Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2619 (2025)[1]

Youth movements for democracy

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Over recent 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 change.

2. Referring to its Resolution 2553 (2024) "Strengthening the youth perspective in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly" and its 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 reform.

3. The Assembly welcomes the long-standing work of the Council of Europe in supporting youth participation through its co-management system, the European Youth Centres, the 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 rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and 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;

1. *Assembly debate* on 1 October 2025 (33rd sitting) (see Doc. 16239, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Yevheniia Kravchuk). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 1 October 2025 (33rd sitting).
See also Recommendation 2299 (2025).

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. considering 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;

4.2.4. 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;

4.3. support youth-led initiatives and civic infrastructure by:

4.3.1. protecting young people’s human rights and freedoms and guaranteeing the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and 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 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 the active involvement of young people and youth-led organisations in post-war recovery and reconstruction processes, recognising their potential to contribute using 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 youth in countries at war or in fragile political situations, ensuring that their voices are heard and that their 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. strengthening the provision of quality leisure activities for children and young people in the fields of youth work, sports and culture, as a means of fostering their personal development and social inclusion;

4.4.3. 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;

4.4.4. 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 safeguard 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 of the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, held in Valletta, Malta, on 8 and 9 October 2025;

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 Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), to improve access for young people to human rights, capacity building, support to youth organisations and movements, and to complement existing Council of Europe mechanisms to address shrinking civic space;

5.4. engaging youth 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, regular dialogue with youth-led organisations and structured input from the Advisory Council on Youth;

6.2. mainstreaming youth perspectives in all committees and reports, treating youth civic space as a matter of ongoing 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 living in repressive contexts;

6.4. promoting exchanges between parliamentarians and youth activists, organisations and youth movements, including by providing sustainable, inclusive and effective mechanisms, together with 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 initiatives, 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.