

EDUCATE ENGAGE EMPOWER

YOUTH SHAPING DEMOCRACY PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

Organised by the Parliamentary Assembly
of the Council of Europe
and the Parliament of Hungary

Budapest, Hungary,
27 October 2026
Hungarian National Assembly





CONTEXT

■ Across Europe, disinformation, political polarisation and concerns about the rule of law are weakening confidence in democratic institutions. Many citizens feel that formal political processes do not adequately reflect their concerns, contributing to a growing distance between the public and political institutions

■ This gap is particularly evident among young people, who are active in public debate but remain underrepresented in formal decision-making. Their connection to democracy depends not only on citizenship education, but also on opportunities to participate and to influence decisions that affect them.

■ Within this context, the Council of Europe's [New Democratic Pact for Europe](#) places participation and education at the centre of efforts to strengthen democratic institutions. Organised in cooperation with the host parliament and building on the work of the [Parliamentary Assembly's Special Committee on the New Democratic Pact](#), this parliamentary conference will consider how parliaments, education systems and young people can work together to strengthen democratic participation.

OBJECTIVES

The Conference aims to:

- share parliamentary approaches to strengthening democratic participation, including in the context of the New Democratic Pact;
- examine the links between democratic participation and education, with a particular focus on young people;
- identify a limited number of realistic follow-up actions at national level, while reinforcing cooperation between PACE and national parliaments.

FORMAT

■ The conference format will prioritise interaction and exchange, with moderated discussions in each session.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- ▶ Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (the Special Committee on the New Democratic Pact) and members of the host parliament;
- ▶ Representatives of the Council of Europe;
- ▶ Youth representatives and organisations active in democratic participation;
- ▶ Ministers of Education or high-level education officials;
- ▶ Representatives of relevant international and regional organisations;
- ▶ Selected civil society and academic experts with direct relevance to parliamentary or education-related work.



DRAFT PROGRAMME

09.00 – 09.30 Opening session

- ▶ **Forsthoffer Ágnes**, Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly
- ▶ **Petra Bayr**, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- ▶ **Alain Berset**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (tbc)
- ▶ **Judit Lannert**, Hungarian Minister of Education and Children's Affairs (tbc)

09.30 – 10.00 Democracy Across Generations: Rebuilding Trust Through Participation and Education

10.00 – 11.15 SESSION I

Understanding the Participation Gap: Youth, Trust and Democratic Legitimacy

- ▶ **Sir Christopher Chope**, Chair of the PACE Special Committee on the New Democratic Pact (tbc)
- ▶ **Dr. Petra Guasti, PhD**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Institute of Political Studies, Charles University, Czech Republic
- ▶ **Eeva Luhtakallio**, Professor, Sociology, Docent, Faculty of Social Sciences, Finland

10.30 – 11:15 Moderated discussion with participants

11.15 – 11.30 *Coffee break*

11.30 – 12.45 SESSION II

Citizens: How Parliaments Can Foster Participation and Trust

- ▶ **Cristina Leston-Bandeira**, Chair of the International Parliament Engagement Network (IPEN), United Kingdom
- ▶ **Martin Karlsson**, Senior Lecturer, School of Social Sciences and Media Studies, Örebro University, Sweden



12.00 – 12.45 **Moderated discussion with participants**

12.45 – 14.00 *Lunch*

14.15 – 15.30 **SESSION III**

Learning and Practicing Democracy: Towards the European Space for Citizenship Education

- ▶ **Benjamin Dalle**, PACE member, Vice-Chairperson: Sub-Committee on Youth and the Society of the Future (Belgium)

14.45 – 15.30 **Moderated discussion with parliamentarians, education authorities and youth representatives**

15.30 – 15.45 *Coffee break*

15.45 – 17.00 **SESSION IV**

Empowering Youth and Strengthening Democracy: A Parliamentary Agenda for Action

- ▶ **PACE Rapporteur on the New Democratic Pact**
- ▶ **Kalypso Nicolaidis**, Professor, Florence School of Transnational Governance (tbc)
- ▶ **Wojciech Przybylski**, President of the Res Publica Foundation and Editor/CEO of Visegrad
- ▶ **Representative of the Finnish Youth Parliament (tbc)**
- ▶ **Santiago Barrail**, Policy Officer, Responsible for the overall coordination of the Youth Democracy Cohort, European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)

16.15 – 17.00 **Interactive discussion and agreement on follow-up priorities**

17.00 – 17.15 **Closing session**



This initiative is a contribution towards the
New Democratic Pact for Europe

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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