.2 distribute reusable and recyclable materials at events;
 - 1.3 remove the use of plastic in cafeterias;
 - 1.4 establish travel guidelines within the organisation regarding the sustainability of staff travel;
 - 1.5 assess the ecological impact and accessibility of the Council of Europe buildings to adapt the food supply and increase the use of renewable energy in Council of Europe buildings.
2. Establish a team with experts and members of civil society who have a specific focus on climate change and environmental degradation.
3. Reconsider participants' profile requirements to ensure increased involvement of different young people and to increase the involvement of young people who may face inequality and discrimination (including for activities in the European Youth Centres).
4. Evaluate and monitor the accessibility of the European youth centres and improve as necessary.
5. Found a platform with a diverse array of stakeholders for increased discussion on AI regulation, from the military to the private sector, ensuring that digital policies are comprehensive, inclusive and ethical.
6. Lead efforts in bridging the digital divide through education and ensure digital tools are used to bolster democratic values rather than undermine them.
7. Increase outreach of activities for a better understanding of the Council of Europe and its role and work in youth and democracy.

4. Conclusions from the Youth Event

Youth message

Drafted by the 'youth voice message drafter', Adam Lambe, the youth message aimed to reflect the spirit of the event, targeted at young people and youth organisations, member states and the Council of Europe. During the event, Adam, with the support of the prep team, and general and working group rapporteurs, gathered key issues, messages, and concerns expressed during plenary and working group sessions and drafted them into the youth message. The youth message below sought to capture "the event, the atmosphere and zeitgeist of the event" (Adam Lambe, Plenary Day 3).

The message which can be found in full in Appendix 3 underlined the contribution of the Council of Europe to safeguarding human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the context of its 75th anniversary. It highlighted the concerns about, commitment to



and aspirations for the revitalisation of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe, stressing the need for collective action and partnership going forward. The message captures many of the challenges of *young people "who are often hit hardest by many of the issues facing the world today"* but their continued hope "to be confident in tomorrow". It also reiterates the continued calls and commitment of young people to shaping solutions for democracy, who "care deeply about democracy", and "demand to be listened to". The message calls for mutual trust and robust and pluralistic democracy for their "political mission" as well as a stop to apathy and inaction.

Furthermore, the message stresses the risks to democracy with young people "getting tired" and 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." It condemns a "culture of impunity" which absolves "duty-bearers of their responsibility and accountability" and leaves "rights holders feel left behind in an increasingly polarised and oppressive political space." Providing several concrete proposals, the message also calls for an end to barriers to youth participation in democratic processes, such as, for instance, poor socio-economic conditions, exclusion, discrimination, conflict, as well as inequalities in terms of employment, health, education and housing.

Nevertheless at the heart of the message is an unwavering hope for the future. It calls for collective action and political will so as *"not to lose this humanity"*:

"Let's continue to be allies, revitalising mutual trust, to facilitate constructive deliberation."

The message also states that it *"is more than a call to action, more than mere words. It is itself a form of power"*, calling on the use of the collective power of young people and their allies *"to create a tomorrow we can be confident in"*.

Overall, the message was well received by all participants and those involved with the event. Comments from young people during the final plenary included:

"Thank you very much. In the document we have focused a lot about how passionate and engaged with are and also how very competent and knowledgeable we are as well."

"I think it bears a lot of emotions which I think a powerful text looks like. We rely heavily on text that heavy in text and jargon which is not good for us when we lobby and stand for certain issues. This is the contrary so I think it will serve us really well."

"We can all appreciate the sincerity and work on this document. Nevertheless, conflict within Council of Europe member states weren't mentioned. Not only we are protesting but we are being effected directly by both wars within Europe and whole world."

In the final plenary one young person also added his own message about the event:

"My message to Human rights: All these wars are big shame for human rights and democracy. And I want to highlight that "human rights" and "democracy" must not be in words but in actions and we have to work together to turn these words into actions and after we can be confident in tomorrow".

Following the event, an Advisory Council [official statement](#) was published. It included the message, Advisory Council learnings from the event and instructions for their next mandate for forming upcoming work plans. This statement is available in Appendix 4.

4.2 Dialogue with Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Secretaries of State and closing of the event

The *Dialogues* session created a unique opportunity for Ministers and State Secretaries responsible for Foreign Affairs and young people to discuss their respective roles in revitalising democracy and strengthening human rights in Europe, in the follow-up to the Reykjavik Declaration. The *Dialogues* contributed to strengthening the mutual confidence between the young people attending the youth event and the main stakeholders and decision-makers of the Council of Europe. The overall theme of the dialogues was:

"Strengthening confidence in democracy and human rights together".

The session involved one Minister/State Secretary meeting, listening, and talking with a group of approximately 15 young people in assigned rooms and spaces at the European Youth Centre. The following were present:

Finland: Pasi RAJALA, State Secretary to Foreign Minister and Defence Minister of Finland

Liechtenstein: Minister Dominique HASLER, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport

Malta: Minister Ian BORG, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade

Norway: Bjoerg SANDKJAER, State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Portugal: Nuno SAMPAIO, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

Ukraine: Iryna BOROSETS, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs



Following the Dialogue sessions, Ministers, State Secretaries and participants then met back in the plenary room where words of thanks and closing of the dialogues with Ministers of Foreign Affairs and State Secretaries was led by Dominique Hasler, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport of Liechtenstein. The Minister commended the commitment and dedication of young people to contributing to Europe's future development and stressed the importance of youth participation in democratic processes, including in the work of the presidency, thanking them for their engagement:

"I learned that I am confident because you are confident. Your generation is a very special one. I am not sure if I sat in a circle like this from my generation, if there would have been so many concrete actions. You have the possibility to change all the actions for tomorrow. For that we need to make sure words are followed by action, I can promise you and assure you that we are not only here to listen. We are also here as decision-makers, we are only as good as our advisors. Thank you for being our advisors here today."

The other Ministers and Secretaries of State also thanked the young people for being the voice of the future and of the present, for the engagement in dialogue with them, and the important and unexpected discussion points. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Iryna Borovets, for example, underlined the importance of such dialogue:

"Every conversation with a young person is an opportunity to open up my perspective and look from different perspectives on many issues."

Their key takeaways included:



1. Young people's agency in decision-making, the need for decision-makers to take youth seriously in decision-making processes and for them to "put pressures on peers to make changes to structures" for this;
2. The importance of the implementation of the Reykjavik Declaration and the need to put in place strong structures/ frameworks around this;
3. The risks of "taking for granted what we did in introducing civil rights";
4. The benefits of comparing "how far we have come and how much is needed to be done"; and
5. The changing context in Europe with increasing polarisation and the importance of building the "common we".

Closing remarks of the youth event Confidence in Tomorrow were then provided by the Tobias Flessenkemper, Head of the Council of Europe Youth Department. He thanked the young people for their dedication and energy during the event, congratulating them for the youth message and proposals for the Council of Europe and the member states, the duty bearers. Tobias stressed the importance of the youth representatives who were to present at the 75th anniversary commemoration event, noting it was the first time in the Council of Europe to have a youth voice included in such an event.

Tobias stressed the need for progress, including the need for the end of the Russian Federation's war of aggression on Ukraine and improvements in planetary challenges. He also reminded the various positive developments mentioned during the event which also give us reasons to look forward to for the future ahead. He also noted the important work already



being done on the already existing reference framework for youth perspectives which incorporates four pillars: *Be with youth, learn with youth, participate with youth, and act with youth*. Finally, he underlined that in 1972 young people told the institution that co-management was central for the future and it has been happening for 52 years. Inviting young people to use the conclusions of this report in their work, he noted that:

"the conclusions contained in the report will inspire the development of our policy, programme and the Youth Ministers Conference to be held in Malta next year, as well as ...our co-management institutions".

Before closing the youth event, preparation for the official celebratory event of the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe took place at the Opera House. There were two main moments of celebration. Firstly, the official speeches commenced by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, then by the president of the assembly, followed by Advisory Council on Youth chair, Nina Grmuša, and bureau member, Maurizio Cuttin. Together with the message/ report drafting team, they aimed to ensure that the message of their speeches reflected the spirit and key themes arising out of the discussions during the youth event. The speeches were then followed by a performance by the Lichtenstein Symphony Orchestra.

The speeches from the Advisory Council on Youth members were as follows:

Nina Grmuša, Chairperson of the Advisory Council on Youth

Dear friends,

I am honoured to address such a distinguished gathering on behalf of the Advisory Council on Youth, the Youth Sector's Statutory Bodies, and the participants of the Youth Event, 'Confidence in Tomorrow', championed by the Liechtenstein Presidency.

I say friends, as we all agreed on the importance of Youth Perspective in Reykjavik.

Our co-managed decision-making structures and practice of cooperation and mutual learning have existed for over half a century. The Youth Department, and its houses here in Strasbourg and in Budapest, have been making space for generations of young people to deliberate, debate, and decide on contemporary issues. The youth sector of the Council of Europe is the political response of European duty-bearers to the demands of young people for their fair share of space, time, and resources.

Today, in fact, at 'Confidence in Tomorrow', democracy has been a verb. We have been generating a democratic political culture. Young people and representatives of governments from virtually every member state of the Council of Europe dug deep into the challenges young people, associative life and civic engagement experience daily.

We were heartened that the Secretary General expressed such confidence in tomorrow, because she is confident in youth.

Yet, it is sobering that youth today feel concerned, confronted, confused, caged and conflicted; we feel uncomfortable, under-recognised, unseen.

We are curious, courageous, committed and compelled. We don't have the luxury not to care.

The aspirations set out in the Reykjavik Declaration are encouraging. They represent confidence in the values we state we share – the three pillars on which this house is built – human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Today, we consider building a fourth – we need peace, again.

One of these commitments is the Youth Perspective – the idea that integrating young people’s experiences, expertise and expressions in all their intersectional diversities adds legitimacy and authenticity to the work of this house, 75 years young, to implement those values.

Our task to ensure that those efforts take place on a level playing field – that young people and those in positions of power are partners and allies is creating lasting sustainable systems that support the emergence of a resilient democratic culture.

Democracy is only as strong as its ability to harness the collective wisdom and energy of all of society’s members. A YOUTHless democracy, is a USEless democracy. Silence cannot be louder than action!

So, think, participate, learn, and act with and for young people, so that together we can set standards for the coming 75 years young.

We are glad you are confident! We want to be, too! Together, we must.

Maurizio Cuttin, Bureau Member of the Advisory Council on Youth

Assembled friends,

As Nina highlighted, democratic culture is a practised one. We, in Europe, find ourselves at a critical juncture where our democratic fabric is threatened.

Young people today are confronted with numerous constraints. Despite the challenges to their daily lives, routines and practices this has not dampened their hopes and aspirations for tomorrow. The youth climate movement and the recurring youth-led fight for freedom against oppression are all contemporary examples of this energy.

Now I want you to imagine a world which is very different from where you are. A world where we as youth advocates and youth allies, alike, are safe to uphold and defend the pillars embodied in the Reykjavik Declaration in a way conducive to the inclusive and democratic society the Council of Europe was established to nurture.

Imagine a politics based on hope. A politics of mutual understanding. And a politics free from polarization, populism and persecution. A politics where young people grow up in the knowledge that the duty bearers of today acknowledge, trust and pave the way for our rights and responsibility as full, legitimate and responsible citizens.

You asked us what we want, this is what we are calling for.

In this imagined world, hope is a political concept. It is not abstract, rather it is in desperate need of renewal.

In our event this week, there have been calls to action for all of us around the table to strive towards the futures we deserve and aspire for. Now, let us be honest about that table. Look around at those beside you.

Who's here and who's not.

Why are they not at the table?

What is missing and what can we do about it?

These are all questions that should be front and centre. Civic spaces need to be welcoming. These environments should also be designed for us and by us.

Nonetheless, these are not radical demands. There was a time when nobody could imagine a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There was a time when no one could imagine the co-management in the way we know it today.

In our deliberations, we also heard that "young people are the most effective source of renewable energy". Let us channel the energy and momentum in this room towards a positive future together.

Reykjavik was just the start.

Complacency is no longer an option.

Ensuring that we have confidence in tomorrow starts today, united in our common values.

Thank you.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Programme

Monday, 13 May

- Arrivals
- Registration at the European Youth Centre
- 19:00 Dinner
- 20:00 Welcome evening

Tuesday, 14 May

- 08:00 Registration and administrative formalities

- 09:30 **Welcome** by TOBIAS FLESSENKEMPER, Head of the Council of Europe Youth Department
Introduction of participants
- 09:50 **Opening** speeches, by:
MARIJA PEJČINOVIĆ BURIĆ, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
DOMENIK WANGER, Permanent representative of Liechtenstein (Chair of the Committee of Ministers)
- 10:15 **Introduction** to the Council of Europe, the programme and expected results of the youth event
Sharing and confidence-building: exploring the European Youth Centre and the mission of the Council of Europe youth sector (including break)
- 12:00 **Confidence in youth and confidence in human rights:** addressed by, and discussion with:
MICHAEL O'FLAHERTY, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights
MARÍA RODRÍGUEZ ALCÁZAR, President of the European Youth Forum

- 13:00 Lunch

- 14:30 Introducing the **Reykjavík Principles for Democracy**
- 15:00 The Principles for Democracy and young people's experiences of democracy (in working groups)

- 16:00 Break

- 16:30 Working groups continued
- 17:30 Conclusions of the working groups on principles and experiences of democracy

18:30 Walking to the headquarters of the Council of Europe

19:30 Celebratory dinner at Palais de l'Europe

21:30 Informal evening at the European Youth Centre

Wednesday, 15 May

09:30 **Confidence through participatory democracy**, debate with participants after opening remarks by:

NINA GRMUŠA, Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth

JORGE ORLANDO QUEIRÓS, Chair of the European Steering Committee for Youth

11:00 Break

11:30 **Creating confidence** in tomorrow, addressing key issues for young people, including:

1. Peace and War
2. Climate crisis and environmental degradation
3. Equality and non-discrimination
4. Social and economic progress
5. Democratic participation
6. Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence
7. Access to quality education
8. Young peoples' health and mental well-being

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Working groups on creating confidence continued (with break included)

17:30 Feedback on progress of working groups

18:00 Closure of the day

19:00 Dinner

Thursday, 16 May

09:00 Opening and practical information about the day

09:15 **Creating confidence**: presentation and consolidation of the conclusions of the working groups and preparing conclusions of the youth event

10:00 Presentation of the **message** with key conclusions of the event

10:15 Preparation for the official celebratory event of the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe

10:45 Break

11:15 Update and briefing for the dialogue with Ministers of Foreign Affairs

11:30 Evaluation of the youth event and its follow-up

12:00 Lunch

13:30 **Dialogue** with Ministers of Foreign Affairs

15:00 **Closure** of the youth event

17:00 **Official celebrations** of the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe - at Opéra national du Rhin

Reception

20:30 Dinner and **closing party** at the European Youth Centre, with the *Pocket Band* and *DJ Q*.

Friday, 17 May 2024

Departures

Appendix 2. List of Participants

Member states/Etats membres

Organisation

Albania/Albanie

JON KOLA National Youth Congress

Andorra/Andorre

ISABELLA VARGAS GONZÁLEZ National Youth Council of Andorra

Armenia/Arménie

NAIRA IRITSYAN World Armenian Youth Network

Austria/Autriche

ANNA MAGDALENA SCHWABEGGER Austrian National Youth Council

Azerbaijan/Azerbaïdjan

MEHRAJ ALIYEV Youth delegate, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

RAUF ALIYEV Bridge to the Future

Belgium/Belgique

AMÉLIE WATERS International LGBTQI Youth and Student Organisation

CHRISTINA YIANNAPI Advisory Council on Youth (Cyprus Youth Council)

LAETITIA HADDAD Le Forum des Jeunes

MARIA SIERRA DE LAS HERAS European Students' Union

MAURIZIO CUTTIN Advisory Council on Youth (British Youth Council)

PAULINE DEPAGNE ATD Quart Monde

ROBERTA BOJANG Advisory Council on Youth (Youth to the European and African Union)

SEAN NART Flemish Youth Council (Vlaamse Jeugdraad)

STANISLAVA STEFANOVA Advisory Council on Youth (AEGEE – European Students' Forum)

TARU GRANHOLM European Educational Exchanges – Youth for Understanding

Bosnia and Herzegovina/Bosnie-Herzégovine

ERMIN MANDŽUKA Student Council Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina

MARKO KNEZEVIC Youth Council Republica Srpska

Bulgaria/Bulgarie

YOAN STOYANOV National Youth Forum

YOANNA PEYCHEVSKA National Youth Forum

Croatia/Croatie

SANDRA ROZMAN PAPAK Croatian Youth Network

Cyprus/Chypre

LIANA LIU IOANNIDES

Youth delegate, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Czechia/Tchéquie

DOMINIKA PETRUSOVÁ

Czech Council of Children and Youth

JAKUB HALUSKA

Nadace Albatros

PETR PAVEL BANDA

Advisory Council on Youth (IQ Roma servis)

Denmark/Danemark

ROXANA PETRACHE

ActionAid Denmark

TÓR MARNI WEIHE

Advisory Council on Youth (European Students' Union)

Estonia/Estonie

KATLIN MERISALU

Estonian National Youth Council

Finland/Finlande

FILIP GODLEWSKI

Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi

JASPER KURJENNIEMI

World Organization of the Scout Movement

SANNA PUURA

Ministry of Education and Culture

SARA NYMAN

Finland National Youth Council Allianssi

France

DAMIEN LAFONT

Foyer Notre Dame

EMILIE HORNUS

Réseau Express Jeunes

EKREM SAHIN

Réseau Express Jeunes

JEANNE GORNY

Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la jeunesse

JEFFRY JEANTY

Association Nationale des Conseils d'enfant et de Jeunes

Assemblée Territoriale des Jeunes Élus de Guyane

JULIA SUEUR DA COSTA

Association Nationale des Conseils d'enfant et de Jeunes

MAGOMED NASULKHANOV

Association Nationale des Conseils d'enfant et de Jeunes

Assemblée Territoriale des Jeunes Élus de Guyane

MATHIAS HERBIL

Conseil des jeunes citoyens de Martinique

MEYETI PAYET

Aujourd'hui Les Citoyennes

VICTORIA-LOLA KUNZ

Permanent Representation of Austria to the Council of Europe

Georgia / Géorgie

ELENE KAPANADZE

Youth Platform – WETALK

LASHA SVANISHVILI

Young European Federalists

Germany / Allemagne

ALEXANDROS APOSTOLIDIS

Young European Federalists

CAROLIN VOGT

German Committee on International Youth Work

German Federal Youth Council

ENRIQUE ANARTE LAZO Openly/Thomson Reuters Foundation
JANNIS GUSTKE Advisory Council on Youth (International Young Nature Friends)
KONSTANZE SCHÖNFELD Advisory Council on Youth (Word Esperanto Youth Organisation)
MORITZ TAPP German Federal Youth Council

Greece / Grèce

ELVIRA MENTZELIOTI European Youth Parliament
NIKOLAOS-IOANNIS OIKONOMOU Municipal Youth Council of Larissa

Hungary / Hongrie

BOGLÁRKA BAUER National Youth Council of Hungary
PÉTER TÖRÖK Advisory Council on Youth
(Federation of Children's and Youth Municipal Councils)

Iceland / Islande

JESSY JONSDOTTIR Advisory Council on Youth (National Youth Council of Iceland)

Ireland / Irlande

FADUMA MOHAMED Cork Migrant Centre
JOAN OSAYANDE Cork Migrant Centre
SARAH GAVIN National Youth Council of Ireland
SARAH STEFAN Teen-Turn

Italy / Italie

GIANLUCA ROSSINO Europiamo, National Youth Council
GIULIO DEL GIUDICE Erasmus Students Network, National Youth Council

Latvia/Lettonie

ANNA RAMKOVICA Youth Delegate, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
ROBERTS SILIS National Youth Council of Latvia

Liechtenstein

MICHAEL KLINGLER AHA Liechtenstein

Lithuania/Lituanie

MARHARYTA VORYKHAVA Advisory Council on Youth (Belarusian National Youth Council)
PAULIUS JAKUBČIONIS EU Neighbours EAST

Luxembourg

MEVLANA SAHITI ROMS Sans Frontières, Romano Phralipe – Fraternité Rom
VANINA BISSE Parlement des Jeunes

Malta/Malte

DAVID DEBATTISTA National Youth Council of Malta

MIRIAM TEUMA	Ministry of Education Youth and Sport
Republic of Moldova/République de Moldova	
DORIN HOTINEANU	National Youth Council of Moldova
ROMEO LEAPCIUC	National Youth Council of Moldova
Montenegro/Monténégro	
MILOŠ MARKOVIĆ	Youth Network of Montenegro
Netherlands/Pays-Bas	
ANIKA KEMPEN	Dutch National Youth Council
LOTTE PRINS	Dutch National Youth Council
North Macedonia/Macédoine du Nord	
ANGEL DIMITRIEVSKI	Association for Educational Development Ekvalis
DARKO TRAJKOSKI	Coalition SEGA
Norway/Norvège	
MADS HARSTAD	Ungdomspanelet i Møre og Romsdal
MARIAM TARTOUSI	Advisory Council on Youth (No Hate Speech Network)
TILDE HOLMVIK	
Poland/Pologne	
CIHAN KILIC	Voicify - European Forum of Youth with lived Migration Experiences
DENYS VERTELETSKYI	Fundacja Voices from Ukraine, National Youth Council of Ukraine
EVGENIY KAZARTSEV	Euroradio
NICOLAS ANDERSEN	Central Roma Council in Poland
Portugal	
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TOMÁS SENA	Lisbon Youth Centre
Romania/Roumanie	
MARILENA-VALENTINA CIOBANU	Romanian Youth Council
San Marino/Saint-Marin	
MAYA TENTONI	YOUTH
Serbia/Serbie	
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ANJA JOKIĆ	Advisory Council on Youth (National Youth Council of Serbia)
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Youth Council of Spain

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LUKAS SVANA
YUSUF MUHAWECH

Slovak Youth Council
National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations

Switzerland/Suisse

JAN BURCKHARDT

Swiss National Youth Council

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Ukrainian Youth Foundation
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United Kingdom/Royaume-Uni

PETER RIGG

British Youth Council

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États parties à la Convention culturelle européenne*

Kazakhstan

TIMUR JUMURBAYEV

Assembly of People of Kazakhstan

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ANAS EL GHARBI
DONIKA ZOGU

Asia-Europe Foundation
The Mediterranean Forum for Youth and Children (FOMEJE)
Regional Youth Cooperation Office

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Parliamentary Assembly / Assemblée Parlementaire

THEODOROS ROUSOPOULOS	President / Président
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Appendix 3. Key Message

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.

Appendix 4. Advisory Council on Youth Statement

Confidence in Tomorrow

Statement by the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ)

16 May 2024, Strasbourg

The youth event Confidence in Tomorrow, organised as part of Liechtenstein's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers and of the celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe, was held at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg from 14 to 16 May 2024. This gathering showcased the leadership and vision of young Europeans, whose active participation inspires us profoundly. The event underscored the crucial role of young representatives in steering our democratic institutions towards a vibrant future.

The discussions over the past three days highlighted the urgent need for youth empowerment mechanisms, not just as decision-makers but as architects of innovative solutions. The participants tackled complex issues such as climate action, digital rights, youthful institutions, democratic backsliding and inclusive governance with remarkable insight and determination, demonstrating their potential to advance our core values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Reflecting on the origins of the Council of Europe, founded to unite a continent devastated by war under the shared values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, we recognise the ongoing challenges facing Europe. The spirit of unity and collaboration, however, remains strong. The Reykjavik Declaration's emphasis on promoting the youth perspective in democracy is a testament to our commitment to investing in our democratic future.

Confidence in Tomorrow was more than a celebration; it was a forward-looking initiative to harness young people's creativity, energy, and resolve to rejuvenate democracy and strengthen our human rights framework. The event provided a platform for young people to address pressing challenges and offer solutions, showcasing their readiness to reshape policies that will define the future of Europe.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all the young leaders who contributed their visionary proposals, setting a course for a collaborative and vibrant future for Europe. The Council of Europe is committed to fostering environments where young people can fully and effectively exercise their leadership, ensuring they have the necessary tools and opportunities to do so.

As we reflect on the success of this event, it is evident that the legacy of the Council of Europe's 75th anniversary affirms the vital role youth leadership plays in the Organisation's work. We are excited to continue supporting young people as they demonstrate that true leadership means making impactful changes for the benefit of society, not just holding positions of authority.

In the spirit of the Youth Sector Strategy 2030 and with our full support for the implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, we reaffirm our dedication to a Europe where young people are not only inheritors of democratic values but active architects of their evolution. The Advisory Council on Youth is committed to this vision and supports initiatives that embody these ideals, ensuring that the Council of Europe's legacy remains vibrant and relevant for future generations.

The statements of the Advisory Council are published for the purpose of informing the public about the activities of the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe youth sector.

The statements reflect the opinions and positions of the Advisory Council and its members. The views expressed therein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council of Europe.