

Introducing the Charter on youth participation



**Youth policy
development**

Peace
social cohesion
intercultural dialogue
participation
human rights
democratic citizenship
research



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The Council of Europe works hard to encourage young people to play an active role in strengthening civil society in Europe. It has developed the following tools to promote the participation of young people:

- ▶ the system of co-management, through which the representatives of youth organisations and governments work together on the formulation and implementation of the Council of Europe youth policy;
- ▶ the European Youth Campaign “All Different – All Equal”, where youth participation is one of the main themes (these themes are: diversity, human rights, participation);
- ▶ the Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life.

WHAT IS YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election ..., it is about having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.

The preamble of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (21 May 2003)



WHY YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

Because youth participation:

- ▶ supports and enables young people to have an active role in decisions and actions which affect them and their peers and immediate community;
- ▶ encourages young people to act independently and to take responsibility for their own life and environment;
- ▶ contributes to the development of local communities, regions and countries;
- ▶ promotes social cohesion, where young people are actively involved and their needs are met.

WHAT IS THE CHARTER ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

The Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life is a document adopted in May 2003 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, promoting participation of young people.

The Charter provides young people, youth organisations and local authorities with guidelines, tools and ideas, which will help them to support youth participation on a local and regional level.



WHO IS THE CHARTER ADDRESSED TO?

The Charter is addressed to the main actors responsible for fostering youth participation:

- ▶ all young people without discrimination;
- ▶ youth organisations and institutions working with / for young people;
- ▶ local and regional authorities.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE CHARTER?

The Charter highlights:

- ▶ types of support which should be provided to young people by local authorities;
- ▶ initiatives of/by/for young people;
- ▶ involvement of young people in decisions that influence their lives;
- ▶ implementation of youth participation within different structures and institutions.

ARE THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEMBER STATES BOUND BY THE CHARTER?

The Committee of Ministers of the 47 member states have adopted a recommendation supporting the implementation of the Charter.

The Charter should be seen as a set of principles, best practice and guidelines for youth participation.



WHAT CAN I FIND IN THE CHARTER?

The Charter consists of three sections:

Section I

Details a range of policies in which local authorities should incorporate a youth participation approach. These include a policy to promote youth employment, a policy for sport and leisure, an educational policy, etc.

Section II

Presents concrete tools to support the participation of young people such as training courses, counselling centres, youth projects, local media by and for young people.

Section III

Gives advice on the possible ways of supporting the institutional participation of young people in their local environment. It elaborates further on youth councils and parliaments and provides suggestions on how young people can get involved in the decision-making process at all levels.

IS THERE A USER-FRIENDLY VERSION OF THE CHARTER?

A plain language version called '*Have Your Say!*' is available, written in an informal style, providing ideas for participation. It exists in print, as an interactive CD-ROM and on-line (www.coe.int/youth).



THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe is a political organisation set up in 1949 to promote democracy and human rights throughout Europe. It also develops common responses to challenges in social cohesion and cultural diversity. The Council has 47 member states, comprising over 800 million Europeans.

The Council of Europe supports the active role of youth in society through European activities. The European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, as well as the European Youth Foundation, are essential in carrying out these activities. Its main goals in youth policy are:

- ▶ to encourage young people to play an active role in civil society in Europe;
- ▶ to promote and develop youth policies in Europe, with special emphasis on youth participation.

The active participation of young people in decisions and actions at a local and regional level is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies.

The preamble of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (21 May 2003)

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



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