

Building an EU–Canada Youth Partnership

A Youth-Led Agenda for Democratic Resilience and Transatlantic Cooperation

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“We share one ocean, one set of values, one way of seeing the world.”

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen
2026 State of the Union Address, September 16, 2026.

“Canada and Europe are each strong. Europe and Canada are stronger together.”

Prime Minister Mark Carney
Address to the European Parliament, September 17, 2026.

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Executive Summary

The European Union and Canada have established a deeper strategic partnership grounded in shared democratic values and a commitment to strengthening their collective resilience. As this partnership expands, young people have an important role to play in contributing their expertise to shared priorities and building the lasting transatlantic relationships that will sustain closer ties. Yet there is no dedicated mechanism for European and Canadian youth organizations to connect, exchange knowledge, develop joint initiatives and bring their collective expertise into EU-Canada dialogue.

The *Youth and the Future of Democracy* initiative was launched by the Delegation of the European Union to Canada and the Parliamentary Centre to fill this gap. Working with youth organizations, the initiative identified shared priorities and a model for long term youth cooperation. Their vision for sustained EU-Canada cooperation is presented below.

An EU–Canada Youth Partnership

Through this initiative, European and Canadian youth organizations developed a framework for an EU–Canada Youth Partnership: a youth-led network that would provide the resources, connections and opportunities needed to collaborate on shared priorities. The proposed partnership would operate through several complementary mechanisms:

A Joint Action Incubator would provide small grants to partnerships with at least one European and one Canadian organization. The Partnership would also facilitate introductions and help organizations identify suitable counterparts. Funding could support joint research, exchanges, public engagement, advocacy, collaborative events or other initiatives addressing shared democratic challenges.

Capacity building and peer learning would allow organizations to strengthen their own work while learning from counterparts across the Atlantic. Activities could include workshops and exchanges on organizational sustainability, communications, fundraising, digital engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and democratic innovation.

Through policy dialogue and joint research, thematic working groups would compare experiences, generate evidence and develop common recommendations on issues of shared concern. Where relevant, this work could inform European, Canadian and bilateral policy discussions.

The Partnership would also explore **parliamentary and institutional exchanges**, including fellowship opportunities that allow young people to gain experience within democratic institutions and build longer-term relationships across jurisdictions.

An annual EU–Canada Youth Forum would bring participating organizations together to review progress, showcase joint work and set priorities for the year ahead. A shared digital platform would maintain collaboration between meetings through partner matching, organizational profiles, resources, funding opportunities and spaces for ongoing exchange.

The Partnership would be youth-driven. Participating organizations would shape priorities and lead substantive work, supported by a Secretariat and Steering Committee that provide continuity, coordination and institutional support.

Areas for Cooperation

Through the surveys, Forum and working-group discussions, European and Canadian youth organizations developed a shared agenda for cooperation. It reflects the issues they identified as priorities for young people and where collaboration across the Atlantic could add the greatest value.

01. Education and civic learning are central to meaningful democratic participation. The initiative identified uneven access to civic education as a shared challenge, particularly for rural and remote youth, minority-language communities and youth outside formal education. Cooperation could support comparative learning, shared resources and expanded transatlantic educational exchanges, including Erasmus+.

02. Economic opportunity, affordability and housing affect young people's ability to participate fully in civic and public life. Organizations identified the value of comparing approaches to employment, housing, financial barriers and the specific pressures facing rural and remote youth, while ensuring that youth perspectives are reflected in broader EU–Canada economic cooperation.

03. Digital spaces, AI and information integrity present global challenges to democracy that require international cooperation. Youth organizations are already working to counter disinformation, strengthen digital literacy and promote safer online spaces. EU–Canada cooperation could connect these efforts, strengthen joint responses to shared challenges and bring youth expertise into emerging debates on AI and digital governance.

04. Meaningful and inclusive youth participation is essential to strengthening democratic institutions, yet youth organizations continue to face barriers to decision-making and consultations that offer little influence over outcomes. EU–Canada cooperation could help improve participation mechanisms, expand access for underrepresented groups and develop more effective approaches to youth engagement in EU–Canada policy discussions.

Toward a sustained partnership

The relationships built through this initiative provide a foundation for sustained youth cooperation across the Atlantic. With dedicated coordination, institutional support and resources, youth organizations can build on this work to strengthen democracy and contribute their collective expertise to the emerging strategic partnership between the EU and Canada.

A youth-led framework for collaboration and stronger democracy across the Atlantic



— Youth-led, supported by a Secretariat and Steering Committee, with institutional backing to sustain collaboration over time. —