



YOUTH DIALOGUE 2023

International Forum On Enhancing
Youth Participation In Democratic Life

In the framework
of the Council of Europe project
Youth Revitalising Democracy



MINISTRY OF
CULTURE, SPORT
AND YOUTH OF
GEORGIA



Youth
Agency



DEMOCRACY
HERE NOW



Youth - Jeunesse



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

YOURS REGIONAL CENTER
BATUMI, GEORGIA

RATIONALE

The Reykjavik summit of Heads of State and Governments of the member states of the Council of Europe, held in May 2023, reaffirmed the commitment of the member states to the mission and the standards of the institution. The important role played by young people and civil society is also recognised in the [Reykjavik Declaration – United around our values](#):

... youth participation in decision-making processes improves the effectiveness of public policies and strengthens democratic institutions through open dialogue.

The importance of youth participation is further reflected in the Council of Europe Youth Strategy 2030 which features a priority on revitalising pluralistic democracies, with an emphasis on:

Advocating a sustainable enabling environment in which young people can exercise their right to assemble and to freely form, join and be active in associations;

Advancing young people's participation in political processes;

Supporting Member States and youth organisations to implement the principles of the [Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life](#); further disseminating the ["Have your say"](#) manual to public authorities and the non-governmental sector;

Supporting the capacity of youth organisations to participate and facilitate the participation of young people in decision-making processes at the local level, with a renewed focus on youth organisations which work with young people in rural areas, from minorities, or vulnerable groups.

This concern with youth participation and the development of an environment that ensures the meaningful participation of young people as full-fledged members of society at the local and national level is also one of the strategic priorities of the State Youth Strategy 2023-2026 of Georgia. According to the document, state agencies at central and municipal levels should develop sustainable and systemic mechanisms of meaningful participation and provide young people with more information about their civil rights and responsibilities, as well as about the ways and means of participating in these processes. This goal is also directly related to the 16th goal of sustainable development of the United Nations ("Peace, justice and strong institutions") and the first priority of the "Concept of Youth Policy of Georgia for 2020-2030" ("Active participation of young people in public life and democratic processes").

RATIONALE

Studies at both the international level, as well as concerning Georgia, reveal a trend of decreasing or limited youth participation in decision-making at local, national and international levels. Europe-wide studies show that young people engage little with conventional forms of participation (voting, standing in elections, taking part in decision-making or consultative processes). The reasons behind reveal a lack of trust in democratic institutions and processes caused by failed experiences of meaningful youth participation, lack of effective mechanisms of participation such as local youth councils, co-management systems, etc. Examining electoral processes, young people rarely find themselves on electoral lists or their concerns reflected in political programmes.

Some of these concerns are shared at the national level in Georgia. Although local authorities provide youth services (mainly sports and cultural sections) to youth, the voices of young people are not being heard due to the absence of youth participation mechanisms in the majority of municipalities in Georgia. The studies show that though the local authorities try to attract and engage young people in decision-making processes (consultative participation), the involvement and motivation of young people to engage remain low, especially among youth from rural areas.

In this context, the Youth Regional Center of Adjara, the Youth Agency of Georgia and the Council of Europe Youth Department are organising an international youth forum dedicated to meaningful youth participation at the local and national levels. The Forum is organised in the framework of the Council of Europe project Youth revitalising democracy.

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS AND PARTNERS

Youth Regional Center (YRC)

YRC is a youth organisation which operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Adjara. Its beneficiaries are young people aged 14 to 29 who live or study in the region of Adjara. It is crucial for the Center to engage all young people of the aforementioned criteria, especially those who live in the highland parts of the region and those who have fewer opportunities.

Founded in 2019, the Center succeeded in planning and implementing a vast variety of projects which were designed to achieve the key aims; Communicating with local and international organisations, establishing links and deepening cooperation for the development of the youth sector;

Based on research, the center has formed following aims:

Collecting and analysing information on youth needs;

Creating appropriate conditions for revealing, forming, and developing the intellectual, personal, professional, and physical potential of the youth of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara based on the main directions of the state youth policy;

Deepening and promoting patriotism, and environmental and civic values among young people.



Overall, YRC has succeeded in implementing more than 130 projects with a total engagement of 15,000+ participants over 4 years, and more is yet to come.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE YOUTH DEPARTMENT AND THE PROJECT YOUTH REVITALISING DEMOCRACY

Established in 1972, the Council of Europe youth sector aims at enabling young people across Europe to actively uphold, defend, promote and benefit from the Council of Europe's core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The governance of the sector is ensured through the unique system of co-management through which representatives of youth civil society and member states take decisions together through consensus. The Youth Department elaborates guidelines and legal standards for the development of coherent and effective youth policies at local, national and European levels, it runs its own educational programme through the European Youth Centers and provides support to youth organisations through the European Youth Foundation.

www.coe.int/youth

Youth Revitalising Democracy is a project led by the Council of Europe Youth Department to restore mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions and processes. The project builds on the results of the youth campaign [Democracy Here | Democracy Now](#) that raised awareness among young people, youth civil society and as well as decision-makers on the dangers posed by the continued backsliding of democracy in Europe and an increasing mistrust between young people and democratic institutions. The key event of the campaign, [Youth Action Week](#) (June 2022, Strasbourg) issued a [Call for Action](#) that provides the directions and objectives for the project for the period 2023-2027. The Call for Action recalls that:

...all processes to revitalize democracy must start with the respect and thorough implementation and monitoring of existing Council of Europe standards, and lead to their further development.

In October 2022, the Joint Council of Youth agreed to follow-up on the results of the campaign in the form of a pluri-annual and multilateral project focused on:

Democratic youth participation, by supporting young activists, youth civil society and national authorities to uphold and expand existing standards and good practices.

Citizenship and human rights education, in response to new challenges and emerging themes, such as digitalisation.

Addressing barriers to youth participation, notably discrimination in all its forms.

www.democracyherenow.coe.int

YOUTH AGENCY

Youth Agency is a state organisation of Georgia, operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia, with the aim of creating a youth-friendly environment, where young people have an adequate environment for full realisation of their potential.

Supporting the development and enhancement of youth organisations has always been one of the most important directions of the Youth Agency, which was declared in State Youth Strategy 2023 - 2026. The objective of the working meeting coincides with the fourth objective of the action plan of the State Youth Strategy 2023-2026, objective 4.1 Strengthening civic responsibility among young people and 4.3. Supporting Young People's Engagement in Decision Making Process. The state creates for young people and together with young people a supportive environment for their development as individuals and full-fledged members of society, which will contribute to the full use of the potential of each, economic strengthening and active participation in the country's development process.

The Youth Agency is the National Contact Point for the project Youth Revitalising Democracy of the Council of Europe.

ABOUT THE FORUM

Aim

The forum will provide an opportunity to promote effective mechanisms and tools in advancing youth participation in democratic life at local, regional and national levels, to share good practices in addressing barriers and challenges to youth participation and to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between youth and other stakeholders. The participants will have the opportunity to discuss topics such as electoral cycles and structures of participation.

Objectives:

Develop a shared understanding of youth participation, exploring existing standards at the European level, as well as necessary conditions and possible forms of youth participation;

Discuss and map challenges and barriers hindering youth participation in decision-making;

Strengthen the capacity of participants to support inclusive youth participation in democratic life at local and regional levels;

Provide space for sharing good practices (policy initiatives, programmes, structural mechanisms) and tools for effective youth participation;

Stimulate dialogue between young people and stakeholders to promote and develop youth participation;

Support cooperation and initiative development by participants in the follow-up of the forum.



Programme and methodology

Some of the topics and questions to be addressed during the forum are:

The role of young people in elections: How can young people be more involved in the electoral process? What are the barriers to youth participation in elections? How can these barriers be overcome?

Structures of youth participation in decision making: What are the different structures for youth participation? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each structure? How can young people choose the right structure for their needs?

Support measures for youth participation: what is the role of youth civil society in supporting young people to learn and practice democratic participation? What is the role of democracy and human rights education both in formal and non-formal education sectors?

Participants' profile and selection:

All those interested in taking part in the activity should fulfill the profile outlined below:

be a representative of a youth group/youth organization/youth dedicated project, a youth worker, youth trainer, or a representative of a local or national authority involved or interested in supporting youth participation;

be resident in a Council of Europe member state;

be able to communicate independently in English;

The group of participants will be composed of 25 participants from Georgia and a maximum of 25 international participants coming from other member states of the Council of Europe.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Language

The forum will take place in English.

Board and lodging

The Youth Regional Center will secure the board and lodging of all participants in Batumi.

Travel

International travel

International travel is financed by the participants.

The Council of Europe can support travel costs for a limited number of international participants. Those requiring support to cover their costs should indicate it at the application level, also justifying the need for this support.

Local travel within Georgia

Is organised and covered by the Youth Regional Center.

Selected participants will have to arrive in Batumi on 19 November and depart on 23 November 2023.

HOW TO APPLY

Those wishing to participate must fill out the following application form by 1 November 2023:

https://link.yrc.ge/Youth_Dialogue_2023

ABOUT BATUMI

Batumi is located in Adjara, western Georgia. It is a wonderful seaside city with glittering beaches and attractive surroundings. The territory of Batumi was even populated in the Bronze Age. There was life during the antiquity period here, and the population had trade links with neighbouring and distant countries. Ancient history, light and dynamic architecture, sunny seaside, boulevard, Batumi Botanical Garden, delicious Adjarian cuisine and many entertaining places, cultural or leisure destinations make this city incredible and it attracts many visitors. It is very popular not only across Georgia but also across the region.



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