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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Draft conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a community of young people in Europe based on European values for a common and safe Europe <i>- Approval</i>

1. The Youth Working Party has examined the above draft Council conclusions at a number of meetings. The attached text met with the agreement of all delegations.
2. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to confirm that there is an agreement on the attached text and submit it to the Council (EYCS) for approval at its session on 12 May 2025 and subsequent publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

Draft conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a community of young people in Europe based on European values for a common and safe Europe

THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

RECALLING THAT:

1. The European Union is built upon the common values¹ of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, which are fundamental principles enshrined in the Treaty on European Union. These European values are universal and serve as a cornerstone for building a common and safe European society.
2. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which affirms the rights and freedoms of all individuals, including young people, provides a robust framework for dignity, equality, participation and protection. These instruments guide efforts to create a safe and inclusive environment for all young people in Europe, fostering their development and engagement within society.²

¹ Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union.

² Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2012/C 326/02), OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 391–407.

3. The European Pillar of Social Rights recognises the rights of young people to access education and training, equal opportunities and protection against discrimination, supporting the creation of inclusive, resilient communities in which young people are actively engaged and economically and socially safe.³ In this vein, the Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship⁴ invited Member States to incorporate a permanent concern for attention to equality and diversity into the specific context of the teaching of common European values and democratic citizenship.
4. The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027⁵ included 11 European youth goals that emphasise the pivotal role of young people in building a common and safe Europe. Through its three core pillars—Engage, Connect, and Empower—it highlights the importance of meaningful participation, fostering mutual understanding, and equipping young people in Europe with the competences and opportunities necessary to actively contribute to a resilient and inclusive society.⁶ The EU Youth Strategy provides a framework for the active engagement, autonomy and inclusion of young people, fostering a sense of shared responsibility towards a common European identity.

³ European Pillar of Social Rights, Chapter I: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market, proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission on 17 November 2017 (2017/C 428/09), OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, p. 10–15.

⁴ Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship, OJ C, C/2023/1419, 1.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1419/oj>.

⁵ Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, OJ C 456, 18.12.2018, p. 1–22.

⁶ EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027.

5. The active engagement of young people in decision-making processes at local, regional, national and European levels is vital for fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the present and future of the European Union. Structured youth participation mechanisms, such as the EU Youth Dialogue, provide a platform for meaningful participation, enabling young people to voice their perspectives, have an impact on policy development and contribute to shaping a common and safe Europe.⁷
6. Young people, as agents of change and as key stakeholders in shaping the future of Europe, should be empowered and enabled from an early age to understand the principles, values and functioning of the EU, in line with Youth Goal #1⁸ and actively contribute to the democratic processes, civil society and social inclusion of the European Union in line with Youth Goal #9⁹.
7. Combatting disinformation and misinformation and providing reliable information are essential for safeguarding democratic processes and protecting young people from manipulation. Enhancing cybersecurity awareness and fostering digital and media literacy and a culture of vigilance among young people empowers them to recognise and mitigate digital threats, thereby promoting a safe and resilient digital environment.¹⁰

⁷ Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on the social dimension of a sustainable Europe for youth (2023/C 185/06), OJ C 185, 26.5.2023, p. 21–28.

⁸ The EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027, Youth Goal No. 1, Connecting EU with youth.

⁹ The EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027, Youth Goal No. 9, Space and Participation for All.

¹⁰ European democracy action plan; Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027, COM(2020) 624 final, SWD(2020) 209 final; Council conclusions on media literacy in an ever-changing world, OJ C 193, 9.6.2020, p. 23–28.

8. The growing health challenges faced by young people, including those relating to mental health and well-being, exacerbated by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and other societal changes and pressures both offline and online, need to be prioritised at every level. Supporting young people's mental resilience is essential not only for their personal development, but also for fostering a safe and inclusive European society where they can thrive as active participants in democratic and social processes as well as in their professional lives.¹¹
9. Young people across Europe face challenges closely tied to European values, including concerns about the rule of law, the shrinking of civic spaces and growing threats to democratic participation. While these issues, combined with pressing global challenges such as climate change, demographic transformation, digital and green transformation, disinformation, international political tensions, and armed conflicts exacerbate inequalities and create barriers that prevent some young people from engaging in societal and democratic processes, they also serve as a catalyst for others to actively participate in democratic debates and actions in areas such as human rights, mental health, intergenerational justice, climate justice and societal change.¹²
10. Various EU programmes and initiatives, such as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme, the European Social Fund Plus including, where applicable, the 'Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve' (ALMA) initiative, DiscoverEU, the Youth Guarantee, the EU Youth Dialogue and the European Year of Youth 2022 have proven successful in, where relevant, enhancing youth participation, competences development, social mobility and the promotion of European values across borders.

¹¹ European Commission / EACEA / Youth Wiki, 2022. *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of young people. Policy responses in European countries. Youth Wiki report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union; Flash Eurobarometer 545 - Youth and Democracy, May 2024.

¹² Flash Eurobarometer 545 - Youth and Democracy, May 2024.

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT:

11. Building a strong community of young people in Europe is key to addressing the challenges young people face, including feelings of disconnection and disappointment in the EU institutions. Challenges such as mental health struggles, growing inequality, and a perception of not being adequately included in the EU's decision-making process have contributed to a sense of mistrust in institutions among some young people.¹³
12. While it is encouraging that young people continue to maintain a strong sense of European identity, trust in European institutions is declining, as are the intentions among young people to participate in European elections. To rebuild this trust, greater emphasis should be placed on inclusive policies, ensuring that these policies respond to the specific needs and concerns of young people, citizenship education, intergenerational cooperation, promoting common values and fostering young people's active engagement in democracy and civil society and ensuring access to reliable sources of information.¹⁴
13. The global challenges of the 21st century, such as mental health issues, the digital and green transformation, the climate crisis, social inequality, polarisation, threats to rule of law and breaches of fundamental rights, international political tensions and armed conflicts, require a unified European response. Engaging young people in Europe in addressing these issues through meaningful participation in decision-making processes will ensure that Europe remains a safe and sustainable region for future generations.
14. The youth sector can play a crucial role in an integrated and cross-sectoral approach to identifying, preventing and acting upon the violent radicalisation of young people against European values.

¹³ Flash Eurobarometer 545 - Youth and Democracy, May 2024.

¹⁴ "Young Citizens' Views and Engagement in a Changing Europe", IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022 European Report, Springer, 2022.

15. Dialogue with children and young people through participatory mechanisms such as the EU Children's Participation Platform and the EU Youth Dialogue, respectively, demonstrates the importance of creating inclusive, safe spaces where they can express their views and participate meaningfully in shaping the present and the future of Europe.¹⁵ At the same time, it is equally important to take young people's opinions into account in policy making.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT:

16. Today's world is facing evolving and new threats to democracy and the rule of law, the global environmental and climate crisis, public health threats, disinformation campaigns, Russia's unjustified military war of aggression against Ukraine, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and other global conflicts. These crises have resulted in energy shortages, inflation, economic and social instability, inequality and mass migration, while also driving the search for innovative solutions to mitigate their impacts. The challenges have introduced additional complexities but have simultaneously created opportunities to foster innovation and address pressing societal and environmental issues.
17. At the same time, Europe's accelerating digital transformation and green transition have brought both challenges and opportunities. While these phenomena may be deepening inequalities and societal polarisation and may have a negative impact on health, including mental health, particularly affecting young people, they have also driven innovation, created new opportunities for education, training and employment, and strengthened connectivity. Addressing these opportunities and challenges requires sustained efforts to foster inclusivity, promote intergenerational fairness, and harness the potential of young people in Europe to contribute to a safer and more equitable and sustainable Europe.¹⁶

¹⁵ Lundy, L. (2007). *'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. British Educational Research Journal, 33(6), 927-942. The Lundy Model, endorsed in European Commission initiatives, highlights four elements—space, voice, audience, and influence—as essential for meaningful youth participation in shaping policies and decisions affecting their lives.

¹⁶ European Commission report: The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), 2022.

18. Collaboration among Member States is necessary to strengthen and mainstream youth perspectives in policies to ensure that they are responsive to the diverse realities of Europe's young people, including those with fewer opportunities and those at risk of exclusion.
19. Enhancing existing activities to support active youth engagement, empowerment and resilience is essential for addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by young people in Europe today. This can include promoting the development of personal and social competences in all environments and throughout life¹⁷, enhancing access to quality and inclusive education and training adapted to future labour market demands and addressing the skills gap and shortages, non-formal and informal learning, improving digital and media literacy, developing inclusive opportunities for civic and democratic participation, including the provision of youth work and volunteering¹⁸ opportunities, and further developing mental health support systems¹⁹. Strengthening these activities will help build a common, safe and engaged European community, where young people are equipped to develop their full potential and can actively contribute to a sustainable and cohesive future.

¹⁷ Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights, OJ C, C/2024/3528, 4.6.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/3528/oj>.

¹⁸ Council recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union, OJ C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 8–10.

¹⁹ Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people in the European Union, OJ C, C/2023/1337, 30.11.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1337/oj>.

20. At the EU Youth Conference in Lublin 2-5 March 2025 young people proposed the following recommendations:

1. Young people stressed that there is a need to increase young people's hope in a democratic and safe future by increasing their trust in democratic institutions at all levels, resilience and contribution to peacebuilding, in order to prevent demotivation, disengagement and political alienation. This can be achieved by:
 - a) Declaring a European year of resilience and increasing long-term, easily accessible EU funding for youth resilience projects and crisis preparedness;
 - b) Strengthening youth engagement in decision-making through measures such as youth led European Citizenship initiatives, Youth check at national and European level and the EU Youth Dialogue. These should incorporate transparent follow-up processes which track the implementation of policy proposals, as well as partnerships with youth organisations on communication and outreach to reach a diverse range of young people and better enable young leaders to bridge the gap between young people and EU policymakers;
 - c) Encouraging young candidates in elections through measures like quotas, political traineeships lowering the age of eligibility, and giving young people a real chance of getting elected;
 - d) Introducing civic education as a mandatory subject in formal education, with a comprehensive curriculum, delivered and created in co-operation with non-governmental organisations. This should nurture civic responsibility, promote European values, civil society, critical thinking, democratic participation, and the role of democratic institutions.

2. Disinformation and misinformation threaten democratic values, erode trust in institutions and create polarisation. This leads to scepticism, disengagement, and mental health issues among young people as well as an inability to make informed choices. Strengthening young people's resilience within the digital landscape and further protecting the democratic values the EU is based on, can be achieved by:
- a) co-designing digital learning frameworks together with young people (formal, non-formal, informal) in domains such as understanding algorithms, media literacy, cybersecurity, fact-checking, digital footprints, information management, critical thinking, ethical media and AI use;
 - b) implementing transparent verification and accountability processes for social media, as well as media quality labelling to encourage responsible digital behaviour;
 - c) supporting youth-led businesses and start-ups in the field of social media and AI.

ACCORDINGLY, INVITE MEMBER STATES, AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVELS, TO:

21. Strengthen democratic citizenship education and training, digital and media literacy, where applicable, through the formal, non-formal and informal learning that equips young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to engage effectively and responsibly in society and to use new technologies and innovations. These initiatives should take into account the different needs of young people, including those with fewer opportunities and in vulnerable situations, and promote the understanding of democratic values and processes, active participation in civic and European community and the development of critical thinking, along with digital and media literacy both to address societal challenges and foster inclusive and resilient communities.

22. Highlight the role of youth work as a driver of European values, competences development and meaningful participation of young people. Youth work in its diversity uses various methods to contribute to a more cohesive society.
23. Further promote the active participation of young people in democratic processes, which helps to create a more inclusive democracy representing the diverse needs of its people, by strengthening the civic participation of young people and supporting them in their participation in elections.
24. Ensure that young people have equal access to safe and inclusive environments that encourage the development of their psychosocial skills and participation in community-building activities. These activities could include volunteering programmes, intergenerational projects, and local initiatives addressing social and environmental challenges, all of which contribute to building and enhancing a sense of belonging within local, regional, national and European communities.
25. Promote intercultural and intergenerational dialogue and solidarity and combat all forms of discrimination, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia and other types of intolerance²⁰, for example by implementing relevant public policies through skills programmes, awareness-raising campaigns and learning activities, both informal and non-formal, that reflect the diversity of European communities and are aimed at safeguarding and improving this diversity.

²⁰ The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan (2020–2025), COM(2020) 565 final; Gender equality strategy 2020-2025, COM/2020/152 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52020DC0152>; LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025, COM/2020/698 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0698>; and the EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030), COM/2021/615 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52021DC0615>.

26. Support youth organisations, youth workers and other relevant stakeholders, in particular those contributing to the promotion of European Union and democratic values, who develop the personal and social competences of young people in order to enable them to engage with communities and effectively address societal challenges.
27. Promote the development of critical thinking skills in young people, empowering them to analyse information, assess assumptions, and navigate complex societal issues with a critical and independent mindset. By nurturing these skills, young people can be equipped to become active, informed citizens who make a meaningful contribution to positive change in their communities and beyond.
28. Support the assessment of youth policies and youth work programmes to ensure that they are inclusive and impactful and that they reflect the diverse and changing needs of young people across the EU, including young people with fewer opportunities and those at risk of exclusion.
29. Encourage and facilitate cooperation among educational institutions, youth organisations, cultural institutions, and the wider community to create synergies that encourage young people to participate actively in cultural, social, civic and sport life. By fostering shared learning opportunities and enhancing mutual understanding, these efforts can support democracy building, promote inclusive and resilient communities, and empower young people to become active and engaged citizens²¹.

²¹ Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship (C/2023/1419), OJ C, 1.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1419/oj>

30. Take full advantage of the opportunities, where possible, offered by the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programmes to empower young people and build inclusive, resilient communities. Tools such as Erasmus+ youth exchanges and training courses can promote citizenship education and critical thinking, while ESC volunteering projects and solidarity activities support young people's engagement in tackling societal challenges. In addition, Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships and Capacity Building projects enable cooperation among educational institutions, youth organisations and cultural and sports institutions to promote democratic values, intercultural dialogue and active participation.

ACCORDINGLY, INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

31. Further promote the active participation of young people in democratic processes by ensuring that their voices are heard and acted upon in policy development at local, regional, national and EU levels.
32. Support both physical and online capacity-building initiatives and the development of competences that empower young people to participate effectively in community-building activities and decision-making processes. Such efforts should aim to enhance their confidence and knowledge as well as their resilience and their commitment to contributing meaningfully to decision-making processes at local, regional, national, and European levels. These initiatives should prioritise reaching underrepresented groups of young people, especially young people with fewer opportunities and those at risk of exclusion, through targeted outreach programmes and partnerships with grassroots organisations.
33. Support youth organisations, especially those that support European values and democracy, and where applicable National Youth Councils, with their work to actively contribute to shaping policies that impact young people's lives.
34. Consistently develop youth information systems, environments and the availability and accessibility of information as youth information plays important role in helping young people to become informed and engaged European citizens.

35. Strengthen cross-sectoral efforts to promote the well-being of young people and to prevent mental health issues, as well as promoting access to quality and inclusive education and training, upskilling, reskilling and employment opportunities for young people, especially those with fewer opportunities and those at risk of exclusion and working to enhance their resilience and their psychosocial skills, to secure their future participation in Europe's societal framework and mitigate socioeconomic disadvantages.
36. Strengthen efforts to foster a safe and healthy online environment for young people by protecting them from exposure to unsuitable content, addictive designs with negative impacts on mental and physical health, and online threats such as disinformation and misinformation, hate speech, and harassment, while strengthening the fight against disinformation and promoting cybersecurity awareness and digital literacy. This will help young people to recognise and mitigate cyber threats, thereby contributing to the creation of more safe and resilient communities.
37. Recognise the importance of youth mainstreaming in policies on security, migration and social cohesion, health, education and training, culture, housing, climate and environmental action and digital transformation in order to shape a safe and common future for Europe, and develop, where relevant, cross-sectoral strategies.
38. Foster cooperation with civil society and the private sector to create opportunities for young people to address pressing challenges, such as digital transformation, climate change, and social inclusion. These opportunities could include apprenticeships, internships, entrepreneurship programs, and collaborative projects.

39. Ensure young people's voices are actively integrated by involving them in decision-making processes and co-designing initiatives that drive Europe's economic growth, security and innovation.
40. Facilitate collaboration between policymakers, youth organisations, civil society organisations and associations, researchers and other stakeholders to ensure that youth policies remain relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of Europe's young people.
41. Further develop close cooperation between young people from the Member States and young people from across Europe, especially from EU candidate countries, as well as from non-European countries, using opportunities available under Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.
42. Further cooperate with international organisations, including the Council of Europe and the United Nations, with a view to enhancing the civic engagement of young people and their organisations, highlighting the need for continued support for the Youth Partnership between the EU and the Council of Europe.
43. Enhance initiatives to engage young people with the European community, fostering an understanding of European citizenship and values, and strengthening their connection to the European community and its institutions.

ACCORDINGLY, INVITE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

44. Strengthen and continue to support in a transparent manner, for example through European programmes, initiatives that enhance the knowledge of the EU and contribute to the development of a shared European community based on common values, including respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

45. Continue to support EU youth programmes and initiatives such as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps and the EU Youth Dialogue, and ensure synergies with other policy initiatives which promote the exchange of ideas, foster solidarity and strengthen the European identity among young people and ensure that their successors will have a strong component dedicated to enhancing young people's solidarity and participation.
46. Ensure synergies between the EU Youth Dialogue and new EU participatory mechanisms, such as the Youth Policy Dialogues with Commissioners, the EU Youth Stakeholders Group and the Commission's Youth Advisory Board in cooperation with Member States, so that they complement each other and fulfil their potential to engage young people in the decision-making process at EU level.
47. Strengthen the inclusiveness and accessibility of the participation mechanisms mentioned in paragraph 46 by reflecting on areas for improvement and lessons learned to achieve a better representation of diverse voices, including those of young people with fewer opportunities.
48. Ensure that young people's voices are taken into account at all levels, with the introduction of the youth check at European level, a youth impact assessment or other similar youth mainstreaming instruments²².
49. Take these conclusions into account in the preparation of the next EU Youth Strategy and the EU Youth Dialogue beyond 2027, ensuring that the scope and objectives are reflected in future policy frameworks. This will ensure that the strategy aligns with the needs of young people and strengthens their role in building a common and safe Europe.
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²² European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks – A comparative overview*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/038401>