



Strasbourg, 1 April 2025

CMJ(2025)41

**JOINT COUNCIL ON YOUTH
(CMJ)**

52nd meeting

7-9 April 2025

Budapest, European Youth Centre

Appendix

Draft 3 European Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life

Item 7. 1.1. of the agenda

Appendix

Draft 3 European Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life

Scope and purpose

1. The European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life aims to promote and strengthen the participation of young people in decision-making processes at the local and regional levels, and to ensure an enabling environment for the participation of young people.
2. Young people and their participation in decision-making at local and regional level are at the centre of the Charter. Young people are equal actors in society and their participation in democratic processes is essential to the sustainability and development of democratic systems. As the generation that will live with the consequences of today's decisions, young people have the right to participate in all areas of policymaking.
3. Local and regional authorities are one of the main foundations of any democratic system. The right to participate in the conduct of public affairs is one of the democratic principles shared among all member States and this right can be most directly exercised at local level, as outlined by the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207).
4. The Charter was adopted in 1992 and is one of key European standards in respect to youth participation. The current revision was initiated in 2024 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in partnership with the Joint Council on Youth. The current revision process included a consultative process with young people and youth organisations, as well as with local and regional authorities to respond to current changes in realities of young people and incorporate the lessons from the implementation.
5. The definition of the age range covered by the terms “young people” or “youth” should reflect the legal and constitutional framework of each member State.

Youth participation and its principles

6. Youth participation is about young people having the right, the means, the space and structures, the opportunities and the tools, as well as the full support to participate in and influence the decision-making at local and regional level.
7. Youth participation is a process based on democratic values. In a rapidly evolving world, the ways young people choose to participate are as diverse as they are. Local and regional authorities should create an enabling environment for young people to participate, should support and recognise both stable, democratic and transparent structures for youth participation in decision-making, such as youth councils and youth organisations, and other forms of participation that empower young people to shape the life of communities.

8. Local and regional authorities should strive to create the conditions, structures, processes and procedures that allow for the highest levels of participation in decision-making of young people. This can take the form of co-management, where young people, through their representatives, take decisions together with local and regional representatives, and involves young people having a say from setting the agenda, taking part in deliberations leading to decision-making, but as well as in the implementation and evaluation.
9. The principle of equality and the prohibition of discrimination, as enshrined in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 005), applies fully to youth participation. All young people should have equal access to participation structures and processes without discrimination on any ground such as "race"¹, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status.
10. Local and regional authorities should constantly identify and take measures to remove the barriers to participation. This may entail adopting tailored measures to support the participation of specific groups of young people in local and regional affairs. These measures should consider structural, multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination with particular attention.
11. Local and regional authorities should pay particular attention to gender equality principle when providing young women and men with access to participation spaces in social, political and cultural life in general, and to leadership positions in particular. This involves taking measures to eradicate gender-based violence.
12. Youth participation requires time and resources invested by young people. Local and regional authorities should secure that sufficient time is foreseen for young people to take part in decision making. Local and regional authorities should recognise the time invested by young people through adequate means. Local authorities should also ensure that financial barriers to participation are removed, including through means of compensation (e.g., subsistence costs, travel costs).
13. Democracy, human rights and participation are learnt. The relevant authorities in member States should ensure that all those involved in youth participation, notably young people, youth organisations and local and regional authorities, including staff and elected representatives, have

¹ Following the standard set by the ECRI in its General Policy Recommendation no. 15 on Combatting hate speech, the term "race" is used with the sole purpose of ensuring that those persons who are generally and erroneously perceived as belonging to another race are not excluded from the protection provided for by the Recommendation.

continuous access to information, education and training to develop their competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes).

14. Local and regional authorities should ensure that youth participation happens in environments that are physically and psychologically safe and where all participants are treated with respect. It is essential for trust in democracy that young people can express their opinions and engage without fear of discrimination, intimidation, or backlash. Young people should be informed of existing mechanisms for reporting and remedy, and, where such mechanisms do not exist, they should be created.
15. The formats of youth participation should be firmly anchored in decision-making procedures, yet flexible and adaptable to constantly changing political or socio-economic circumstances. They should allow for innovation and creativity, offering a variety of ways for young people to engage and allow young people to engage in ways that suit their schedules, interests, and levels of commitment.
16. The structures, processes and platforms for participation should be designed in ways that are accessible to all young people. Youth participation structures, platforms and processes should be adapted to the needs and interests of young people, while paying particular attention to the needs of young people with disabilities.
17. Youth participation should be productive, engaging and enjoyable, creating the conditions for a meaningful and empowering experience for young people, encouraging the commitment to democratic values.
18. Youth participation requires dedicated and adequate financial and qualified human resources. Local and regional authorities should ensure that provisions for youth participation are incorporated in regular planning and budgeting processes. Sustainability means that youth participation efforts are ongoing and not one-off events, with permanent structures, qualified and sufficient human resources, ensuring that youth engagement continues to thrive.

Chapter II Young people have the right and the means to participate

19. Youth participation is rooted in the international human rights framework that emphasises the importance of involving all individuals, including young people, in the decisions and processes that affect their lives.

20. By engaging in decision-making at the local and regional level, young people exercise their human rights, including the right to participate in the public affairs and cultural life, either directly or through representatives they choose.
21. Local and regional authorities play an essential role in the respect, protection, fulfilment and promotion of human rights of young people which are creating the necessary conditions for their participation in the life of the community.
22. The respect of freedom of expression of young people is fundamental for the exercise of the right to participate, to ensure that young people can express their opinions without fear of intimidation, repression and backlash. At the same time, young people need access to unbiased and reliable information to make informed decisions
23. The right to privacy requires additional protection in respect to participation processes, in both online and offline environments. Local and regional authorities should take all necessary means to protect the right to privacy of young people, informing clearly young people, and where applicable their legal guardians, on all aspects involved.
24. Freedom of assembly and association, including the protection of youth civil society is a requirement for meaningful youth participation at any level. Young people exercise these rights in various ways, including through engagement in youth organisations, local and regional youth councils, movements, taking part in demonstrations and advocacy groups. Young people need to be protected when appearing or acting as human rights defenders, in both online and offline environments.
25. Member States have an obligation to respect, to protect, to fulfil and to promote human rights. All relevant authorities should take the necessary measures to secure that young people have access to education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in both formal and non-formal settings. This involves recognising and supporting the important role played by youth organisations in information, education and training programmes.
26. Young people's social rights must be guaranteed, including housing, education and training, health, employment and work, leisure and culture without discrimination on any grounds. Local and regional authorities, as well as other authorities in member States, should give particular attention to the fulfilment of social rights, paying special attention to disadvantaged segments of youth, especially those who are affected by multiple and/or intersecting discrimination.

27. Youth participation is not just an individual right but a collective right as well. This collective dimension ensures that young people can make an impact not only as individuals but as part of a broader community.

Chapter III Young people have the spaces and structures for youth participation

28. Member States should take the necessary measures in all areas and at all levels to create an enabling environment for youth participation, with particular attention paid to democratic structures and processes for youth participation, such as local youth councils; youth civil society and youth-led spaces, including youth centres.
29. Local and regional authorities should support the creation of independent and youth-led structures for participation in decision making at local level. Whether called local and regional youth councils, youth parliaments, and youth forums (hereafter, youth councils) such structures serve as permanent structures that enable young people to actively and meaningfully engage in decision-making processes on a regular basis.
30. Youth councils require the existence of a clear framework for their functioning, including a clear and public set of objectives, roles and responsibilities in respect to young people and to local and regional authorities, rules and procedures, discussed and approved by the members.
31. Youth councils secure that their composition is fair and representative of the diversity of local youth. The members of the youth councils are elected or designated by young people and/or youth civil society through a fair and transparent procedure. The youth councils adopt and implement non-discriminatory policies and practices that ensure all young people, regardless of their background, can participate.
32. Local and regional authorities should strive to ensure that youth councils can follow and contribute the decision-making processes, allowing young people the possibility of maximum of impact.
33. Youth councils can facilitate consultations with youth on relevant issues, serve as fora for the development, monitoring, and evaluation of youth projects, and encourage youth participation in other local consultative bodies.
34. Local and regional authorities should ensure that youth councils have an adequate budgetary allocation, included in the regular budget of the local or regional authority, as well as material (e.g., meeting space, equipment, technology, materials) and human resources that support their activity. This should not impede youth councils to seek additional funding and resources necessary for them to conduct their activity, nor influence in any manner their functioning.
35. The activity of youth councils should be transparent, well communicated and made visible to young people and youth civil society in the community they represent.

36. Local and regional authorities might also devise democratic processes for the consultation and engagement of young people, notably consultations, youth assemblies and other practices of deliberative democracy, participatory budgeting processes. Such processes should adhere to the principles of youth participation outlined in Chapter I and should be seen as complementary.
37. Member States should create an enabling environment for youth civil society, in full respect of the freedom to associate and recognising the essential role played in securing a thriving democratic future. This includes an appropriate legal framework, structural support, access to funding and to decision making processes.
38. Local and regional authorities should ensure that young people have access to youth-led youth spaces, including youth centres, where democracy can be learnt and practiced. Such space require investment and financial support.
39. Local and regional authorities should consider also leveraging inclusive and safe digital platforms to engage with youth and ensure their participate in democratic processes, including online consultations, virtual town halls and interactive decision-making platforms.
40. Local and regional authorities should secure means for outreaching to those young people in remote areas, or unable to access youth centres, through means such as mobile youth centres and outreach youth work and information services.
41. Within the remit of their authority, local and regional authorities should support the creation and maintenance of democratic governance structures in schools and universities and furthermore recognise the contribution of such structures for youth participation.
42. Young people should be encouraged to participate in the political life of the community, with special emphasis placed on the right to vote in and stand in elections.
43. Member States should consider measures to encourage the political participation of young people, notably:
 - a. Lowering the voting age to 16 years old.
 - b. Introduction of youth quotas on electoral lists for local and regional elections.

Chapter IV Youth policy at local and regional level and youth perspectives in policy-making

44. Local and regional authorities should adopt evidence-based youth policies /strategies developed together with young people and their representatives. Such policies/strategies should be implemented, evaluated and revised in partnership with young people.

45. Member States should encourage cooperation between national authorities and local and regional authorities in the field of youth with a view to better coordinate and support youth participation.
46. Member states should encourage international cooperation in the field of youth, especially cooperation between local and regional authorities, youth councils and youth civil society active at local and regional level.
47. Youth perspectives in all policy areas at local and regional level should be secured, notably of economic policies, employability, education and training, living and working conditions, diversity and inclusivity, digital technology, digitalisation, social media and artificial intelligence, rural and remote communities, environment and climate change, and public health.

Chapter V Young people have the opportunities, the tools and the full support to participate

48. Local and regional authorities should ensure that young people have the opportunities and the full support, including adequate tools, to take part in local and regional affairs. Local and regional authorities should co-design and co-evaluate such opportunities, tools and support together with young people, with particular attention to the needs of marginalized groups, including young people with disabilities, from rural areas, from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and from minority communities.
49. Local and regional authorities should ensure that adequate provisions are made for access to HRE/EDC both in formal and non-formal education and training. This implies recognising the role of youth organisations as providers of human rights and citizenship education and providing them with the support necessary, including financial and institutional backing.
50. Local and regional authorities should ensure that adequate provisions and recognition are given to youth work as an essential contribution to young people's empowerment and development. Recognition and support should be given to both paid and volunteer youth work.
51. Local and regional authorities should strive to develop tools that support youth participation, harnessing the power of virtual spaces, while ensuring the principles of youth participation are fully respected. The tools include raising awareness in the digital space (on social media platforms, forums, websites, etc.), providing education through digital literacy, critical thinking, and both formal and non-formal training, as well as exchanging best practices and offering e-learning opportunities.

52. Local and regional authorities should invest in capacity building measures securing that staff, as well as elected representatives are trained, as well as motivated to support youth participation.
53. Local and regional authorities, and where relevant, national authorities, should take measures to support the private sector to live up to its social responsibility.

Chapter VI Dissemination, evaluation and review of the Charter

54. Competent authorities in each member State will ensure that the Charter is translated in national, regional and local languages.
55. Local, regional and national authorities will ensure the wide dissemination of the Charter among the relevant authorities and stakeholders. Young people and youth organisations are key partners in the design, implementation, and evaluation of dissemination strategies of the Charter to ensure that these efforts are relevant, effective, and resonate with the youth.
56. Local and regional authorities and young people, including youth organisations and youth councils, should evaluate the implementation of the Charter in their community using tools developed for this purpose. The evaluation process needs to be followed-up with appropriate measures to strengthen the implementation of the Charter.
57. The Council of Europe will conduct a regular review of implementation of the Charter at local and regional level in accordance with the principles set out for youth participation. The review will be conducted every five-year involving the relevant stakeholder.