Parliamentary Assembly
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Resolution 2553 (2024)[1]

Strengthening the youth perspective in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Taking on board the views, expectations and concerns of youth is an essential precondition for ensuring the good functioning of democracy and its capacity to pursue, with a long-term perspective, the public good. Young people bring dynamism, a fresh impetus and new ideas to a full range of policy issues, which is key to addressing today's challenges and contributes to effective, inclusive and sustainable policy making.

2. Regrettably, young people are underrepresented in parliaments and do not engage sufficiently with traditional politics due, *inter alia*, to legislative and other barriers, prejudices and a lack of opportunities. This reinforces their disenchantment with political life, undermines the representativeness of elected institutions and raises questions about intergenerational justice. It also affects the effectiveness and future sustainability of democracy as a governance system, as young people are those who will be the most affected by the decisions taken today on longer-term issues such as climate change, environmental protection and widening inequalities.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly firmly believes that increasing youth participation in political platforms and decision making can lead to more resilient democracies, help tackle democratic backsliding and increase the political engagement of young people and their legislative representation. It strongly welcomes, therefore, the stance taken by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe during their 4th Summit that a youth perspective should be included in all Council of Europe intergovernmental and other deliberations.

4. The Assembly underlines that the Council of Europe is a pioneer, promoter and innovator in youth participation, notably with the establishment of the European Youth Centres based in Strasbourg and Budapest, the European Youth Foundation and the co-management system, which gives an equal voice to young Europeans, represented by the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), and to the representatives of public authorities responsible for youth issues, in the formulation of the Organisation's youth policies and programmes.

5. The Assembly highlights the achievements of the Council of Europe youth sector during its fifty years of existence and the individual and collective contributions that young people and their organisations continue to make in uniting the continent and supporting democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the member States of the Council of Europe. It also commends the campaign "Democracy here. Democracy now.", which aims at revitalising democracy by strengthening mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions.

6. The Assembly also notes that, since 2014, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has implemented an initiative aimed at rejuvenating political life by inviting young people to take part in its sessions as youth delegates, to have their say in the debates and to exchange ideas with Congress members on the issues on the agenda.

1. *Assembly debate* on 25 June 2024 (17th sitting) (see Doc. 15871, report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Anastasios Chatzivasileiou; and Doc. 15872, opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Yevheniia Kravchuk). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 25 June 2024 (17th sitting).

7. Furthermore, the Assembly takes positive note of the initiatives taken by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE-PA) to discuss the challenges faced by young people and their interests, to boost the participation of young people in parliaments and to ensure that young members of parliament play a full part in their work. It notes with satisfaction that the platforms put in place by these international parliaments, which regroup their youngest members, greatly contribute to including a youth perspective in their decision making and to keeping youth issues high on their agendas.

8. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly resolves to establish a mechanism aimed at ensuring that a youth perspective is systematically taken into account in its deliberations. The "PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism" foreseen by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) would rely on the participation of members of the Assembly and young Europeans, represented by the CCJ and other structures in the Council of Europe youth sector. The mechanism would function as follows:

8.1. each of the Assembly's general committees (with the exception of the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights) should appoint, from among its full members or alternates, a "Youth Rapporteur" who would be responsible for presenting a youth perspective in the debates on the reports under preparation in the committee, and who for this purpose would liaise with CCJ members and other structures in the Council of Europe youth sector working on specific files. The mandate of Youth Rapporteur should not exceed two years and should be renewable once;

8.2. when appointing the Youth Rapporteur, in addition to the criteria of competence and availability, fair representation of political groups (based on the D'Hondt system), gender-balanced representation and geographical and national balance, committees should also give due regard to the age of the candidates, with a view to ensuring that young members of the Assembly are given appropriate visibility in its work. Upon their appointment, the Youth Rapporteurs should make a declaration of interests;

8.3. during plenary debates, the Youth Rapporteur of the committee which is seized for report should have the right to take the floor after the representatives of the political groups;

8.4. on an annual basis, the Assembly's Youth Rapporteurs should hold a meeting with the CCJ to discuss the Assembly's reports under preparation, identify new issues for debate and envisage joint initiatives and co-operation activities (the annual session of the PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism). The discussions may cover any substantive issues and should not be limited to youth policies;

8.5. on an annual basis, the Bureau of the Assembly should be invited to hold a strategic exchange of views with the joint bureaux of the CCJ and the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), with the participation of the Youth Rapporteurs from each committee;

8.6. once a year, the Assembly should hold a debate on a specific theme agreed during the above-mentioned strategic exchange of views, with the participation of the members of the CCJ;

8.7. the PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism would operate within the framework of increased interaction between the Assembly and the youth sector: whenever possible, members of the CCJ, other structures in the Council of Europe youth sector and youth organisations should be invited to contribute to the preparation of reports, by participating in hearings and exchanges, and presenting contributions at committee level. This process should include a yearly exchange, for example at the beginning of the year, on current priorities and issues for future work in each committee. At the same time, the participation of the Assembly's Youth Rapporteurs and other Assembly representatives in the Council of Europe's youth sector meetings and activities should be encouraged.

9. The Assembly calls on its Bureau to take the necessary measures to ensure that the Assembly's Rules of Procedure and complementary texts are amended to take into account paragraph 8 and its sub-paragraphs shown above.

10. Being aware that strengthening the youth perspective in political decision making requires a wide range of measures and the involvement of many actors, the Assembly invites national delegations to:

10.1. ensure and increase the presence of young parliamentarians among their members;

10.2. reserve a certain number of seats for young parliamentarians and take measures to encourage their active participation in the work of the Assembly;

10.3. consider reserving a "youth seat" for a member of their national parliament who is also a representative of a youth organisation.

11. The Assembly invites its political groups to consider ways to increase youth participation in their work, including by:

11.1. regularly inviting youth representatives to participate in their meetings and supporting and facilitating their participation;

11.2. giving young members greater visibility and opportunities to actively participate in the work of the Assembly;

11.3. actively calling on their respective national political parties to undertake institutional reforms to increase youth representation, in particular young women, including by devising new recruitment strategies, allocating funding to young candidates and actively supporting them in running for election, and empowering party youth groups.

12. With the objective of strengthening the youth perspective in political decision making at national level, the Assembly calls on the national parliaments of Council of Europe member States to create the conditions for the widest possible participation of young people, in particular young women, in political decision making and to this effect to:

12.1. remove legislative barriers which prevent young people from running for office, including by aligning the voting age and the age required for running for office;

12.2. step up co-operation with national youth councils, youth organisations and networks, including by co-organising meetings to hold thematic discussions on topical issues, thus enabling youth to share their ideas, perspectives and solutions;

12.3. set up, if they have not yet done so, participatory mechanisms to allow mainstreaming of a youth perspective in parliament's work;

12.4. set up an informal network of young parliamentarians.

13. The Assembly supports the introduction of youth quotas by political parties and encourages them to carry out a feasibility study to this end.

14. The Assembly refers to Resolution 2378 (2021) "Strengthening the role of young people in the prevention and resolution of conflicts". It acknowledges the challenge that young people and young parliamentarians must face in countries where they suffer from the devastating consequences of a war and in regions affected by frozen conflict. It also recognises that they must be given a stronger role in promoting dialogue and mutual understanding, and will thus seek to provide all of the Assembly's young parliamentarians with greater opportunities to work together and contribute to the Assembly's efforts towards conflict prevention and resolution.