



## Resolution 2639 (2026)<sup>1</sup>

# Strengthening democracies with young people: from participation to shared responsibility

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The effective participation of young people in democratic life is vital for the renewal, resilience and legitimacy of democratic institutions. The future of Europe depends on societies in which young people are recognised as equal partners in shaping political, social, economic and cultural life.
2. Building on its [Resolution 2619 \(2025\)](#) and [Recommendation 2299 \(2025\)](#) “Youth movements for democracy” and its [Resolution 2553 \(2024\)](#) “Strengthening the youth perspective in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly” which introduced the PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism with the aim of ensuring that the youth perspective is systematically taken into account in the work of the Assembly, the Assembly emphasises that youth participation must evolve from consultation to shared responsibility, ensuring that young people have both the right and the means to influence decisions that affect them.
3. The Assembly notes that, while progress has been made, youth participation remains uneven and fragmented across Europe. Many young people continue to feel excluded from decision making, perceive institutions as unrepresentative and have limited opportunities to shape public policy. Persistent barriers such as social inequality, precarious employment, limited access to housing and education, and shrinking civic and cultural spaces have deepened generational divides.
4. The Assembly welcomes the Final Declaration adopted at the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, held on 8 and 9 October 2025 in Malta, and the Resolution on the Council of Europe Reference Framework on a Youth Perspective adopted on the same occasion. It also welcomes the adoption by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe of the new European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life on 29 October 2025, as well as the New Democratic Pact for Europe, which aims at strengthening democratic resilience in Europe and to which the Assembly actively contributes. Together, these instruments provide a coherent road map for integrating a youth perspective across all sectors of policy and decision making.
5. The Assembly recognises the importance of the unique co-management system of the Council of Europe’s youth sector as a standard and inspiration to be followed, including the instruments of the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest and the European Youth Foundation, as an exemplary model of youth participation. It also welcomes the proposal to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a third venue of the European Youth Centre in the Black Sea region as a sign of renewed commitment to democratic inclusion in Europe’s eastern regions.
6. The Assembly stresses that youth participation must move beyond consultation towards genuine influence in decision making, in accordance with the principle that young people should be provided with the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and the support to participate meaningfully in democratic life. This requires transparent and accessible institutional mechanisms, accountability of authorities towards young people and a culture of trust between generations.

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1. *Assembly debate* on 28 January 2026 (5th sitting) (see [Doc. 16308](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Sona Ghazaryan; and [Doc. 16332](#), opinion of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Ms Elisabetta Gardini). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 January 2026 (5th sitting).

See also [Recommendation 2302 \(2026\)](#).



7. In the light of the above and in consideration of the centrality of youth engagement to the New Democratic Pact for Europe, the Assembly calls on member States to develop and implement comprehensive frameworks for youth participation, taking inspiration from the Council of Europe Reference Framework on a Youth Perspective, at all levels and in particular to:

- 7.1. adopt or update national youth policies and strategies and ensure their effective implementation through measurable indicators;
- 7.2. establish or reinforce youth-led councils, youth parliaments and structured dialogue platforms with decision-making powers or advisory mandates, including by integrating participatory youth budgeting;
- 7.3. implement the new European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- 7.4. include young people in public administration advisory bodies, boards of cultural institutions and environmental councils;
- 7.5. adopt targeted measures to prevent and address hate speech directed at young people engaged in political life, including through stronger legal protections, reporting and rapid-response mechanisms and educational programmes that promote democratic participation and safeguard young voices in the public sphere.

8. The Assembly emphasises that equal access to rights is the foundation of participation. As a priority, it urges member States to:

- 8.1. guarantee universal access to quality education, vocational training, employment opportunities, housing and healthcare for young people;
- 8.2. prioritise mental health policies and accessible services tailored to young people's realities, particularly in post-crisis contexts;
- 8.3. combat discrimination and ensure the inclusion of marginalised young people, including those from minority, migrant, rural or low-income backgrounds, and those with disabilities;
- 8.4. ensure gender equality in all youth-related initiatives and leadership positions.

9. The Assembly notes that civic and citizenship education are key to nurturing democratic competences and critical thinking. It therefore calls on member States to:

- 9.1. integrate civic education into formal curricula from an early age and across disciplines;
- 9.2. support non-formal education and youth work as complementary spaces for experiential learning and active citizenship;
- 9.3. enhance teacher training and youth worker professionalisation;
- 9.4. recognise youth civil society, volunteering and community engagement as integral parts of civic learning;
- 9.5. promote the Council of Europe's Quality Label for Youth Centres as a symbol of commitment to shared values, collaborative learning and continuous improvement of youth work across Europe.

10. The Assembly highlights that cultural participation strengthens belonging and community cohesion, based on the principles set out in the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199, 2005). It invites member States and local authorities to:

- 10.1. support projects linking art, civic engagement and urban regeneration;
- 10.2. provide accessible public spaces for youth creativity and expression;
- 10.3. promote partnerships between youth organisations, artists and municipalities to co-create inclusive cultural initiatives, including by strengthening links with the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

11. Recognising the digital transformation of political and civic life, the Assembly calls on member States to:

- 11.1. promote digital literacy and critical media education for young people;
- 11.2. establish transparent frameworks for online participation, including e-consultations and digital assemblies;

11.3. ensure that digital platforms respect human rights, protect young users from disinformation and online abuse, and promote respect, remedy and democratic dialogue.

12. The Assembly also strongly supports lowering the voting age to 16 as a concrete step towards intergenerational equality and more inclusive democracy. It underlines the positive experience of several member States where such reform has led to higher levels of political engagement and civic trust among young voters. It therefore urges all member States to:

12.1. examine the legal and institutional feasibility of lowering the voting age to 16 in all elections;

12.2. accompany this reform with civic education and awareness-raising initiatives to ensure informed participation;

12.3. support peer learning and capacity building among electoral authorities, youth organisations and youth workers to facilitate implementation of the reform.

13. The Assembly further encourages governments to foster intergenerational dialogue and participation by:

13.1. developing mentorship programmes linking young leaders with experienced policy makers;

13.2. establishing youth advisory boards in national parliaments and government ministries, in consultation with national youth councils;

13.3. supporting political parties in promoting youth wings and candidate training programmes, including young women, vulnerable and under-represented groups, and minorities.

14. Civil society and youth-led organisations are indispensable partners for democratic innovation. The Assembly calls on them to strengthen advocacy for youth rights, promote diversity and inclusion, develop civic education initiatives and engage in structured co-operation with parliaments and public authorities.

15. Furthermore, the Assembly invites international and regional organisations, including the European Union, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations agencies, to co-ordinate efforts to promote youth participation, support research and data collection, and share best practices on intergenerational solidarity.

16. Finally, the Assembly resolves to:

16.1. continue integrating the youth perspective in all its thematic, political and monitoring activities to ensure the implementation of [Resolution 2553 \(2024\)](#), and strengthen the visibility of young parliamentarians in national delegations;

16.2. ensure regular involvement of youth representatives, including grassroots organisations, in its debates, hearings, election observation missions and electoral activities;

16.3. promote interparliamentary co-operation on youth engagement through regional exchanges and capacity building for youth representatives;

16.4. promote dialogue initiatives within its framework, involving young people from the youth organisations of political parties represented in the Assembly, with a view to fostering intergenerational exchange and informing parliamentary work.

17. Building democracies with young people requires meaningful engagement, which demands institutional reform, accountability and shared responsibility. By embedding the youth perspective across all levels of decision making, Council of Europe member States can ensure that democracy remains inclusive, dynamic and sustainable for generations to come.