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**(Final version)**

## **Youth movements for democracy**

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## A. Draft Resolution

1. Over the past years, youth-led movements have emerged as vital forces in the defence and renewal of democratic values, particularly in the face of rising authoritarianism, institutional distrust, socio-economic exclusion, digital transformation and environmental crisis, as well as shrinking civic space that undermines young people's ability to participate in democracy and advocate for change.
2. Referring to its Resolution 2553 (2024) "Strengthening the youth perspective in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly" and Resolution 2610 (2025) "Social mobilisation, social unrest and police reaction in Council of Europe member States: is there a need for a new social contract?", the Parliamentary Assembly:
  - 2.1. affirms that young people across Europe are among the most active defenders and imaginative builders of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, advancing inclusive visions of justice, rights and participation;
  - 2.2. recognises the creativity, resilience and civic innovation of youth organisations and youth movements, which are pioneering new forms of political participation, from participatory budgeting to open-data civic labs, and from environmental justice frameworks to community-led democratic education, while also reshaping political participation through non-institutionalised forms of direct action, such as protests, petitions, boycotts, occupations, and online activism;
  - 2.3. is deeply concerned by the growing repression faced by young activists and youth organisations in some member States, including politically motivated arrests, criminalisation of peaceful protests, harassment, surveillance and stigmatisation;
  - 2.4. stresses that governments and institutions must respond to youth civic engagement not with repression or indifference, but with recognition, protection, support and structural reforms.
3. The Assembly welcomes the long-standing work of the Council of Europe in supporting youth participation through its co-management system, European Youth Centres, European Youth Foundation and policy frameworks such as the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life.
4. In the light of recent developments, the Assembly urges Council of Europe member States to:
  - 4.1. protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of young people by:
    - 4.1.1. guaranteeing the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association for young people, in accordance with Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), and removing administrative and political obstacles that disproportionately affect youth-led organisations and movements;

- 4.1.2. repealing or amending legislation that criminalises or unjustly restricts peaceful protest, including vague provisions on public order, national security or “extremism” that are often used to silence youth dissent;
- 4.1.3. ending politically motivated arrests of young activists and ensuring that any deprivation of liberty is strictly compliant with legal standards, while strengthening access to legal aid and judicial remedies for youth facing persecution for their civic engagement;
- 4.2. institutionalise youth participation in political processes by:
  - 4.2.1. ensuring meaningful youth representation in elected bodies, such as national parliaments and local councils, by supporting effective and inclusive structures and mechanisms to integrate young people in policy and decision making;
  - 4.2.2. consider lowering the voting age to 16 across all Council of Europe member States to foster early civic responsibility and inclusion;
  - 4.2.3. introducing multi-age electoral lists and youth quotas in political parties and public institutions to counter generational imbalances and promote intergenerational solidarity in governance;
- 4.3. support youth-led initiatives and civic infrastructure by:
  - 4.3.1. protecting young people’s human rights and freedoms, guaranteeing the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association;
  - 4.3.2. allocating dedicated public funding for youth civic infrastructure, including safe and inclusive community centres, independent online platforms, legal clinics and participatory spaces where young people can organise and collaborate;
  - 4.3.3. promoting youth-led media and embedding democratic civic education in school curricula, in line with the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education and the Council of Europe’s Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, to equip young people with the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge needed to engage in democratic life and resist disinformation and extremism;
  - 4.3.4. encouraging active involvement of young people and youth-led organisations in post-war recovery and reconstruction processes, recognising their potential to contribute with innovative solutions, promote inclusive governance and strengthen democratic resilience in societies emerging from conflict or facing complex political transitions. Special attention should be paid to supporting

**Amendment 1**

**Tabled by Mr Benjamin DALLE, Mr Theo BOVENS, Mr Andries GRYPFFROY, Mr Christophe LACROIX, Mr Rónán MULLEN**

*In the draft resolution, after paragraph 4.2.3, insert the following paragraph:*

*"ensuring meaningful youth representation through independent and representative youth councils, which are empowered to provide advice on any policy initiative or issue relevant to children and young people, either on their own initiative or at the request of the authorities;"*

youth in countries at war or in fragile political situations, ensuring that their voices and initiatives are protected and integrated into national and international recovery strategies;

4.4. tackle structural barriers to youth democratic participation by:

4.4.1. addressing youth socio-economic precarity through inclusive housing, employment, and education policies that recognise the link between economic marginalisation and democratic disengagement;

4.4.2. promoting access to free, independent and pluralistic media, including in digital format, to ensure that youth have access to diverse sources of information and can freely express their views;

4.4.3. supporting international and European youth co-operation and youth-to-youth exchanges, as a means of building democratic cultures across borders, fostering solidarity and preventing conflict.

5. Furthermore, the Assembly calls for strengthened international co-operation to uphold youth civic space by:

5.1. promoting the Council of Europe's role as the main pan-European driving force for the development of youth policy and standards in Europe, taking forward the outcomes and results of the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth scheduled to take place on 8-9 October 2025, in Valletta, Malta;

5.2. encouraging the European Union to integrate civic space benchmarks into enlargement processes and funding frameworks, including specific indicators on youth rights and participation;

5.3. co-ordinating with international organisations, such as the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to improve access of young people to human rights, capacity building, support to youth organisations and movements, and complement existing Council of Europe mechanisms to address shrinking civic space;

5.4. engaging diaspora and refugee youth in democratic participation strategies, recognising their unique experiences and potential to contribute to democratic development both in their countries of origin and in host societies.

6. The Assembly commits itself to:

6.1. strengthening the participation of young people in its work, including through the activities of youth rapporteurs,

#### **Amendment 2**

**Tabled by Mr Benjamin DALLE, Mr Theo BOVENS, Mr Bob De BRABANDERE, Mr Andries GRYFFROY, Mr Christophe LACROIX**

*In the draft resolution, after paragraph 4.4.1, insert the following paragraph:*

*"strengthening the provision of quality leisure activities for children and young people in the fields of youth work, sports and culture, as a means to fostering their personal development and social inclusion;"*

- regular dialogue with youth-led organisations, and structured input from the Advisory Council on Youth;
- 6.2. mainstreaming youth perspectives across all committees and reports, treating youth civic space as a standing democratic concern, and monitoring restrictions on youth rights with the same urgency as other human rights violations;
  - 6.3. ensuring that the Assembly's Bureau and part-sessions provide platforms for youth perspectives, particularly from those in repressive contexts;
  - 6.4. promoting exchanges between parliamentarians and youth activists, organisations and youth movements including by providing sustainable, inclusive and effective mechanisms, including funding as appropriate.
7. The Assembly encourages all relevant stakeholders, including international organisations, civil society, academia and the private sector, to work in partnership with youth organisations and youth movements to co-design democratic innovations, amplify youth voices in decision making, and invest in sustainable civic infrastructure.
  8. Protecting youth freedoms, institutionalising participation, and dismantling structural barriers are democratic imperatives, and youth movements must be recognised not as threats but as indispensable actors in building democratic resilience in Europe.

## B. Draft Recommendation

1. Referring to its Resolution ... (2025) “Youth movements for democracy” emphasising that young people across Europe are not only participants but also essential defenders and innovators of democracy, and that their engagement is critical to sustaining democratic resilience in the face of authoritarianism, institutional distrust, socio-economic exclusion, digital transformation and environmental crisis, the Parliamentary Assembly:
  - 1.1. stresses the need for the Council of Europe and its member States to protect and promote youth civic engagement and (financial) support to youth organisations, safeguard youth rights, and dismantle the structural barriers that prevent young people from fully participating in democratic life;
  - 1.2. welcomes the Council of Europe’s longstanding achievements in promoting youth participation through the co-management system, the European Youth Centres, the European Youth Foundation, and its standard-setting work, in particular the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and the forthcoming reference framework for a youth perspective.
2. In view of the above, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
  - 2.1. ensure that youth participation, as a core priority for the Organisation on the basis of the Reykjavik Declaration and Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, is mainstreamed across all sectors of the Council of Europe’s work;
  - 2.2. integrate youth civic space as a standing item in the Council of Europe’s human rights monitoring and co-operation programmes, including within accession, post-monitoring and thematic review processes;
  - 2.3. invite relevant intergovernmental committees, including the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), to develop and strengthen standards for member States on protecting youth civic engagement, in line with Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), and to report regularly on implementation;
  - 2.4. encourage the adoption and promotion of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, its own recommendations and the reference framework for a youth perspective, and support their dissemination and implementation at national and local levels;
  - 2.5. strengthen the resources of the European Youth Foundation and the European Youth Centres in order to provide support for youth-led democratic initiatives, including in contexts where civic space is shrinking;
  - 2.6. promote intergovernmental exchanges of good practice on lowering the voting age to 16, introducing youth quotas

and multi-age electoral lists, and embedding democratic civic education in formal and non-formal settings;

- 2.7. enhance co-operation with other international organisations, including the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations, to co-ordinate action in monitoring and defending youth human rights, supporting civic infrastructure, and maintaining warning mechanisms for threats to youth civic space;
- 2.8. ensure the effective participation of young people from diverse backgrounds, including those from rural areas, minority communities, and diaspora and refugee populations, in Council of Europe activities and policy processes;
- 2.9. make full use of the Assembly's youth participation mechanism and the role of youth rapporteurs in order to create regular and structured opportunities for dialogue between the Committee of Ministers, the Assembly, and youth-led organisations.