

**DEMOCRACY
HERE NOW**



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Strasbourg, 12 November 2024

Youth advocacy for democracy and human rights

Training course

26 – 31 January 2025
European Youth Centre, Strasbourg

Call for participants
Deadline: 3 December 2024, 14:00 CET

Realised in partnership with:



Rationale

The Council of Europe Summit in Reykjavik held in May 2023, the Heads of State and Government of the organisation's 46 member states decided to establish to strengthen the Council of Europe and its work in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law by adopting a declaration on democracy principles ¹which emphasizes the importance of investing in a democratic future for all:

“Priority will be given to supporting 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.”

The Reykjavik Declaration, entitled United around our values, also sets a high standard, rooted in the values of human rights and democracy, for the Council of Europe work:

“... a youth perspective in the Organisation's intergovernmental and other deliberations as youth participation in decision-making processes improves the effectiveness of public policies and strengthens democratic institutions through open dialogue.”

The Joint Council on Youth has initiated the drafting of a Reference Framework for a Youth Perspective with the expectation to be adopted in 2025 with the occasion of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (Malta, 8-9 October 2025). The Reference framework will provide guidance to the Council of Europe on how to integrate and operationalise the youth perspective, as well as to the member states on how to follow up at national level.

The revised Charter on participation of young people in local and regional life clarifies participation is having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and the support to take part in the life of the community. The Charter is also undergoing a process of revision, initiated by the Congress of local and regional authorities in partnership with the Joint Council on Youth. The process is also involving the consultation of young people, youth organisations, as well as local authorities. A new revised Charter is expected to be adopted by the Congress in October 2025.

These developments, together with other efforts undertaken by the Council of Europe to make institutions youth friendly and support the involvement of civil society open up possibilities for advocacy for youth organisations.

To translate into reality the promise of the Reykjavik, young people and youth civil society need both the political will and effort into the creation of relevant structures for participation in decision making, as well as the capacity and competences to meaningfully take part in these structures and processes. In order for young people to be successfully and meaningfully participating in the Council of Europe work, their capacity needs to be developed starting with knowledge about the work done by the institution beyond its youth sector, and competences to engage with decision makers in various fields.

The youth campaign *Democracy Here | Democracy Now* was run by the Council of Europe in 2022 as a response to the challenges face by democracies in Europe: rise of populism,

¹ The Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values, Appendix 3 Reykjavik Principles for Democracy is available [here](#).

demotatorships, shrinking space for civil society, economic and social crises, war against Ukraine, all contributing to a climate where young people fear retribution when exercising freedom of expression and, at the same time, “show a high degree of political interest but a low degree of engagement with essential democratic processes”². The campaign involved national campaigns in 27 member states, more than 50 projects and initiatives implemented with the support of the European Youth Foundation and partners. The flagship activity of the campaign, the [Youth Action Week: Democracy Now!](#), brought together 450 young activists in Strasbourg, and resulted in a [Call for Action](#) with 50 proposed actions to be taken by young people, youth civil society, member states and the Council of Europe. The Call for Action was further endorsed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Following the success of the *Democracy Here | Democracy Now* youth campaign, the Joint Council on Youth decided in October 2022 to continue the work initiated through a follow-up project, *Youth revitalising democracy*, and keeping Democracy Here | Democracy Now as its slogan.

The project is run in partnership with national authorities responsible for youth and youth civil society active at European, national and local levels. The implementation of the project is overseen by a Follow-up Group composed of representatives of the Advisory Council on Youth, the European Steering Committee for Youth, and the European Youth Forum.

To further support and develop the capacity of youth civil society to advocate for human rights, democracy and youth participation, the Youth Department organises in partnership with the European Youth Forum and the German Federal Youth Council a training course on advocacy for human rights and democracy.

The training course takes place in Strasbourg, between 26 and 31 January 2025, in parallel with the meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe offering a chance to participants to engage also with members of their national delegations.

The training course

The training course aims to develop the competences of youth civil society and young activists to advocate for human rights, democracy, ensuring a youth perspective in all the Council of Europe work, as well as advocating for the implementation and expansion of Council of Europe standards at national and local level.

Objectives of the course:

- To familiarise participants with the Council of Europe, its institutions and standards for democracy, human rights and youth participation
- To develop participants’ competences in human rights-based advocacy and strengthen their capacity to develop and implement advocacy strategies and practices
- To create a space for sharing and learning from each other, as well as from examples of good practice in human rights and democracy advocacy, structures for youth participation in decision making, working with decision makers, etc.
- To associate participants with the Youth Department’s work, notably the project Youth revitalising democracy
- To develop common advocacy initiatives/actions, also supporting the advocacy objectives of the project Youth revitalising democracy: enhancing youth participation in

² State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law – A democratic renewal for Europe, Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, 2021, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/secretary-general/reports>

the elections and removing barriers to youth standing in elections, as well as securing structures for youth participation in decision-making.

Methodology and programme of the course

The training course will be based on the approaches on democratic citizenship and human rights education, being designed to be an experience of mutual learning and sharing among participants. The participants will have the chance to have hands on experiences, as well as engage with experts from the Council of Europe institutions and sectors, in order to learn how to advocate on youth issues within the institution, as well as advocate for the implementation of Council of Europe standards at national and local level.

Profile of participants

The training course is designed for participants who are:

- aged between 18 and 30 years, exceptions can be made if justified;
- representatives of national youth councils, international youth organisations/networks, and other youth civil society motivated to further advocate towards and cooperate with the Council of Europe;
- holding a position in their organisations to follow-up on the training course with advocacy campaigns/initiatives;
- committed to the values of the Council of Europe, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and to youth participation and are interested in taking further action;
- motivated and able to take in the entire training course and be involved in the project follow-up;
- able to work autonomously in the English language;
- are resident in one of the state parties to the European Cultural Convention; exceptions can be made if justified.

The Council of Europe welcomes applications from all candidates who fulfil the specific profile of the activities, irrespective of gender, disability, marital or parental status, racial, ethnic or social origin, colour, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

Application, procedure and selection of participants

All candidates must apply on-line at <https://youthapplications.coe.int>. In addition to completing their application form online, they should send a support letter from their sending organisation via email at youthdemocracy@coe.int.

The Council of Europe will select up to 30 participants on the basis of the profile outlined above. It will try as far as possible to respect the organisations' priorities, but also to ensure a balance between genders, geographical regions, different types of experiences, cultural backgrounds and organisations, institutions and projects. A waiting list may be established. Candidates will be informed whether their application has been accepted or rejected, and if they have been put on the waiting list, by 10 December 2024.

The full application form including the support letter from sending organisation must be submitted on-line **before 14:00 (CET), 3 December 2024**.

Financial and practical conditions of participation

Travel expenses

Travel expenses and visa fees for the training seminar in Strasbourg will be reimbursed according to the rules of the Council of Europe. Only the participants who attend the entire training seminar can be reimbursed.

Participants are expected to arrive to the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg on Saturday, 25 January 2025 and depart on Saturday, 1 February 2025.

Accommodation

Board and lodging for the residential training seminar will be provided and paid for by the Council of Europe at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg. The European Youth Centres are accessible to people with disabilities and can take measures to accommodate for any access needs of participants in this respect. Please provide the necessary information in your application form.

Working languages

English will be the working language of the training course, both for e-learning and the residential training seminar. Participants are required to be able to express themselves autonomously in English.

Further information

For any questions, please contact us at youthdemocracy@coe.int.