



# #YOUTHSPACE23

Berlin

November 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> 2023

**FINAL DECLARATION**

# Introduction

From 15 to 17 November 2023, over 50 youth representatives from National Youth Councils met in Berlin to participate on the Youth SPACE conference „The Future of the Council of Europe after the Fourth Summit “.

They represented 22 countries and were joint by the European Youth Forum and the Advisory Council on Youth on the Council of Europe.

The conference was initiated and hosted by the German Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in close cooperation with the German Federal Youth Council and the Council of Europe supported by the German Ministry on Foreign Affairs.



Deutscher Bundestag



# Introduction

*The 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe stated in the 'Reykjavík Declaration' that the common values of democracy, freedom and human rights are not given and manifested forever. The Reykjavik Principles for Democracy therefore provide a concrete framework for shaping the future of the Council of Europe*

*In this final declaration, the participants recall that all processes to strengthen democracy and to build the future of the Council of Europe as an institution, must actively include the participation of young people and their representative bodies such as the Advisory Council on Youth, the European Youth Forum and the National Youth Councils.*



## List of Abbreviations

CoE	Council of Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
AC	Advisory Council on Youth
NYC	National Youth Council
AI	Artificial Intelligence
HR	Human Rights
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EYF	European Youth Foundation



# *Final Declaration – Youth perspectives on Ukraine and the accountability of the Council of Europe*



- Call on member states to support Ukrainian youth communities in member states and help them to maintain connections with Ukraine.
- Advocate and support the establishment of a temporary relocated status for Ukrainian youth affected by war, ensuring access to essential services and opportunities during their displacement.
- Supporting initiatives that involve youth in the decision-making processes in policies and actions surrounding anti-corruption and rule of law.

# *Final Declaration – Youth perspectives on Ukraine and the accountability of the Council of Europe*

- Foster collaborations with reputable media organisations to promote responsible journalism.
- Engage in international cooperation among member States to share best practises, resources and expertise in media literacy initiatives.
- Develop user-friendly digital literacy platforms that are accessible that are accessible to broad audiences.



# *Final Declaration – Youth perspectives on the future of human rights in the context of climate change and digitalization*

- Take the necessary measures to ensure equal access to digital opportunities, such as: access to internet, digital infrastructure, open source information, digital literacy education and all of this in respect of human rights.
- Launch a broad and inclusive discussion on AI. Create rules that regulate it. As it effects young people immensely they should be part of this forum.
- We demand to the CoE to start drafting a Convention on Environmental Rights, modeled on ECHR, holding states accountable through the European Court of Human Rights.



## *Final Declaration – Youth perspectives on the future of human rights in the context of climate change and digitalization*

- We demand the CoE to allocate dedicated funds to local projects aiming to increase youth engagement in environmental issues, through the European Youth Foundation.
- Design a quality communication plan/campaign striving to use a more accessible, simplified and inclusive language that can reach the different target audiences.
- Ensure policies and measures taken by the Council of Europe designed to respond to climate- and AI-related issues do not further marginalize disadvantaged young people.





## *Final Declaration – Youth perspectives on the Reykjavík Principles for democracy*

- Call on PACE to strengthen and meaningfully include already existing youth participation structures, including demanding fitting increased financial support. Call for increasing structures as the Advisory Council on Youth and Youth Delegates to the Congress and cooperating with them across the organisation. Increasing the amount of youth experts that engage with the CoE, highlighting the importance of equal geographical, member state and gender.
- Recognise and strengthen National Youth Councils, as recognised by the European Youth Forum, as partners beyond youth policy also through updating and reinforcing the implementation of the Council of Ministers Recommendation 2006, ensuring NYCs are present in the decision-making process from the beginning till the end.
- Call for a PACE recommendation on standardised practices for meaningful youth participation and invite NYCs to contribute to country monitoring missions on CoE standards when they take place. Call for PACE to elect a candidate for HR Commissioner who prioritises youth rights and appoints a special advisor on youth rights.
- Create an accessible unified platform to facilitate information sharing, network development, dialogue, and partnership between NYCs and all the different members in the youth participatory mechanism of Council of Europe to promote engagement, access to information, and transparency. The Council of Europe should support the different activities and initiatives of the platform such as regular meetings, information library, and capacity building of those involved.

## *Final Declaration – Youth perspectives on the Reykjavík Principles for democracy*

- The Council of Europe is urged to promote the reduction of the voting age to 16 among its Member States. In order to guarantee that voters are adequately informed and capable of making informed decisions, Member States are required to incorporate mandatory formal and non-formal civic democratic education into their educational policies. Additionally, the minimum age for passive voting eligibility for elected offices should be lowered. Ultimately, a harmonization of both active and passive voting rights is to be achieved across all Member States of the CoE.
- Call on the PACE to advocate both within their national Parliaments and the Council of Europe for allocating financial support for recognised NYCs, including those struggling with war and undemocratic regimes. This should be done through reviewing financing mechanisms, including potential amendments to the EYF statutes.



# Remarks on Meaningful Youth Participation

*Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Young people are motivated and interested in political issues in our societies, however they find that traditional avenues for participation are not delivering on their promise. Youth civil society has been particularly affected by the shrinking civic space, and yet has been delivering support in times of crisis.*

*Discrimination of all kinds, along with a general othering and infantilisation of youth, keeps adding barriers to youth engagement with democratic processes and institutions, creating an atmosphere of mistrust and disenfranchisement.*

*With co-management, the Council of Europe sets an example of good practice for youth participation and is involved in the development and implementation of standards for meaningful youth participation. This example of good practice should be applied especially when it comes to the future of the Council of Europe. The conference demonstrates that young people need the Council of Europe, but the Council of Europe also needs the young generation.*



## Final remarks

*The representatives of the participating national youth councils welcome the fact that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is turning to the topic of youth as a partner in order to reflect the importance of youth participation in PACE.*

*The conference organised by the German PACE delegation in the German Bundestag showed that the cooperation of national parliamentarians and youth representatives can succeed with corresponding initiatives. This connection between national delegations, the youth councils and the Council of Europe should be further strengthened.*

*The Youth Department of the Council of Europe makes a decisive contribution to this. The further strengthening of this Department is a central component of the involvement of young people and their interests.*

