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Strengthening a youth perspective in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly

Report[1]
Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
Rapporteur: Mr Anastasios CHATZIVASILEIOU, Greece, Group of the European People's Party

Summary

Youth participation is an essential precondition to ensure the quality and good functioning of democracy and its capacity to pursue, with a long-term perspective, the public good. Enhancing youth participation in political platforms and decision making can lead to more resilient democracies and help tackle democratic backsliding.

The Parliamentary Assembly should promptly and effectively follow up the commitment 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 the Council of Europe intergovernmental and other deliberations.

An array of measures would contribute to this end, namely:

- establishing a participatory mechanism bringing together members of the Assembly and young Europeans;

- debating, on a regular basis, youth policies with the direct participation of youth representatives;

- enhancing the visibility and presence of young parliamentarians, including youth representatives, in national delegations to the Assembly;

- supporting greater engagement of the Assembly's political groups with their respective youth branches.

1. Reference to committee: Doc. 15262, Reference 4582 of 28 May 2021.

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A. Draft resolution[2]

1. Taking on board the views, expectations and concerns of the youth is an essential precondition to ensure 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, that is key to addressing today's challenges and contributes to effective, inclusive and sustainable policy making.

2. Regrettably, young people are under-represented 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 the ones who will be the most affected by the decisions taken today on longer-term issues such as climate change, environmental protection and deepening inequalities.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly firmly believes that increasing youth participation in political platforms and decision making can lead to more resilient democracies and help tackle democratic backsliding. 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 the Council of Europe intergovernmental and other deliberations.

4. The Assembly recalls 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, and 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 50 years of existence of the Council of Europe youth sector 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 with Congress members on the issues on the agenda.

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 (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly to discuss the challenges of 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 agenda.

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. Such a PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism would rely on the participation of members of the Assembly and young Europeans, represented by the CCJ and other structures of 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 amongst its full members or alternates a Youth Rapporteur, who shall be responsible for raising a youth perspective in the debates on the reports under preparation in the committee, and for this purpose liaise with CCJ members and other structures of the Council of Europe youth sector working on specific files. The mandate of Youth Rapporteur should not exceed two years, renewable once;

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 11 September 2023.

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 declare their interests;

8.3. during plenary debates, the Youth Rapporteur of the committee which is seized for report shall 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 shall 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 (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);

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 an increased interaction between the Assembly and the youth sector: whenever possible, members of the CCJ, other structures of 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. 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

10. Being aware that strengthening a 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. increase the presence of young parliamentarians amongst their members;

10.2. consider reserving 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;

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

12. With the objective of strengthening a 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 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 for running for office;

12.2. step up co-operation with national youth councils and 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.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Anastasios Chatzivasileiou, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. In the last decade, the importance of youth participation in all decision-making processes has been increasingly recognised. Within this wide context, youth participation in political processes and institutions, particularly in parliaments, has come to the forefront of discussions, highlighting a "disturbing dichotomy" between the potential, motivation, and interests of youth to contribute to politics, and the actual opportunities to do so.[3]

2. Today, it is widely acknowledged that young people make an essential contribution to the development and realisation of democracy and human rights, and to the functioning of democratic institutions.[4] Experience from many countries shows that young people took leadership during very difficult and challenging historical moments and managed to bring about change.[5] Young people's creativity, dynamism, social commitment and competences are an invaluable source for targeted and effective policy responses, and are crucial for the sustainability of our democratic societies.[6] Thus, they must have a seat at the table with the older generation of politicians when decisions are taken, not only in policy fields that affect youth, but with respect to the full range of political and social issues.

3. On 17 March 2022, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)6 on protecting youth civil society and young people and supporting their participation in democratic processes. It called on member States to "engage in open and structured dialogue with young people and youth civil society and create the requisite conditions for the widest possible political participation by young people."[7]

4. The Parliamentary Assembly also expressed the view that the Council of Europe should place a specific emphasis on engaging in a meaningful way with young people.[8] In its Recommendation 2245 (2023) "The Reykjavik Summit of the Council of Europe: United around values in the face of extraordinary challenges", it stressed that the 4th Summit should ensure that the Council of Europe put people at the forefront of its mission by, *inter alia*, mainstreaming a youth perspective in all its activities.

5. The Summit gave a positive response to these expectations. It affirmed the wish by the Heads of State and government of the 46 member States of the Council of Europe to include a youth perspective in its intergovernmental and other deliberations, recognising that "youth participation in decision-making processes improves the effectiveness of public policies and strengthens democratic institutions through open dialogue".[9]

6. As one of the statutory organs of the Organisation and "the democratic conscience of Europe", these considerations must find an echo within the Assembly itself. While the present report was initiated before the Summit, its recommendations should take into account the Summit Declaration and its preparatory work, including the contributions by youth civil society organisations and the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ).

2. Origin and preparation of the report

7. In its Resolution 2378 (2021) "Strengthening the role of young people in the prevention and resolution of conflicts", the Assembly noted that "the new era of youth participation requires mechanisms to ensure their continuous and meaningful involvement in making decisions, shaping policies, adopting strategies and implementing actions". It resolved "to continue its reflection on promoting meaningful and structured ways of involving youth participants in its activities, most importantly by increasing dialogue and co-operation between the Assembly and the different youth forums that already exist within the Council of Europe".

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3. Annual Report of the Special Representative on Youth Engagement of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly, July 2022.
4. See Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on protecting youth civil society and young people, and supporting their participation in democratic processes.
5. Special Representative on Youth Engagement of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Report to the Standing Committee, 25 February 2022.
6. CM/Rec(2022)6, op. cit.
7. Ibid.
8. Resolution 2369 (2021) "The Assembly's vision on the strategic priorities for the Council of Europe".
9. Reykjavík Declaration - United around our values.

8. As a follow-up to this resolution, the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media tabled a motion for a resolution stressing the stark under-representation of youth in all institutional political processes and policy making, including in parliaments.[10] The motion advocates more structured avenues of involving organised youth in a meaningful way in the Assembly's activities. It argues that "a political partnership with organisations belonging to the Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth would allow young Europeans to have a say on matters that are not only focused on youth issues but which still impact them" and calls for the setting up of "a youth partnership status with the Assembly along the lines of the existing partnership for democracy status as stipulated in Rule 64 of [its] Rules of Procedure".

9. Given its emphasis on institutional matters and the link with the partnership for democracy status, the Bureau of the Assembly referred this motion to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy for report. In addition, the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media was seized for opinion.

10. The Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy held a first exchange of views on the matter in December 2021. While there was unanimous support for enhancing the youth perspective in the work of the Assembly, several voices warned against the expediency of modelling the framework for co-operation with youth organisations on the partnership for democracy status.

11. The partner for democracy status is granted to parliaments, and the members of the relevant delegations are members of parliament. It gives the right to take the floor during plenary sittings, in committees, and to sign motions, written declarations and other documents even if these signatures are not included in the counting. Should the Assembly set up a delegation whose members are not members of parliament? How would the delegation be selected and how could its representativeness and democratic legitimacy be ensured? Would setting up a status for the youth or for a specific Council of Europe body such as the CCJ subsequently lead other groups/Council of Europe bodies to request a similar status, to be represented in an institution – the Assembly – which is by design representative, enjoys the democratic legitimacy resulting from elections and has many other ways to interact with Council of Europe structures?

12. These very pertinent questions showed since the beginning that more thought had to be given to the matter. Since then, I have had several opportunities to develop my reflection. On 1 July 2022, I attended as a speaker an informal exchange of views on "The participation of organisations representing youth, in particular the [CCJ], in the development of soft law in the Council of Europe", held by the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Legal Co-operation (GR-J). One of the conclusions of this exchange was that young people's participation in policy-making processes can bring new ideas, perspectives and creativity to the resulting texts and contribute to making these policies more relevant, inclusive and sustainable. It was therefore recommended that the steering committees and subordinate bodies of the intergovernmental structure systematically assess opportunities for engaging the CCJ and the youth members of the Conference of INGOs in their processes of drafting policy instruments and legal standards and monitoring their implementation.[11]

13. On 10 October 2022, I had an online exchange of views with the members of the CCJ and subsequently, the CCJ submitted written comments stressing that the establishment of a "youth partner" status with the Assembly would be a appropriate action to tackle the systematic issue of under-representation of young people in institutional political processes and policy making.

14. On 1 December 2022, I attended as a speaker the Conference on "Democracy and human rights in times of crisis – the contribution of young people in Europe", organised by the German delegation to the Assembly in co-operation with the German Federal Youth Council. Young representatives from over 25 countries, as well as CCJ members, held discussions and developed proposals for policy measures on specific themes. In a joint final declaration, participants welcomed the Assembly's ongoing work and called for, *inter alia*, the organisation of similar conferences in other countries in co-operation with the Assembly members and national youth councils.

15. On 13 December 2022, I presented an introductory memorandum where I made three alternative proposals with a view to ensuring meaningful involvement of youth in the Assembly's work.[12] Members welcomed my proposals, suggesting that they may not be mutually exclusive and adding that political groups and national delegations should also be given a role in this context. It was also stressed that it was crucial to ensure the representativeness of young people or youth organisations who would be involved in the Assembly's work.

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10. See Doc.15262.
11. https://rm.coe.int/conclusions-informal-exchange-gr-j-1-july-2022-2753-8478-2598-1-2778-6/1680a71b45.
12. See AS/Pol(2022)37 as declassified.

16. At the same meeting, the committee held a hearing with the participation of Mr Spyros Papadatos, Chairperson of the CCJ, who presented the Council of Europe's co-management system; and Mr Roger Padreny, member of the Parliament of Andorra, member of the Network of young parliamentarians of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), who presented the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Youth Engagement and the activities of the Network. I would like to thank them, as well as the CCJ – which, on 20 January 2023, sent written comments on the introductory memorandum – for their valuable contribution to our reflection.

17. While the present report was under preparation, the whole Council of Europe was involved in the organisation of the 4th Summit of its Heads of State and Government. The youth question was high on the agenda.

18. The CCJ provided an extensive contribution in view of the 4th Summit, which was presented to the Ministers' Deputies by Ms Alice Bergholtz, Vice-Chair of the CCJ, during a preparatory meeting of the Summit working party (GT-SOM4) on 24 February 2023. In her presentation, Ms Bergholtz highlighted the need for Council of Europe member States to invest more in human rights, democracy and the rule of law; called for a convention on youth; and asked the Council of Europe to better connect with civil society, in particular the youth, including by modernising its communication policy and above all by extending the co-management system to additional sectors.[13] Ms Bergholtz reiterated these views and proposals during her participation in the Assembly's Standing Committee in Reykjavík, on 15 May 2023.[14]

19. On the strength of these discussions, I have further refined the proposals initially made in my introductory memorandum. I am deeply convinced of the need to include a youth perspective in the work of the Assembly. Regular communication should be established with the youth, but it is necessary to mainstream their perspective in a substantive manner in the Assembly's overall deliberations. The new title I have proposed for the report clarifies this point.

20. At the same time, it is not possible to simply transpose existing models – such as the partner for democracy status – to address the youth representation and participation deficit in parliamentary deliberations. Parliamentary institutions owe their legitimacy to the democratic mandate of their members, as expressed through free and fair elections. All Assembly delegations are composed of members holding such a democratic mandate. The best way to ensure that a youth perspective is better taken into account would be to set up a specific participatory mechanism which would enable youth representatives to be part of the deliberative process of the Assembly. Making a viable proposal to this end is the aim of this report.

3. Definitions of youth

21. There are variations on the way the term "youth" is defined in different instruments or bodies. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace, and Security defines "youth" as people aged 18-29. Similarly, for the purposes of their youth policies, the Council of Europe and the European Commission define young people as aged between 18 and 30.[15] At the level of inter-parliamentary assemblies, pursuant to the Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), a young parliamentarian is one who is under the age of 45. As for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, at the initial stage, its Network of young parliamentarians included all parliamentarians younger than 35 years old. The age limit was subsequently raised to 40, to include other parliamentarians who expressed a strong interest to join the network.

4. The importance of youth participation in political decision making

22. Young people are deeply invested in public affairs. Yet, they are hardly represented in political processes and institutions, particularly in parliaments. This challenges the representativeness of our democracies and raises questions about intergenerational justice. The risk is that issues of particular importance to young people will not be on the political agenda, that debates and decisions on issues which young people relate to differently lose their relevance for younger generations, and that laws and policies passed by parliament and government are detrimental to their interests, bearing in mind that young people are the ones who will be the most affected by some of the decisions taken on longer-term issues such as climate change. Thus, youth participation in political decision making must be strengthened, by enabling more of them

13. https://rm.coe.int/2023-03-01-statment-ac-joint-response-to-the-summit-open-consultation/1680aa94c5.
14. https://rm.coe.int/minutes-of-the-meeting-held-in-reykjavik-on-monday-15-may-2023/1680aba8b3.
15. See glossary on youth.

to participate in the decision-making process as members of parliament and by ensuring they participate more broadly in the political process through a full and meaningful contribution to parliamentary processes and work.

23. Strengthening youth participation in political decision making is not only the right thing to work towards; it is also the smart thing to do. Young people have a huge potential, as well as motivation and interest to contribute to politics. They hold the ideas, the understanding of the complexity of the digitised world, and the energy and the interests necessary for powerful participation and truthful change.[16] Harnessing the perspectives, new ideas and energy of young people is indispensable in the broader efforts to address key issues which affect people of all ages, such as achieving the sustainable development goals, peace and security, the right to education, to health and to social protection, gender equality, equal socio-economic and political opportunities, and fighting climate change. Youth are an innovative force that have much to contribute to these collective efforts.[17] In this respect, the CCJ stressed, in its written comments to the present report, that young people bring insights to political discussions that older generations might lack, purely because young people experience society from a different perspective, with different capabilities, resources, skills and realities. Thus, stepping up youth participation in political processes is also needed for better policy making.

24. It should also be borne in mind that the under-representation of young people in politics and parliaments contributes to their disenfranchisement. In fact, youth show a growing disenchantment with traditional politics and political parties, have a wavering faith in governments and institutions and a dwindling interest in formal political activity, including voting and party membership. These are real threats to the future of democracy and its long-term sustainability as a governance model.[18] Therefore, actively engaging youth in political decision making is key to protect democracy, strengthen it and counter democratic backsliding.

5. Youth representation in parliaments

25. According to data collected by the IPU in 2021, while 49% of the global population is under 30, a mere 2.6% of the world's members of parliaments (MPs) belong to that age group. In the IPU's Europe region – which covers all Council of Europe member States, as well as Belarus and the Russian Federation – this percentage is 4.9% (for lower and unicameral chambers). Around 25% of the world's single and lower houses of parliament have no MPs aged under 30. This figure rises to 73% for the world's upper houses of parliament. Amongst Council of Europe member States, in terms of the lower and unicameral chambers category, Armenia, Norway, and San Marino have the highest under-30 representation, with over 10% of MPs aged under 30. For upper chambers, Belgium is in the lead with 10%.[19]

26. At the international level, the Assembly itself includes only 17 members aged 30 and under in its current composition (2.6%). This figure rises to 60 members if the age-threshold is set at 35 and below (9.28%), and to 117 members if the age-threshold is set at 40 and below (18%). In the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, 32 out of 323 parliamentarians are below the age of 35 (9.9%).

27. There are several reasons for the stark under-representation of young people in parliaments, and politics in general. These include legislative barriers, prejudices, a lack of political will or opportunities, and the low rates of engagement by young people themselves due to a lack of trust in the political system and political institutions (the latter is less of an issue in Europe where the more established democracies tend to have higher rates of youth engagement). For example, in most countries, the minimum age for eligibility to run for parliamentary office is set higher than the age to vote. The world average eligibility age is 22.2 years for the lower chambers, namely 4-6 years after obtaining the voting right, and 27.9 years for the upper chambers.

28. Moreover, politics are traditionally seen as the domain of older (and often male) citizens. Voters and party members associate youth with a lack of experience or being unqualified, thus prioritising the experience of older people over the outlook of youth ("Old is gold" proverb). Young people who, nevertheless, succeed in accessing decision-making and leadership roles, are regularly confronted with suspicion, intimidation, dominant behaviour, and prejudice.

29. In 2021, recognising the need to harness young people's positive energy and innovativeness, speakers of parliaments from all over the world committed to speeding up action to curb the chronic under-representation of young people in parliament and parliamentary processes and renewed their pledge to do

16. Annual Report of the Special Representative on Youth Engagement of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, op. cit.
17. Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament Virtual meeting, 19-20 August 2020, Conference Report.
18. See Resolution on "Youth participation in the democratic process".
19. Youth participation in national parliaments, IPU, April 2021. The data is current as of 14 September 2020.

their utmost to make politics genuinely open to young people and to facilitate their election into parliaments in greater numbers.[20] Evidence suggests that measures to increase youth representation in parliaments include aligning the minimum age of eligibility to run for office with the minimum voting age,[21] and introducing youth quotas, which can take different forms, including reserved seats, legislated quotas and party quotas.

6. A youth perspective in the Council of Europe

6.1. The co-management system

30. In the Council of Europe, it has already been widely recognised that young people have the right to have their voice heard and to make their own decisions on issues that will impact them and their lives. As far back as in 1972, the Organisation introduced a ground-breaking co-management system, which gives an equal voice to young Europeans (represented by the CCJ) and to representatives of public authorities responsible for youth issues (represented by the CDEJ) in the formulation of youth policies and programmes.[22] The Council of Europe's co-management system in the field of youth policies is a living example of participatory democracy.

31. The CCJ consists of 30 representatives from a diversity of youth INGOs (13 members), national youth councils (7 members) and youth organisations and networks (10 members). These representatives, in addition to being young, are experts on youth issues and each have portfolios which they have responsibility for (youth, peace and security; gender equality; artificial intelligence, etc.).

32. 20 CCJ members are proposed by the European Youth Forum (EYF) following an election process which also gives a role to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. EYF brings together over 100 member organisations representing millions of young people across Europe. To become a member or associate member of the EYF, candidate organisations have to fulfil certain criteria, including "to have democratic aims and structures and accept the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights". The members of the CCJ are then designated by the Committee of Ministers. The CCJ is, in fact, an *ad hoc* committee belonging to the Council of Europe's intergovernmental structure. As a result, its terms of reference are decided by the Committee of Ministers.

33. The European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) brings together representatives of ministries or bodies responsible for youth matters from the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18). All members of the CDEJ and the CCJ come together in the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) which is the co-decision-making body that establishes the youth sector's priorities and objectives and makes proposals to the Committee of Ministers for the relevant budget.

34. The CCJ's main task is to advise the Committee of Ministers on all questions relating to youth. It should be noted that the current terms of reference, which run from 1 January 2022 until 31 December 2025, also include a paragraph saying that "subject to the adoption of the proposal for a Partnership status with it", the CCJ has amongst its tasks to "advise the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on youth and other issues that impact young people".[23] Another key task is promoting the mainstreaming of youth issues and policies within the Council of Europe programme of activities.

35. At the moment, the Committee of Ministers is reviewing the terms of reference of all Council of Europe intergovernmental structures, with a view to ensuring that they take into account the Reykjavík Declaration. The new terms of reference of the CCJ, the CDEJ and the CMJ should be approved before the end of 2023. It is to be noted that, according to the ongoing discussions, all the Council of Europe intergovernmental committees will be required to mainstream the youth perspective in their work.

6.2. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

36. Since 2014, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has implemented a youth delegates scheme, whereby one youth delegate per member State participates in the Congress' sessions for a period of one year, undertakes projects, and give their opinions to the Congress on various issues.

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20. Declaration adopted at the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, September 2021.
21. The IPU young MPs' motto is "If you are old enough to vote, you are not too young to run".
22. https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/co-management.
23. https://rm.coe.int/terms-of-reference-of-the-advisory-council-on-youth-for-2022-2025/1680a6eaf4.

37. Developed in the framework of the Congress' "Rejuvenating Politics" strategy, this scheme gives young people between the ages of 18 and 30, from a variety of backgrounds (youth activists, youth workers, students, young politicians etc.) a unique opportunity to sit in a European assembly alongside local and regional elected representatives, and to contribute, without voting rights, to debates during Congress sessions (and committee meetings) and to exchange views with Congress members on the issues on the agenda.[24]

38. They can make their voices heard, be part of a diverse group of young activists, build a network and have an impact by stimulating debate from a youth perspective. The Congress Bureau also appoints a thematic spokesperson and deputy spokesperson on youth.

6.3. The Assembly

39. The Assembly has a solid and continuous record of encouraging the active participation of young people in civil and institutional life. Its first concrete proposal concerning young people's involvement in its own work dates back to 1985 when it asked its Sub-Committee on Youth and Sport to examine with the political groups, in co-operation with national parliamentary delegations and representatives of party-political youth organisations, ways of associating young people more closely with the Assembly.[25] Three years later, it repeated its call for the closer involvement of young people in Assembly activities, welcoming, as an interesting initiative, the decision by the then Liberal, Democratic and Reformers Group to invite, on a regular basis, two youth representatives to participate in its meetings during Assembly sessions and calling on other political groups to follow this example. It also asked all committees to seek to more actively reflect the views of young people in the preparation of reports and to play a more active part in relevant activities organised by the Council of Europe in the youth sector.[26]

40. In 2008, the Assembly called upon young people and their organisations to use the possibilities that exist for interaction with the Council of Europe and in particular with the Assembly itself. It reiterated the request to its political groups to associate their respective political youth organisations in Assembly activities; called on its members, and in particular its younger members, to assume a more active role in championing the views of young people in Assembly debates and in committing themselves personally to involvement in the youth activities of the Council of Europe; and decided to hold round tables and hearings with youth representatives and young political leaders on subjects of common interest and to seek in general the more open involvement of young people in its meetings, missions, and debates.[27]

41. As far as the Assembly is concerned, young people are "involved" in its work on the basis of numerous initiatives centred on youth and whereby the Council of Europe youth sector is invited to comment on reports and participate in hearings. The Sub-Committee on Education, Youth and Sports of the Committee on Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media is particularly instrumental to this end. This committee also represents the Assembly in the CDEJ and the CCJ.

42. To date, however, the Assembly has no formal structure or mechanism which allow youth meaningful and regular participation in its work. In addition, there are no particular arrangements to allow young parliamentarians to have special visibility or play a special role.

7. A youth perspective in other international organisations and assemblies

7.1. OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

43. In recent years, growing attention has been given to youth issues within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which resulted in the appointment, in August 2021, of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's first ever Special Representative on Youth Engagement, Ms Farah Karimi, whose main mandate is to promote the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes. At her initiative, an informal network of young parliamentarians was set up to provide a platform to discuss the challenges of young people and to represent their interests, both within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and beyond.

24. Rejuvenating Politics.
25. Recommendation 1019 (1985) "Participation of young people in political and institutional life".
26. Order 441 (1988) "Assembly and young people in Europe".
27. Resolution 1630 (2008) "Refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe".

44. Currently, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Network of young parliamentarians has 66 members (10% of the overall number of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly members) representing 36 countries (out of 57 OSCE participating States). 32 of them are below the age of 35; 26 are women and 40 are (full) members of their respective delegations.[28]

45. During the exchange of views held in December 2022, Mr Padreny noted that the network had held six meetings since its establishment and provided an impulse to various initiatives at national level. Network members had organised events with young people and civil society organisations in their countries and contributed to various events dedicated to youth issues as guest speakers. This engagement had helped members to channel the challenges and concerns of young people to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

46. Representing not only their respective parliaments or political groups, but also young people, members of the network were more vocal in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly meetings about youth issues, helping to keep such topics high on the agenda of their governments. While many members already worked directly on youth issues and policies in their own countries, the network provided proper channels for exchanging information and communication.

47. The discussions on ways to ensure the sustainability of the network by integrating it into the formal structure of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are ongoing. In this context, there is a proposal to invite a representative of the network to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Bureau meetings as an observer, and there are plans to facilitate discussions and co-operation between the network and general and *ad hoc* committees of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

7.2. Inter-Parliamentary Union

48. In 2010 the IPU adopted a resolution on "Youth participation in the democratic process" where it called on parliaments, governments and political parties to take comprehensive legal and policy action to enhance youth participation in politics. The resolution went beyond calling for increased youth consultation in political processes by also calling for increased direct youth representation in decision making. It proposed concrete measures, such as the introduction of youth quotas, alignment of the minimum age of eligibility for parliament with the voting age, enhancement of youth in political parties, and political education to stimulate active citizenship. The resolution also laid the foundations for the establishment of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians, which was subsequently created in 2013.

49. The forum serves as a statutory body of the IPU and aims at boosting the participation of young people in parliaments and to help ensure young MPs play a full part in the work of parliament. It meets twice a year during the IPU Assemblies. Although it is a space for young MPs (below the age of 45), others are free to attend as observers. The Forum is steered by a board composed of 12 people – one man and one woman from each of the IPU's six geopolitical groups – who elect a president.

50. In 2016, the IPU took further action and called for change within the IPU's functioning itself so that young MPs are better represented in country delegations and took on more senior roles within the organisation's political structures. In 2018, the IPU became the first international organisation to adopt changes to its Statute to enhance the number and role of young MPs at IPU Assemblies. To attain a target of having a minimum of 25% of young MPs as parliamentary delegates at Assemblies, a set of incentives were instituted to encourage greater inclusion of young men and women MPs. The President of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians now holds an *ex officio* seat on the IPU Executive Committee as well as all the Standing Committee bureaux. Moreover, parliamentary delegations who bring young MPs to IPU Assemblies receive extra votes and speaking time.[29]

7.3. United Nations

51. At the United Nations, all national delegations are encouraged to involve youth delegates who participate – for one year – in their country's official delegation to the UN General Assembly and various functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. It is the member States' responsibility to establish a youth delegate programme at national level, and to decide who will represent the young people of

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28. According to OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's rules of procedure, only "members" of delegation can attend the plenary session and the committee meetings. An alternate member of delegation may take the place of a member who is unable to attend a session or committee meeting of the Assembly and when the Secretariat has been duly informed of this by the President of the delegation.

29. www.ipu.org/impact/youth-participation.

their country at the United Nations. The roles of a youth delegate vary from country to country, but normally includes providing input to their delegation on issues related to youth and participation in their delegation's work, such as through attending meetings and informal negotiations.

8. The way forward: proposals on how to enhance a youth perspective in the work of the Assembly

52. Following the Reykjavík Summit, the Council of Europe is committed to mainstreaming a youth perspective throughout its activities. Being a representative institution composed of parliamentarians with a democratic mandate, the Assembly should set up a mechanism to enable youth representatives to take part in and enrich its deliberative process, while preserving its parliamentary nature. The following three-pronged proposal would contribute to achieving this objective, while also giving a specific role and greater visibility to young members of the Assembly.

8.1. Youth Rapporteur

53. I propose that each Assembly general committee (with the exception of the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights) appoint, from amongst its youngest members, a "Youth Rapporteur", who would be responsible for raising a youth perspective in the debates on the reports under preparation in the committee, in consultation with the CCJ.

54. Youth Rapporteurs should be elected amongst the full members or alternates of the committees, for a term of office of two years, renewable once. When appointing them, committees should take into account competence and availability, gender-balanced representation, geographical and political balance, as required by the Rules of the Assembly, and also age, privileging young members.

55. During the debates of reports presented by his/her committee, in plenary or at the Standing Committee, the Youth Rapporteur should be included in the speakers' list and given the floor after the representatives of the political groups.

8.2. The PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism

56. The Assembly and the CCJ should set up the PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism, a platform for dialogue and consultation composed by the members of the CCJ and the Assembly's Youth Rapporteurs. In addition to regular bilateral contacts between Youth Rapporteurs and CCJ members working on subject matters of common interests, the participation mechanism should hold a plenary meeting once a year. This meeting would ensure that youth representatives' concerns, priorities and expectations are channelled through the work of the Assembly by the Youth Rapporteurs, through the tabling of new motions, suggestions as regards the content of reports and the preparation of amendments. The participation mechanism would encompass all substantive issues covered by the Assembly in its deliberative activity and would not be limited to youth policies.

57. Members of the CCJ, other structures of the Council of Europe youth sector and youth organisations should be invited to contribute directly to the preparation of reports, by participating in hearings, exchanges and presenting contributions at the level of committees, whenever possible and according to the subject matter. At the same time, the Assembly's Youth Rapporteurs should be invited to participate in the Council of Europe's youth sector meetings and activities so that they can serve as a connecting bridge between youth organisations and the Assembly.

8.3. Encouraging the presence and visibility of young parliamentarians

58. Beyond the introduction of a formal mechanism, there are many other measures that can be taken to ensure the youth voices are better heard. The Assembly, for instance, should aim at increasing the presence of young parliamentarians within the composition of national delegations. National delegations should consider reserving a certain number of seats to young parliamentarians and take measures to encourage their active participation. They could also reserve a "youth seat" for a member of their national parliament who is also a representative of a youth organisation. The President of the Assembly could acknowledge the active role of young members of the Assembly in his speech at the end of each part-session. Political groups should also be invited to mobilise young members and liaise more regularly with youth organisations of their political families.