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**Parliamentary Projects Support Division**  
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## YOUTH ASSEMBLY 2012

“ Youth and democracy: the young generation sacrificed?”

STRASBOURG

4-8 October 2012

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe  
in cooperation with  
the European Youth Centre Strasbourg and  
the Youth sector of the Council of Europe

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Background document and description of the Assembly

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## Background of the Youth Assembly 2012

Democracy is one of the three main pillars of the Council of Europe, together with human rights and the rule of law. The work on democracy with young people is not new. For years, the Council of Europe has focused on capacity building and training of young people, youth leaders and youth workers on democracy, human rights, participation and citizenship.

As for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, following the reports adopted in 2011 (Resolution 1828 on "Reversing the sharp decline in youth employment" and Recommendation 1978 "Towards a European framework convention on youth rights"), in January 2012 it decided to prepare a report on "The young generation sacrificed: political, social, economic and other consequences of the financial crisis". These reports clearly demonstrate the Assembly's concerns in this area.

Moreover, in the spirit of Resolution 1822 (2011) (on reform of the Parliamentary Assembly), it has been proposed that a youth assembly be held from 5 to 10 October 2012, in co-operation with the European Youth Foundation and other partners from the Council of Europe's youth sector. Holding the event will enable the Parliamentary Assembly to boost dialogue with, and raise the profile and impact of its work among, a population group to which it attaches great importance.

Owing to the demographic and cultural changes that have taken place in Europe over the last few years, young people face increasing difficulties in accessing to, and exercising their rights. Their autonomy is increasingly threatened as a consequence of economic, geographical and socio-cultural inequalities. Youth policies are also particularly vulnerable to economic recession, as they are often relegated to a secondary place in governmental priorities and resource allocation.

Indeed, at times of economic and social crisis, the feelings of powerlessness and anxiety about the future have created deeper tensions and an on-going feeling in our societies that the voice of the people is not being heard enough. Young people are often at the centre of these tensions, because they are directly affected by the uncertainties regarding their real possibility of participating in society, contributing to its development and developing their autonomy.

In a continent with ageing societies, young people are the first victims of lacking opportunities, unemployment, housing difficulties and often-limited mobility in a virtually more globalised, but physically often closed space.

Recent protest movements of young people in Europe and in the Arab world have shown youth's willingness to act and bring about change towards more democratic societies in which young people are valued and given the space to develop and contribute actively. At the same time, political participation of young people has strongly decreased, showing a lack of trust in governments and representatives. Political debates often focus on issues (pensions, security, etc.), which are not the priority concerns of young people ("the aging of politics" phenomenon).

The Youth Assembly 2012 will take place in the frame of the Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy, which will bring together established leaders and emerging voices from different parts of the world to debate the gap between the existing social, political and economic models and the new realities in today's world. During the youth event, 170 young people will actively work towards the development of concrete

recommendations on themes related to youth and democracy, which will be transmitted to the World Forum on Democracy. 40 young people from the youth Assembly will be selected to stay for the World Forum and deliver young people's messages. This event therefore represents a unique chance for young people from all across Europe and beyond to present their view on the place of democracy in a quickly changing world, to express their concerns and identify common challenges with concrete proposals to be taken to the World Forum.

## Aims and objectives of the Youth Assembly

The Youth Assembly 2012 aims at bringing together young people from all over Europe to reflect on youth's current challenges to democracy and to formulate common recommendations to the World Forum on democracy on how young people can better benefit and develop more democratic and inclusive societies.

The objectives of the Assembly are:

- To share experiences on the realities of young people in relation to Democracy and democratic processes today;
- To identify main challenges faced by young people in Europe in relation to the full enjoyment of democracy and explore possible ways of addressing these;
- To share existing good practices in the field of youth work, youth activism and new emerging youth movements for democracy;
- To formulate concrete recommendations on the role and the space of young people in democratic processes in Europe;
- To reflect on possible ways to follow up on the Youth Assembly through networking;
- To contribute to the World Democracy Forum by ensuring that the voice of youth can be heard and taken into account.

## Activities of the Youth Assembly

### Online learning

From the end of June to the start of the Youth Assembly in October, selected participants will be invited to join an online learning platform, which will serve as a basis for the preparations to the Assembly. This platform will aim at getting to know each other and start sharing realities, but will also be a place to explore the concept of democracy and start reflecting on the main themes of the Youth Assembly. Participants will be asked to complete monthly thematic online units.

### The Youth Assembly

The Youth event will start on 5th October 2012 with a plenary session in the Hemicycle of the Parliamentary Assembly, in which a debate will take place between young people and parliamentarians. On the following 2 days, participants will work in thematic working groups on concrete themes related to youth and democracy.

The identified themes to be addressed during the Youth Assembly are (these themes are not final and might be changed and adapted according to the final profile of participants):

- Democracy and Religion

- Democracy and new social media
- Democracy and globalisation
- Democracy and access to social rights
- Democracy and youth participation
- Democracy and the role of youth work/ youth organisations
- Democracy and migration
- Democracy and the inclusion of minorities
- Democracy and citizenship education.

Each working group will formulate concrete recommendations to be addressed to the World Democracy Forum.

## World Democracy Forum

The Youth Assembly takes place on 5-7 October 2012. 40 participants to the Youth Assembly will be selected, based on their applications and motivation, to represent the young people and stay on for the World Forum on Democracy (8-11 October). These representatives will be given a chance to transmit the results of the Youth Assembly and to convey young people's worries, questionings and requests to the Forum, where thousands of people from all over the world will get together and further discuss democracy from a global perspective, with high political figures, representatives of Parliaments and of schools of political studies.

## Profile of participants

In order to be selected and participate in the Youth Assembly 2012, applicants should:

- Be aged 16-25 (exceptions can be made in special cases)
- Be resident in one of the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe, Observer States to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Mexico, Israel, Canada) or States whose parliaments are partners for Democracy (Morocco, Palestinian national Authority) (exceptions can be made in special cases);
- Be able to communicate and work fluently in English and/or French;
- Be actively involved in civil society Democracy initiatives;
- Be motivated to contribute to the development of recommendations on youth and democracy;
- Be supported by a youth organisation or network or informal group working on democracy;
- Be available to participate fully in the Assembly and possibly in the World Democracy Forum;

As far as possible, participants should be representative of the variety of youth in Europe. Therefore, special attention will be given to young people from marginalised backgrounds, representatives of minority organisations or youth movements acting for access to social rights of young people. Gender balance will also be taken into account. Moreover, to reflect a fair geographical balance, participants should represent 50% of the national delegations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, observer States and partners for Democracy.

## Application, procedure and selection of participants

All candidates must apply on-line, completing the application form under this link: <http://youthapplications.coe.int/>

Applications must be submitted by **30th May 2012**.

The organising team will select 170 participants on the basis of the profile outlined above. The selection will also take into account balance between sexes, geographical regions, different types of experiences, organisations, institutions and projects. A waiting list may be established. Candidates will be informed about whether their application was accepted or not, and about their positioning on the waiting list, latest by **20th June 2012**.

### Deadline for applications

The application form must be submitted on-line until **30 May 2012**.

### Financial and practical conditions of participation

#### Working language

The common working languages of the course will be English and French. Candidates must be able to use at least one of those two languages independently in both written and oral communication.

#### Accommodation

Board and lodging for the Youth Assembly are provided and paid for by the Council of Europe. Participants will be lodged either at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg or in the Hotel Forum in Schiltigheim. Transport between the place of accommodation and the venue of the Youth Assembly will be provided.

#### Travel expenses

Travel expenses and visa costs will be reimbursed upon presentation of the relevant receipts, according to the rules of the Council of Europe. Only the participants who attend the entire Youth Assembly can be reimbursed. The payment will be made either by bank transfer after the Assembly, or by bank check to be cashed at the Council of Europe bank at the end of the Assembly (in Euros).