



Presidency of Malta
Council of Europe
May - November 2025

Présidence de Malte
Conseil de l'Europe
Mai - Novembre 2025

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Valletta, 9 October 2025

**10th Council of Europe Conference
of Ministers responsible for Youth
Final Declaration**

10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth

Final Declaration

1. We, the Ministers responsible for Youth, gathered in Valletta on 9 October 2025, with the objective of increasing confidence, improving quality and strengthening the resilience of our democracies through stronger youth participation, drawing on the Council of Europe's New Democratic Pact for Europe, affirm our commitment to enhancing democracy, human rights and the rule of law by consolidating young people's role in democratic life and their perspectives in decision-making processes. We decide, therefore, to reinforce European youth policy and the Council of Europe's work in the field of youth.
2. In today's Europe, the pursuit of peace, based on justice and international co-operation, is vital for preserving young people's access to rights. Our efforts must focus on the ability to live in peaceful and inclusive societies. Recognising the vital role of young people in peacebuilding, we stress the importance of reinforcing citizenship education in peacebuilding and intercultural dialogue as a valuable means to strengthen respect for human rights and democratic values, as well as the resilience and social cohesion of European societies.
3. Young people are dynamic, diverse and dedicated drivers for positive change. They are shaping 21st century European societies in a new digital, demographic, and environmental context, based on their support for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
4. Young generations have the knowledge, skills and perspectives to be change-makers and to build a present and future rooted in the Council of Europe's youth policy standards. Through mutual trust, open dialogue, meaningful participation and co-creation with public institutions, they contribute to building societies in which they have confidence.
5. Young people are not a homogeneous group, yet many of them face common challenges. These can include high unemployment rates, unfavourable, unsafe or precarious working conditions, wage discrimination, and limited and unequal access to quality healthcare, education and affordable housing, which are barriers to their autonomy. Young people are also underrepresented in political decision-making and must be supported in their electoral participation and involvement in democratic processes, both as voters and as candidates. Access to rights and quality youth information remain issues, particularly for young people with fewer opportunities. Youth democratic participation is further hindered by the impact of conflicts and wars, which threaten their security. Poor mental health prevents many young people from participating fully.
6. Young people are crucial to the shaping of our shared and democratic future; their perspectives are key to strengthening democratic institutions and improving the quality of decision-making processes. Consequently, we adopt a Resolution on the Council of Europe Reference Framework on a Youth Perspective, which provides a model to guide the Council of Europe and its member States in integrating a youth perspective across areas of policymaking that concern young people. The aim is to develop more forward-looking and future-proof policies that reflect the needs and energy of young people and are responsive to current and future challenges. This approach builds on the Reykjavík Declaration; it embraces a new way of thinking and charts a progressive way forward. We commit to ensuring its implementation.

7. The Council of Europe is an essential partner in empowering young people to take action and respond to these challenges, to uphold and defend human rights and to participate fully in democratic life. Thirteen years after the last Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, the Council of Europe remains a key actor in youth policy within the architecture of international organisations and European institutions.
8. For decades, the Council of Europe has been a key driving force behind the development of youth policy in Europe. Thanks to its pioneering co-management system in the youth field, the Organisation's member States and young people have worked together to build more democratic and inclusive societies across Europe, supported by key instruments, namely the European Youth Centres, the European Youth Foundation; the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card, and the partnership with the European Commission in the youth field. The Organisation's work in this area has included setting standards for knowledge and evidence-based youth policies, youth-policy co-operation, human rights and education for democratic citizenship programmes, campaigns, capacity-building and youth-work activities.
9. We reaffirm the need for support for and recognition of the role of youth structures and national, regional and local youth councils in increasing the participation of young people in democratic life, especially in times when the civic space is shrinking. We commit to ensuring that young people's democratic rights in electoral processes are respected, as the basis for democracy. To this end we invite the Committee of Ministers to entrust the youth statutory bodies with carrying out a study to examine the experience of countries having lowered the voting age.
10. We welcome the progress towards the adoption of the European Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life, jointly elaborated with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. The Charter will give a new impetus to youth participation and to the support of youth organisations at local and regional levels. We are committed to fostering these through Council of Europe and national initiatives.
11. We support the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030 that has identified, as the guiding principles for the Council of Europe's work until the end of the decade: strengthening democratic participation and enlarging the civic space for young people, broadening young people's access to rights, supporting young people to live in peaceful and inclusive societies, and improving the recognition and quality of youth work across Europe. We invite the Committee of Ministers to entrust the youth statutory bodies with assessing the need for and the feasibility of a new instrument to consolidate and update the Council of Europe's acquis in the youth field. This instrument could also serve to acknowledge a rights-based approach.
12. We reconfirm that young people's access to rights, notably social rights, is an indispensable precondition for the democratic participation of young people, particularly in a new digital era marked by powerful and transformative technologies such as artificial intelligence. Mitigating the risks arising from such technologies and developing appropriate safeguards for young people to enjoy their rights –including digital literacy for a democratic space - is of key importance. A special focus should be placed on youth policies for young people with fewer opportunities and in vulnerable situations; their perspectives should be included in policymaking.
13. We acknowledge the urgency of the climate crisis, and the vital role young people play in addressing it. We welcome their contributions in tackling present and future challenges, notably combating the triple planetary crisis (pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss) and its economic and social consequences, and in ensuring that the

reflection on the nature and implications of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment moves forward. In the spirit of the New Democratic Pact for Europe and based on European human rights standards we commit to the safeguarding of their right of free speech, their right to protest and their right of collective action, in defending the aforementioned goals. We encourage member States to explore investment options in programmes that empower youth to lead climate action and pro-environmental initiatives, promoting sustainability and resilience at local and regional levels.

14. We reaffirm that the Council of Europe's support for Ukraine in the field of youth remains a priority. This includes solidarity, targeted intergovernmental activities, and cooperation with non-governmental youth organisations and networks that foster young people's participation in democratic life and contribute to the recovery of Ukraine, including its youth infrastructure and the reintegration of young veterans. We value transnational voluntary services for young people as an important instrument to support youth engagement in solidarity and reconstruction efforts, with a view to building a peaceful and democratic future.
15. As a sign of our commitment to ensuring that young people in Ukraine, and the wider region, can uphold, defend, and benefit from the core values of the Council of Europe, we invite the Committee of Ministers to carry out a feasibility study on the basis of the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe youth policy on the creation of the third venue of the European Youth Centre in the Black Sea region, within available resources, to provide a dedicated space for youth cooperation, capacity building, and democratic engagement. At the same time, we underline the need to invest in the existing European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest to ensure their continued role and well-functioning as hubs for youth participation and policy development. We underline that securing sustainable financial contributions from member States is essential for maintaining these structures, ensuring they effectively support youth engagement and democratic resilience across the continent.
16. We express appreciation for the cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the areas of youth research and youth work and call on both Institutions to strengthen their collaboration beyond existing programmes.
17. We emphasise the importance of youth research as a foundation for evidence-based youth policy, ensuring that policy decisions are informed by robust data, analysis, and the realities faced by young people.
18. We welcome the conclusions of the 4th European Youth Work Convention, held in Malta in May 2025, and support its follow-up as a means of prioritising a strategic vision for the future of youth work in Europe. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening and advancing youth work in our respective countries and ensuring it remains a key priority through sustained support for youth organisations and youth-work providers. This includes investing in their capacity-building and fostering cooperation between both professional and volunteer youth workers to promote the recognition and visibility of youth work, as well as disseminating standards, knowledge, and good practices while embracing innovative approaches.
19. We welcome the reform of the European Youth Foundation, and agree that co-management, intergovernmental cooperation, including through policy assistance and the Council of Europe's country action plans, the programme of the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres, the European Youth Information Quality Label and the promotion of innovative approaches to youth participation in democratic and civic spaces, should remain priorities for the Council of Europe youth policy and action in the coming years.

20. We reaffirm that conferences of ministers responsible for youth are an important decision-making platform at the European level and call upon member States to commit to hosting future conferences and note with gratitude the invitation of the authorities of Luxembourg to host the next Conference in 2028. .
21. We thank the Maltese authorities for their initiative to host the 10th Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth and their generous hospitality.