

**DEMOCRACY
HERE NOW**



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Youth Here: Democracy Now! **Council of Europe Youth Action Week**

27 June – 2 July 2022

Strasbourg, France

Concept note
Call for applications

Youth Here: Democracy Now!

The Council of Europe recognises the “considerable potential and therefore fundamental role in promoting Council of Europe’s values” that young people play and aims at enabling young people across Europe to “actively uphold, defend, promote and benefit from the Council of Europe’s core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law”.

Democracy has been particularly challenged in recent years due to the rise of populism and *demotatorships*, fake news, shrinking space for civil society and, more recently, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. All of this contributes 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”. Concerns regarding the health of democracies in Europe have been consistently raised, especially in view of the successive and multiple crises that trouble the perspective of growing up with confidence about the future. The war in Ukraine aggravated the sentiment of crisis and the need to act to save democracy and peace in Europe and beyond.

The *Democracy Here | Democracy Now* youth campaign of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe is a response to these challenges. It aims at revitalising democracy and for strengthening mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions and processes. The Campaign focuses on access to human rights, meaningful youth participation and the impact of digitalisation as factors of democratisation. The Campaign is based on activities undertaken with young people and youth organisations at local, national and international levels, supported by national contact points and European partners. These activities are supported and connected by the Council of Europe; the results and proposals emerging from young people will be organised and integrated in a pledge for action.

The only response to the problems of democracy is more democracy: democracy is a process of democratisation. Learning about and for democracy, support and recognition given to structures and new forms of youth participation, including an enabling environment for youth civil society, remain key areas of action.

The Campaign is also an exercise of democracy: young people and their organisations explore the topic of revitalisation of democracy and make the proposals to be translated into policy and programmes at Council of Europe level.

In 2022, the youth sector of the Council of Europe is celebrating 50 years of ensuring that young people and youth participation are at the heart of the institution, through the unique system of decision-making, the co-management, the policy standards developed, and the programme of activities run in the two European Youth Centres in Budapest and Strasbourg. The Youth Action Week constitutes thus also an important opportunity to reflect on the achievements and relevance of the work of the Council of Europe youth sector and make proposals for the future.

The Council of Europe Youth Action Week

The Youth Action Week is the flagship event of the *Democracy Here | Democracy Now* campaign and of the anniversary of 50 years of the youth sector in the Council of Europe. The event is organised under the patronage of the Irish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and in partnership with the City of Strasbourg.

Aim

The Council of Europe Youth Action Week brings together activists, civil society, member States and partners of the youth sector to strengthen the youth campaign for revitalising democracy and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the youth sector of the Council of Europe.

Objectives

- To discuss and deepen the understanding of the current challenges and attacks on democracy and their impact on young people and society
- To design and plan interventions, activities, actions, projects in the youth campaign with a focus on revitalising democracy, meaningful youth participation and digitalisation
- To celebrate the fifty years of the youth sector of the Council of Europe and reflect on its relevance for young people, youth policy and the mission of the Council of Europe in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law
- To give an impetus for joint action and cooperation in the framework of the Democracy Here | Democracy Now campaign at local, national and international level.

Expected outcomes

The pledge for action

The week will result in proposals for action at local, national and international level in the framework of the *Democracy Here | Democracy Now* youth campaign, including recommendations addressed to stakeholders aiming to revitalise democracy and support the meaningful participation of young people in democratic processes and institutions.

Reports

A written report outlining the main outcomes of the discussions, the proposals for the pledge for action and a video about the Youth Action Week will be produced.

Programme and methodology

The programme of the Council of Europe Youth Action Week is thought to be an experience of participatory approaches characteristic to non-formal education and youth work. The programme will feature plenary sessions and will be based on working groups organised according to the three main themes of the campaign. The Youth Action Week programme will also incorporate proposals for themes, topics and activities received from national and European campaign, partners and activists.

A draft programme of the week is appended. In the framework of the Youth Action Week, a meeting of the local peace camps organisers will also take place. The selection of participants to the latter activity will be done through a special call.

The Youth Action Week is prepared by a group composed of representatives of the Advisory Council on Youth, the European Steering Committee for Youth and the European Youth Forum.

Participants and selection

All those interested in taking part in the Council of Europe Youth Action Week should fulfil the profile outlined below:

- Be motivated and able to take part
in the full duration of the activity

- Be able to communicate independently in English or French
- Be resident in a member state of the Council of Europe or in a state with the 'Partner for Democracy' status granted by the Parliamentary Assembly (Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Palestine). Applications from other countries may also be considered.

Participants in the Youth Action Week will fall in one of the following categories:

1. Members of “national delegations”

Profile

- Have been or are planning to be actively involved in the campaign at local and national level as young people, youth workers, trainers, activists, policy and/or political actors
- Be able to follow-up the event with actions and activities in the framework of the campaign at national level

Selection

The selection is made by the [National Contact Point](#) for the campaign (or national authorities where a national contact point has not been nominated) in cooperation with the Council of Europe. The national delegations are expected to comprise in a proportion of 70% young people up to 30 years old, include the National Contact Point and representatives of public authorities associated with the campaign at local and national level (e.g. parliamentarians, locally elected representatives). The delegations should also include participants and organisers of pilot activities funded by the European Youth Foundation in the framework of the campaign. The travel costs of the participants in the national delegations are covered by national authorities.

2. Representatives of international youth organisations/networks

Profile

- Have been or have concrete plans to be actively involved in the campaign at international level as young people, youth workers, trainers, activists, policy and/or political actors
- Are motivated to take part in the Youth Action Week
- Are able to follow-up the event with actions and activities in the framework of the campaign at international level

Selection

The selection is made by the Council of Europe.

3. Self-funded groups

Initiatives/groups/organisations with relevant projects involving young people on the themes of revitalising democracy, meaningful youth participation and digitalisation can apply to take part in the Youth Action Week. The group should include at least 70% young people up to 30 years old. Each member of the group must complete the application form individually to secure that all relevant administrative information is collected.

Profile

- Have been or have concrete plans of being actively involved in the campaign at local/national/international level as young people, youth workers, trainers, activists, policy and/or political actors

- Are involved in initiatives/projects/organisations that are of relevance to the themes of the Youth Action Week and of the campaign
- Are motivated to take part in the Youth Action Week
- Are able to follow-up the event with actions and activities in the framework of the campaign at local/national/international level.
- Are able to fund their own travel costs

Selection

The coordinating organisation/institution is recommended to contact the Secretariat of the Council of Europe (youthdemocracy@coe.int) to discuss the details of such participation. The selection is made by the Council of Europe.

Application form

All interested candidates need to duly complete the online application form.

The deadline for submitting applications is **16 May 2022, 4PM CET**

<https://youthapplications.coe.int/Application-forms>

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.

Practical information

Working languages

The Youth Action Week will take place in English and French with simultaneous interpretation. Participants are expected to be able to communicate autonomously in one of the two languages.

Travel

Participants are expected to arrive to Strasbourg on 27 June and depart on 2 July. The working days for the activity are from 28 June to 1 July 2022.

Travel costs of participants are covered by either:

- national authorities for national delegations
- the Council of Europe
- by the sending organisation/institution of the participant.

Participants have to inform in the application form if they require funding for their travel costs. Ability to cover one's own travel costs is not a criterion for selection.

Board and lodging

Participants will be accommodated in several hotels in Strasbourg. The organisers will take measures to accommodate for any specific needs of participants in respect to accessibility provided that information is given in a timely and clear manner.

Venues

The sessions of the Youth Action Week will take place in [Palais de l'Europe \(Headquarters of the Council of Europe\)](#), [Agora](#), [European Youth Centre Strasbourg](#) (all Council of Europe premises) and

[Lieu de l'Europe](#), all located in the European institutions quarter of Strasbourg. Free transport between the venues will be ensured.

COVID-19 sanitary protocols

Participants are required to follow the rules in place in France in respect to COVID-19 prevention valid at the time of the event.

Further information

For further information, do not hesitate to contact the secretariat at youthdemocracy@coe.int.

Appendix 1

Draft programme of the Youth Here: Democracy Now! - Council of Europe Youth Action Week

Monday, 27 June 2022

Arrival of participants

Registration at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg

19:00 Dinner at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg

Tuesday, 28 June 2022

9:00 Meeting of participants on the lawn of the Palace of Europe

11:00 Official opening of the Youth Here! Democracy Now! - Council of Europe Youth Action Week (Chamber of the Parliamentary Assembly) with:

- Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (tbc)
- Ambassador Breifne O'Reilly, Permanent representative of Ireland and Chair of the Ministers' Deputies (tbc)
- Jeanne Barseghian, Mayor of the City of Strasbourg (tbc)
- Spyros Papadatos, Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth

Exchange between participants and guests

Keynote speech on The state of democracy in Europe today and the role of young people

Testimonies of young activists in the campaign: rejuvenating democracy

12:00 Information about the Youth Action Week programme, methodology, participants, etc.

12:30 Lunch

14:30 Parallel working groups on the challenges, threats to democracy today and the role of young people in revitalising it, including sharing of practices on the themes of the campaign.

16:00 Break

16:30 Parallel working groups (continued)

18:00 Evaluation of the day in working groups

19:00 Dinner

21:00 Evening programme

Wednesday, 29 June 2022

9:00 Parallel plenaries on the themes of the campaign: revitalising democracy, meaningful youth participation, digitalisation

11:00 Break

11:30 Thematic workshops on key issues for young people in respect to democracy, meaningful youth participation and digitalisation

- Young people and elections: voting, standing in elections, electoral campaigns
- Good democratic governance and the role of youth civil society
- Democracy at local level
- Political participation of young people (including involvement in political movements and parties)
- Innovative democratic practices involving young people: sortition, citizens' assemblies, etc – what do we learn from them?
- New forms of participation and protest of young people (ie. What do we learn from Fridays for future?)
- Ensuring structures for meaningful youth participation – learning from the co-management
- Minority youth participation
- Media pluralism: ensuring the voices of young people in mass-media
- The role of youth work in removing barriers to participation
- Securing an enabling environment for youth civil society
- Democratic schools and student participation
- Learning democracy, living human rights: the role of citizenship and human rights education
- Right to information and democracy: combating mis- and dis-information, propaganda and fake news
- The rise of artificial intelligence and democratic processes
- Online surveillance, data protection and democratisation
- Addressing structural racism and discrimination
- War is an attack on democracy: how do we address war with young people?
- Youth activism and advocacy for democratisation

Please note this is a draft list of topics and not a final one.

13:00 Lunch

15:00 Thematic workshops (continued)

16:30 Break

17:00 Thematic workshops (continued)

18:30 Evaluation of the day in working groups

19:00 Dinner at Le Fec (City Centre)

Free evening

[Thursday, 30 June 2022](#)

9:30 Thematic workshops (continued)

11:00 Break

11:30 Thematic workshops (continued)

13:00 Packed lunch

Free afternoon

19:00 Picnic and evening programme realised in partnership with the City of Strasbourg: concerts, artistic events and dinner

Friday, 1 July 2022

9:30 Parallel plenaries on the themes of the campaign (human rights, meaningful youth participation, digitalisation) to develop the Pledge for Action

11:00 Break

11:30 Parallel plenaries on the themes of the campaign (human rights, meaningful youth participation, digitalisation) to develop the Pledge for Action

12:30 Lunch

14:30 Meeting of national groups to discuss further actions on national level in the framework of the Campaign

15:30 Closing session of the Youth Here! Democracy Now! - Council of Europe Youth Action Week
Presentation of 50 recommendations and proposals for the Call for Action by the participants

Reflection on the proposals and follow-up with:

- Roderick O’Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Ireland (tbc)
- Silja Markkula, President of the European Youth Forum (tbc)
- Miriam Teuma, Chair of the Joint Council on Youth (tbc)

19:00 Dinner at L’Ancienne Douane (City Centre)

21:30 Party at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg

Saturday, 2 July 2022

Departure of participants