



Presidency of Malta
Council of Europe
May - November 2025
Présidence de Malte
Conseil de l'Europe
Mai - Novembre 2025



Joint Statement by the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe and the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe: Empowering Young People for Democratic Leadership

On this International Youth Day, the Council of Europe (CoE) re-affirms its unwavering commitment to ensuring that every young person in our 46 member States can learn, lead, and thrive. Through a unique co-management system that gives youth representatives an equal voice alongside governments, the CoE's Youth for Democracy programme, European Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation support thousands of initiatives each year. These efforts bring the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law into lived experience for young citizens.

The Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (CINGO) strengthens this mission through its dedicated Youth Strategy and Programme. Under the pillars **Engage – Connect – Empower**, CINGO equips young Europeans with the skills, networks and resources needed to act as drivers of positive change. Particular attention is placed on removing socio-economic barriers to participation and strengthening democratic culture, both online and offline. In doing so, it cultivates a resilient generation capable of meeting today's complex challenges with creativity, resolve, and democratic purpose.

Malta's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers is guided by a bold Youth Strategy that places **young people at the heart of European policymaking**. Anchored in three priorities — protecting children, combating discrimination and empowering youth — the strategy embeds a youth perspective across all ministerial portfolios. Malta's Presidency will continue to drive this agenda forward, underscoring that young people are indispensable partners in driving democratic innovation up to 2030 and beyond.



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To translate these commitments into tangible results, we call on governments to give youth issues a permanent seat in cabinet rooms and develop policies with youth and for youth. Budget lines and public policies must transparently reflect the needs and ambitions of young people, demonstrating that their perspectives are essential to sustainable growth and social cohesion. Realising this vision also requires sustained investment to empower young Europeans through high-quality youth work — formal and non-formal alike — that builds the competences needed for democratic participation. Peer-to-peer education, digital-literacy training, environmental stewardship and entrepreneurship initiatives help emerging leaders feel both capable and trusted, turning potential into concrete influence.

Yet skills alone are not enough. Institutional structures must enable young people to exercise agency. We urge national parliaments, local authorities and other relevant stake holders to institutionalise structured youth participation. Youth councils and participatory-budgeting processes must become the norm, not the exception, enabling young voices to shape laws, policies and services from inception through implementation. Accountability is the final test of credibility. Disaggregated data and transparent reporting are essential for converting consultation into visible change, closing the gap between promise and practice, and reinforcing young citizens' confidence in democratic institutions.

On 12 August — and every day — the Council of Europe, together with CINGO and under Malta's youth-centred Presidency, stands ready to partner with young people in shaping democratic societies that are inclusive, innovative and future-ready. By acting today, we secure not only the rights of young people, but the vitality of European democracy for generations to come.