Building an EU–Canada Youth Partnership

A Youth-Led Agenda for Democratic Resilience and Transatlantic Cooperation

Parliamentary Centre
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Prepared by The Parliamentary Centre
September 2026

"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.

This project was possible thanks to the support of the Delegation of the European Union to Canada

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The Delegation of the European Union to Canada represents the European Union (EU) in Canada and works to strengthen cooperation between Canada and the EU. Since 1976, the Delegation has served as a bridge between the European Union and Canada, advancing political dialogue, expanding trade and investment, supporting research and innovation, and working together on climate action and global challenges.

The European Union (EU) is a unique political and economic partnership of 27 European countries working together to promote peace, prosperity, democracy, and solidarity. Its mission is to improve the lives of its citizens by fostering sustainable economic growth, protecting fundamental rights, supporting social inclusion, and addressing shared challenges through collective action. The EU seeks to strengthen cooperation among its member states while respecting national diversity and sovereignty. It advances common policies in areas such as trade, climate action, security, research, and digital transformation, and promotes its values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law both within Europe and globally.

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Founded in 1968**, the Parliamentary Centre** is one of the leading and longest serving non-governmental, non-partisan organizations dedicated to the strengthening of parliamentary democracy in Canada and around the world. The Parliamentary Centre has become a source of expertise and advice and a partner of choice for more than 120 legislatures in over 70 countries, along with a host of civil society groups and other democratic actors. Our partners include emerging and developed democracies, as well as democratic actors working in non-democratic contexts.

As a trusted facilitator of dialogue and exchanges we are uniquely positioned to support efforts to advance the key areas of collaboration outlined in the “Joint Statement: Enduring Partnership” and other relevant documents guiding the deepening EU-Canada relationship.

Our mandate and work include a targeted focus on youth perspectives on democracy, including the challenges of youth disillusionment and disengagement, the impact of social media and the challenges and opportunities of civic education, re-engagement, agency and empowerment.

Acknowledgments

The Parliamentary Centre gratefully acknowledges the youth organizations and youth leaders who contributed their time, knowledge and experience to the Youth and the Future of Democracy initiative. Their contributions through the survey, Forum and subsequent discussions shaped the findings, cooperation agenda and proposed model for an EU–Canada Youth Partnership presented in this report.

We extend our sincere thanks to the participating organizations from the European Union and Canada, including: Apathy is Boring, the Canadian Muslim Youth Alliance, City Hive Vancouver, the European Union of Jewish Students, the European Youth Parliament, European Youth Press, Global Shapers Community Ottawa Hub, Latvijas Jaunatnes padome / National Youth Council of Latvia, Mreža mladih Hrvatske / Croatian Youth Network, Nationale Jeugdraad / The Dutch National Youth Council, NATO Youth Canada, the New Brunswick Youth Council, Nuorisoala / The Finnish National Youth Council and Youth Sector, Polska Rada Organizacji Młodzieżowych / Polish National Youth Council, Rural Youth Europe, Vote 16 Canada, Young Diplomats of Canada, Young European Federalists (JEF Europe), Young Politicians of Canada, the Youth Apprenticeship Council, and Youth 4 Youth Québec. A full list and description of participating organizations can be found in Annex B.

We also thank Young Diplomats of Canada for sharing their database of youth organizations, which supported the mapping and outreach process for this initiative.

Special thanks are extended to Martin Wilhelm, Managing Director of Citizens For Europe, who supported the initiative as the European expert. His deep experience in facilitation, youth engagement, and advocacy for inclusive democracy was critical to the success of the initiative. His guidance helped create a space for open exchange, collective reflection, and meaningful dialogue among participants.

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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 and Canadian 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.

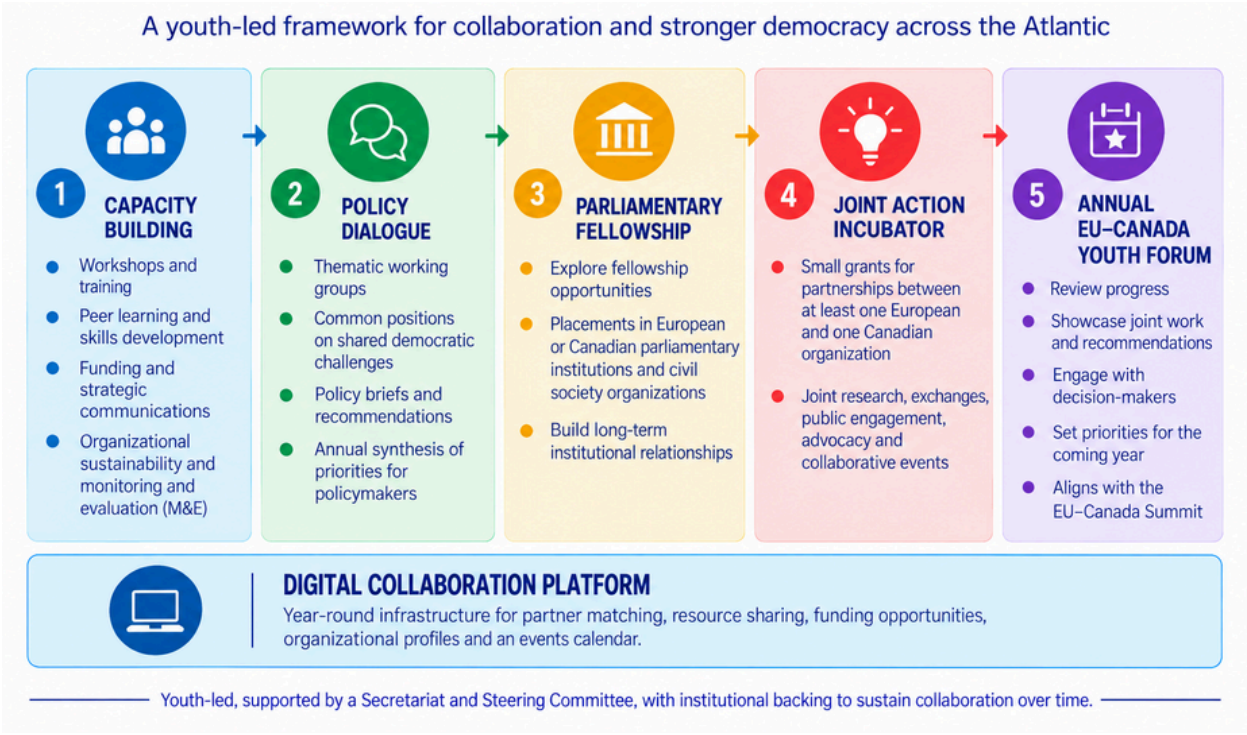


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1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) and Canada have entered a new phase in their relationship and have established a deeper strategic partnership grounded in shared democratic values and a commitment to strengthening their collective resilience. Building on longstanding economic and political ties, the relationship now encompasses more ambitious cooperation across security and defence, trade, technology, the Arctic and other strategic priorities.

As this strategic partnership expands, young people have an important role to play in contributing their expertise to shared priorities and building lasting transatlantic relationships that will sustain closer ties between the EU and Canada.

Youth organizations on both sides of the Atlantic are already working on many of the democratic challenges and policy issues shaping the partnership. However, there is no sustained mechanism for them to connect, exchange knowledge, develop joint initiatives and bring shared priorities into EU-Canada dialogue.

This gap presents an opportunity to build a stronger youth dimension of the EU–Canada relationship. Connecting youth organizations would support collaboration on shared democratic challenges, build lasting ties between the EU and Canada, and give policymakers access to a network of youth expertise.

To explore this opportunity, the Delegation of the European Union to Canada and the Parliamentary Centre launched the *Youth and the Future of Democracy initiative.* The initiative examined where European and Canadian youth organizations share priorities, where cooperation could add value, and what sustained collaboration could look like.

The findings point to a clear next step: an EU–Canada Youth Partnership that gives youth organizations a sustained framework to work together and contribute to the broader bilateral relationship.

This report presents a youth-led agenda for that partnership, a practical model for how it could operate, and the support needed to move toward sustained transatlantic cooperation.

2. Why EU–Canada Youth Cooperation?

The EU and Canada have established a deeper strategic partnership.

The EU and Canada are deepening their relationship at a moment of growing geopolitical uncertainty and pressure on democratic institutions, the rules-based international order and national sovereignty. Their partnership is grounded in shared commitments to democracy, the rule of law and open, rules-based markets, and is increasingly being positioned as a means of strengthening their collective resilience.

The foundations for this relationship are already well established through the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA). More recently, however, the EU and Canada have begun to expand cooperation into new areas. At the 2025 Canada–EU Summit, they committed to a more ambitious strategic partnership and signed a Security and Defence Partnership. In 2026, Canada became the first non-European country to participate in the EU's Security Action for Europe (SAFE) defence instrument. Most recently, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proposed moving beyond CETA toward an 'Alliance for the Future,' an ambition welcomed by Prime Minister Mark Carney in his subsequent address to the European Parliament.

As Prime Minister Carney argued in his address to the European Parliament, deeper cooperation can help Europe and Canada build the resilience needed to protect their sovereignty, freedoms, and democratic institutions.

Young people have a stake in this relationship.

Young people have a direct stake in the issues shaping the evolving EU–Canada relationship. Decisions about artificial intelligence (AI), climate and energy transitions, education, employment, democratic resilience, digital governance and security will shape both their lives today and the societies they inherit.

But young people are not simply affected by these decisions. They are already working on them. European and Canadian organizations are actively working to ensure that young people have a voice in Arctic policy, receive meaningful civic education, have a seat at the table where decisions are made, grow up in inclusive societies, have access to meaningful employment, understand and contribute to debates about their countries' security, and many other priorities.

Much of their work contributes to the same democratic objective: enabling young people to understand their rights, participate meaningfully in public life, influence the institutions and policies that affect them, and see themselves represented within their societies.

There is therefore already a strong foundation of youth organizations with relevant expertise, practical experience and an interest in working across the Atlantic to strengthen both their own work and the democracies in which they operate.

The missing link.

Despite this, there is currently no sustained structure to support this kind of collaboration. The EU and Canada have built extensive mechanisms for governments and institutions to work together. However, youth organizations have limited opportunities to build relationships with counterparts across the Atlantic to work on joint initiatives or bring their collective expertise into the broader EU–Canada relationship.

An EU–Canada Youth Partnership could fill this gap. A structured partnership would support youth organizations to exchange knowledge, develop joint solutions and strengthen their advocacy on shared priorities. At the same time, it would create a channel through which policymakers could engage with youth perspectives and expertise as the EU and Canada deepen their cooperation.

As the EU and Canada rethink and deepen their relationship, there is an opportunity to strengthen youth cooperation alongside it to ensure that young people can contribute meaningfully to the EU and Canada's growing partnership.
The youth organizations engaged through this initiative have demonstrated both an interest in sustained cooperation and a practical understanding of what would make it useful. The following section translates their contributions into a proposal for an EU–Canada Youth Partnership designed to strengthen youth-led cooperation and contribute to more resilient, inclusive and participatory democracies on both sides of the Atlantic.

3. The proposed EU–Canada Youth Partnership

The model presented below was developed through a survey of youth organizations, a Youth Forum and working-group discussions with youth organizations. It reflects their ideas about what would make sustained EU–Canada cooperation useful and workable. The proposed EU–Canada Youth Partnership would connect European and Canadian youth organizations working to strengthen democracy, providing the continuity, relationships and resources needed to develop joint initiatives and bring youth expertise into EU–Canada policy dialogue.

At its centre would be a youth-led network supported by dedicated coordination and resources. Participating organizations would help set priorities and shape the substance of the Partnership's work, while a Secretariat would maintain connections, coordinate activities and support collaboration between annual meetings.

Joint Action Incubator

A dedicated small-grants mechanism would support partnerships involving at least one European and one Canadian organization to design and implement collaborative initiatives addressing shared democratic challenges.

The funding mechanism is important because sustained cooperation cannot depend solely on organizations contributing unpaid staff or volunteer time. Providing resources for joint work would allow organizations, particularly smaller and less-resourced groups, to participate meaningfully while giving partnerships an opportunity to produce concrete results.

Policy Dialogue and Joint Research

The Partnership would establish working groups around priority areas identified by participating organizations. These groups would meet throughout the year to compare experiences, undertake research and develop common positions, policy briefs and recommendations on shared democratic challenges.

Where relevant, this work would feed into EU–Canada policy discussions, consultations and other bilateral processes. An annual synthesis of emerging priorities and recommendations could provide policymakers with a regular source of analysis from youth.

Capacity Building and Peer Learning

The Partnership would support organizations to strengthen their own capacity while learning from counterparts across the Atlantic. Webinars, workshops and peer-learning activities could address areas such as fundraising, strategic communications, digital engagement, organizational sustainability, monitoring and evaluation, and democratic innovation.

Organizations could also exchange tools, approaches and lessons from their work and identify practices that could be adapted across European and Canadian contexts.

Project result: As a result of the EU–Canada Youth Forum, NATO Youth Canada connected with the European Youth Parliament and was subsequently invited to participate in a capacity-building training in Europe alongside other youth organizations.

Parliamentary and Institutional Exchanges

The Partnership would explore opportunities for deeper institutional exchange, including parliamentary fellowships that could allow young people to spend time within Canadian or European parliamentary institutions and civil society organizations.

These opportunities would strengthen understanding of democratic governance in different systems while building longer-term relationships between youth organizations and democratic institutions.

Annual EU–Canada Youth Forum

An annual Forum would bring participating organizations together in person to review progress, showcase joint work, strengthen relationships and establish priorities for the coming year. The Forum would alternate between an EU Member State and Canada, ideally alongside the EU–Canada Summit or other high-level dialogues. This would create opportunities for youth organizations to engage directly with policymakers and bring the Partnership's research, recommendations and joint initiatives into broader bilateral discussions.

Continuous Digital Collaboration

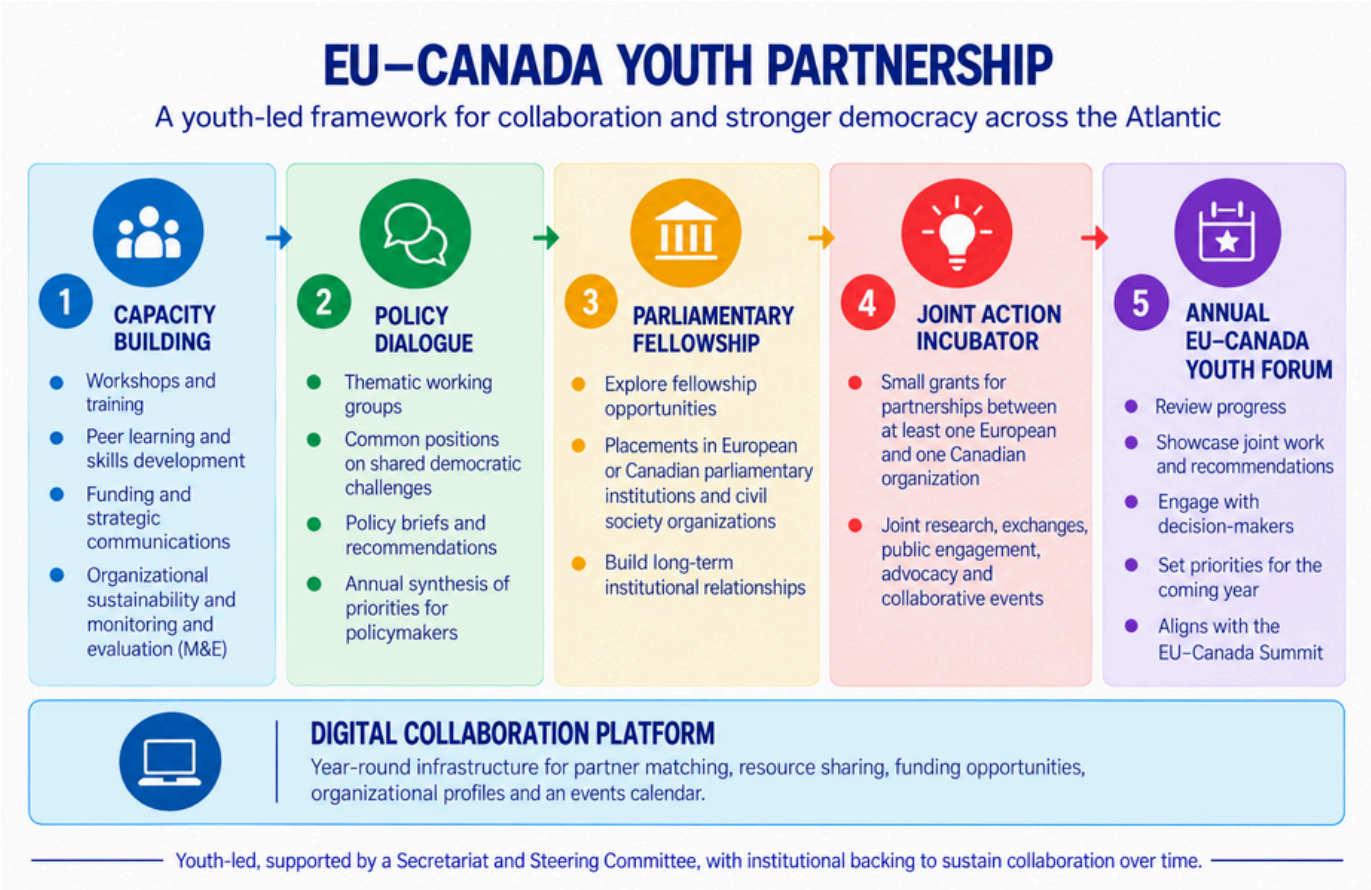
A shared digital platform would maintain collaboration where in-person meetings are not possible. It could include organizational profiles and contacts, a space for discussions, partner-matching tools, a resource library, funding opportunities, and an events calendar.

Governance and Institutional Support

The Partnership should remain youth-driven, with participating organizations setting priorities, shaping activities and leading substantive work. At the same time, sustained cooperation cannot rely on informal networking or the unpaid labour of youth but also requires institutional support. The Parliamentary Centre, working with a European partner, could serve as the Secretariat responsible for coordination, communications, working groups, grants administration and follow-up between annual Forums.

Strategic direction could be provided by a Steering Committee composed primarily of youth representatives of participating organizations, alongside representatives of supporting institutions and funders. The Partnership would also maintain close links with the Delegation of the European Union to Canada, the Government of Canada and other relevant European and Canadian institutions.

It would also require dedicated resources so organizations can participate meaningfully, especially those with limited staff, volunteer capacity, or funding.



4. An Agenda for EU–Canada Youth Cooperation

Overarching Agenda: Democratic resilience, fundamental rights, and inclusion

The central purpose of this cooperation agenda is to strengthen inclusive and resilient democracies by enabling young people to participate meaningfully in the decisions and institutions that shape their lives. This includes upholding democratic norms and fundamental rights and ensuring that our societies and governance systems are inclusive, representative and responsive.

The proposed Partnership will apply an intersectional rights and inclusion lens across its work, recognizing that barriers to participation are not experienced equally and that some young people remain underrepresented in public and policy spaces.

The areas of cooperation outlined below reflect the priorities identified by youth organizations throughout this initiative. They are areas where participants see a particular need for a stronger youth voice, and where cooperation between European and Canadian organizations could strengthen their ability to influence policy, learn from one another and contribute to more inclusive democratic decision-making.

a) Education

Young people do not have equal access to the knowledge, skills and opportunities needed to participate confidently in democratic life. Access to civic education varies considerably, as does exposure to democratic institutions, political processes and opportunities for international education. These gaps are particularly significant for young people outside formal education, in rural or remote communities, from minority-language communities, or with limited access to institutions and international opportunities.

Civic education is key for young people to understand how institutions and democratic processes work, critically assess political information, understand their rights, and develop the skills to engage effectively. Gaps in these opportunities can contribute to political disengagement and leave young people less equipped to influence decisions that affect them.

EU Member States and Canada have different education systems and models of civic participation, creating a useful basis for identifying promising practices and adapting them for different communities. Transatlantic exchanges can themselves also serve as a form of civic learning by exposing young people to different democratic systems and institutions.

What can be done together

- Expand transatlantic exchanges: Advocate for and expand opportunities for youth to study and visit institutions across Europe and Canada, including by opening Erasmus+ to Canadian participants.
- Compare and strengthen civic education: Exchange promising practices in formal and non-formal civic education, including political and media literacy, and develop youth-led recommendations for strengthening curricula.
- Develop and test shared resources: Co-create civic education toolkits and training activities for youth organizations, educators and youth workers.
- Reach young people with fewer opportunities to participate: Compare and test approaches for engaging rural and remote youth, minority-language communities, young people outside formal education and others with limited access to civic learning and democratic institutions.

Project result: The EU–Canada Youth Forum is already translating exchange into action. For example, after learning about European approaches to civic education through the Forum, Young Politicians of Canada developed a civic education initiative in British Columbia and Ontario and is now engaging policymakers on strengthening civics and political education in school curricula.

b) Economic opportunities, cost of living and housing affordability

Young people in Europe and Canada are facing rising living costs, housing unaffordability and labour-market uncertainty. Not only does economic insecurity delay independence, but it has direct implications for democracy by impacting young people's ability to participate in civic opportunities.

Importantly, these pressures are not experienced equally. In rural and remote communities, for example, limited employment opportunities, housing shortages, transportation barriers and reduced access to services can contribute to youth outmigration and longer-term demographic decline.

At the same time, the EU and Canada are deepening their economic relationship. This creates an opportunity to consider more deliberately how young people can benefit from, and contribute to, growing cooperation on trade, employment, skills, innovation and economic resilience.

What can be done together:

- Bring youth perspectives into EU–Canada economic cooperation: Create opportunities for youth organizations to contribute to relevant discussions, projects and consultations on trade, skills, employment, innovation and other areas of bilateral economic cooperation.
- Address the economic challenges facing rural youth: Compare approaches to employment, entrepreneurship, transportation, housing and service access in rural and remote communities, and develop youth-led recommendations for creating opportunities that allow young people to remain and build their futures in these communities.
- Make participation opportunities financially accessible: Compare how internships, exchanges, leadership programs and civic-participation initiatives address financial barriers. Jointly develop accessibility recommendations for governments and institutions on compensation, support and participation costs when designing youth engagement and international exchange opportunities.
- Develop joint youth-led economic policy proposals: Produce comparative research and policy recommendations on shared economic challenges and use them to support dialogue and joint advocacy with European and Canadian decision-makers.

c) Digital spaces, AI, and misinformation/disinformation

Digital spaces increasingly shape how young people access information, participate in public debate and engage with democratic institutions. At the same time, misinformation and disinformation, algorithmic amplification, online manipulation and harassment can undermine trust, deepen polarization and make it more difficult for young people to participate safely and confidently in democratic life. These threats can also disproportionately affect minority and diaspora communities and reinforce social division.

Young people are among those most immersed in digital spaces, and they are directly affected by decisions on platform governance and online safety. They will also live with the consequences of choices being made now about AI, as the technology rapidly reshapes work, information and public life.

Youth organizations in Europe and Canada are already working on these issues, but many lack the sustained resources needed to develop effective responses and work across borders. As the EU and Canada deepen cooperation in these areas, young people should have a meaningful role in shaping the policies that will define their future.

What can be done together:

- Bring youth perspectives into AI and digital policy: Compare European and Canadian approaches to AI governance, transparency, platform accountability and online safety, and develop joint youth-led recommendations.
- Track emerging information threats across borders: Share misinformation and disinformation trends, compare how narratives move across Europe and Canada.
- Compare responses to foreign interference and transnational repression: Exchange research and approaches for identifying and responding to foreign interference, disinformation and transnational repression, including how these threats affect diaspora communities and young people's ability to participate in democratic life.
- Strengthen youth organizations' capacity to respond: Share tools, research and community-based approaches, and support joint initiatives that help youth organizations protect democratic participation and build more resilient information environments.

d) Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation

Young people do not have equal access to the spaces where public decisions are made. Geography, financial resources, institutional networks, language, accessibility and awareness of opportunities can all shape who is able to participate. Smaller youth-led organizations can face similar barriers, particularly when participation depends on established relationships or financial capacity.

Access alone is also not enough. Young people are frequently invited to consultations or advisory processes without opportunities to contribute over time, understand how their input is used, or see whether it has influenced decisions. Participation that is tokenistic can deepen frustration and distrust in institutions. Creating meaningful and sustained opportunities for young people to engage in public life is therefore important not only for making policymaking more inclusive, but also for addressing political discontent and strengthening trust in democratic processes.

Stronger participation mechanisms should therefore address who gets access, how participation is designed, what influence participants have, and how institutions report back on the impact of their contributions. The EU and Canada provide useful contexts for comparing different models and identifying practices that make youth participation more accessible, representative and meaningful.

Growing EU–Canada cooperation also creates an opportunity to apply these principles directly by ensuring youth organizations can contribute expertise to bilateral initiatives.

What can be done together:

- Improve access to participation: Compare and test approaches to remove barriers to participation for rural and remote youth, minority-language communities, marginalized groups, and smaller youth-led organizations outside established institutional networks.
- Develop standards for meaningful participation: Produce practical youth-led recommendations on outreach, representative selection, accessibility, compensation, and the role young people should have in different types of decision-making processes.
- Compare participation mechanisms: Exchange lessons on youth councils, advisory bodies, consultations, youth parliaments and other models, with a focus on which mechanisms provide sustained access and influence.
- Apply these principles to EU–Canada cooperation: Identify bilateral initiatives where youth organizations have expertise, including on the Arctic, AI, and youth mobility, and create sustained opportunities for them to contribute.

5. The Way Forward: From Forum to Partnership

The Youth and the Future of Democracy initiative established a strong foundation for sustained EU–Canada youth cooperation. It brought together organizations working on shared challenges, created new relationships across the Atlantic, demonstrated clear interest in continued collaboration, and identified practical areas where working together could add value.

The priority now is to build on this momentum. Moving from an emerging network to sustained cooperation will require coordination, dedicated resources and opportunities for youth organizations to undertake meaningful work together. The proposed EU–Canada Youth Partnership provides a framework for maintaining these connections and ensuring that participating youth organizations continue to shape the Partnership's priorities and direction.

In his address to the European Parliament, Prime Minister Carney said, "Canada and Europe are each strong. Europe and Canada are stronger together." The relationships built through this initiative offer a practical opportunity to put that principle into action. Youth organizations on both sides of the Atlantic already bring knowledge, networks and approaches developed in their own communities. Connecting them creates the opportunity to learn from what works elsewhere, test ideas together, strengthen one another's work and build joint responses to challenges that increasingly cross borders.

Annex A: Methodological Note on Data Collection and Analysis

Drawing on the experiences of youth organizations, this project seeks to understand how youth perceive established democratic institutions and processes, how they experience formal avenues of political participation, and what barriers and opportunities shape their engagement, and what solutions young people propose to strengthen their voice in public life.
The study takes a comparative EU–Canada approach to identify shared challenges and open space for collaboration.

The objective is to:

1. Generate evidence-based policies to strengthen youth participation in democratic processes, public diplomacy initiatives, and multilateral engagement.
2. Create opportunities for a structured EU–Canada youth forum centred on democratic innovation

Mapping of Youth Organizations

The mapping exercise aimed to identify youth-led organizations in EU Member States and Canada that actively engage young people on issues that concern them and seek to influence policy.

These included organizations working on civic engagement, human rights, the economy, the environment, health, safety and security, and related areas. The objective of this phase was to establish a systematic overview of key youth organizations to inform survey outreach and provide a foundation for future initiatives.

The mapping was conducted using publicly available sources, existing networks of the Parliamentary Centre, EU Delegations, youth platforms, and civil society databases. In particular, the Parliamentary Centre is grateful to Young Diplomats of Canada for giving us access to their Youth Organizations Database (YOD), which maps over 400 Canadian youth-led/youth-serving organizations.
Organizations identified through this process were assessed against inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure consistency and relevance.

Desk Research

Primary data collection was complemented by desk research reviewing existing literature, policy frameworks, and legislative instruments relevant to youth engagement and democracy in the EU and Canada. This review identified: key institutional frameworks and best practices for youth engagement at the level of EU institutions, EU Member States, and Canada; relevant data and trends on youth and democratic participation; and existing youth-led policy recommendations and reform proposals. The findings informed the design of the survey, shaped the agenda of the forum, and contributed to the development of the statement paper and policy brief.

Inclusion criteria

Organizations were included if they met all of the following criteria:

- They were primarily youth-led or have a youth-led chapter, with youth defined as individuals aged 16 to 30.
- They had a primary mandate that involved advocacy, public policy, civic engagement, governance, human rights, social accountability, or related forms of public decision-making engagement.
- They were based in Canada or an EU Member State, with a primary mandate and programming focus on domestic issues within Canada or the European Union.
- They demonstrated evidence of ongoing activities, programs, or initiatives, indicating a meaningful level of reach or engagement.

An organization was considered active and relevant for inclusion if it had existed for at least one year and showed evidence of at least two of the following within the last 12 months:

- Recent programming, such as events, workshops, consultations, training sessions, or projects relevant to democracy, governance, or civic engagement.
- Public-facing outputs, such as reports, statements, policy submissions, toolkits, op-eds, or regular communications.
- Identifiable membership or participation, including evidence that the organization engages a defined group of young people through members, participants, networks, or chapters.
- Engagement with institutions or partners, including participation in consultations, parliamentary briefings, coalitions, or partnerships with public institutions or civil society actors.

The researchers used an inclusive approach to mapping, including snowball sampling to identify youth organizations that may be harder to reach, as well as targeted outreach to support the meaningful inclusion of under-represented youth organizations, including Indigenous, Black, and queer youth organizations. Attention was also given to representing a range of youth ages, Canadian regions, and EU Member States.

The mapping was compiled in a shared Google Sheets database with standardized fields to ensure consistency and support collaborative use between EU and partners.

Data Analysis

Survey responses were analyzed using a mixed-methods approach. Closed-ended questions were reviewed using descriptive analysis to identify overall trends, patterns, and differences across respondent groups, including comparisons between EU and Canada-based organizations where relevant. Open-ended responses were reviewed thematically, with recurring ideas, concerns, and recommendations grouped into common themes. The analysis prioritized findings that appeared consistently across responses, while also noting specific examples or perspectives that added important context. Given the size and targeted nature of the survey, the findings are not intended to be statistically representative, but rather to capture the experiences, priorities, and recommendations of participating youth-led organizations.

Surveys

A survey was developed and administered to youth organizations identified through the mapping exercise. Each participating organization was asked to submit one survey response. Organizations were given discretion to decide how to complete the survey internally.

The survey collected quantitative and qualitative data from youth experts and practitioners on

1. Perceptions of democratic institutions and processes.
2. Key issues young people want reflected in policy debates.
3. Current challenges and opportunities for engagement in democratic processes.
4. Recommendations to increase meaningful engagement.
5. Awareness of EU–Canada cooperation, counterpart youth organizations, and how collaboration could contribute to strengthening democracy.

The questions built on existing research by inviting organizations to reflect on available data and assess how it aligned with their experience. In addition to eliciting new proposals, the survey also asked respondents to assess existing youth-driven recommendations in order to identify which approaches were viewed as most relevant and feasible in practice.

The survey was administered online using the EU Survey tool to support broad geographic reach. It was designed to be accessible by using clear instructions and common language, offering multiple language options, and providing alternative participation options, such as interviews, where needed

Annex B: Participating Youth Organizations

We are grateful to the organizations listed below who contributed to the Youth and the Future of Democracy initiative through the survey, forum participation, or related engagement.

Organization	Description
Organization	Apathy is Boring is a national, non-partisan charitable organization committed to connecting, educating and activating youth in Canadian democracy. Working with thousands of youth yearly across the country, we support young people to become active citizens to strengthen and uphold our democracy: whether that's going to the polls, creating community projects around issues they care about or advocating at the institutional level. Our vision is a Canada where every young Canadian is an active and creative citizen, and youth are meaningfully engaged in all aspects of the democratic process. This is more than just voting. It is about supporting young people to take charge of the conditions that they live in.
Organization	Canadian Muslim Youth Alliance (CanadianMYA) is a youth-driven organization that brings together Muslim youth from across Canada under one united network. We believe in building spaces where youth can celebrate their identities, share their experiences, and lead meaningful change in their communities. The mission is to empower Muslim youth in Canada by creating opportunities for community-building, leadership development, mentorship, and collaboration, while promoting representation, inclusion, and cross-cultural understanding.
Organization	NATO Youth Canada is the official youth wing of the NATO Association of Canada, operating as part of the Youth Atlantic Treaty Association (YATA). We are a non-partisan organization dedicated to engaging young Canadians in transatlantic security dialogue, defence policy, and international relations. Our members include university students, graduate researchers, young professionals, and early-career academics from coast to coast. We believe that the next generation of Canadian leaders must be informed, engaged, and ready to contribute to the security and prosperity of the transatlantic community. Through policy briefs, events, conferences, and international exchanges, we provide platforms for young Canadians to develop expertise, build networks, and make their voices heard on the issues that define our times—from defence modernization and cyber security to climate-related security risks and democratic resilience.

Organization	**Description**
Global Shapers Community Ottawa Hub	The Global Shapers Community Ottawa Hub is a grassroots collective of over 30 young leaders aged 18 to 30, working across sectors to advance practical, community-driven change. Our members bring expertise from public service, business, civil society, and academia to projects that create local impact. Over the past decade, the Hub has led multidisciplinary initiatives across public health, civic engagement, sustainability, and community development. Recent projects include Breathe Equally Ottawa, focused on air-quality equity, and Shapers for Plastic Action, advancing plastic reduction and circularity. The Hub also leads nonpartisan civic engagement initiatives, including get-out-the-vote campaigns ahead of Canada's 2025 federal election and Ottawa's 2026 municipal election. From the Zero Waste Cookbook, newcomer integration platform, to period poverty campaigns, and the Youth Privacy Anonymization project, the Ottawa Hub convenes communities, builds partnerships, and empowers young leaders to shape the future of Canada's capital.
NATO Youth Canada	NATO Youth Canada is the official youth wing of the NATO Association of Canada, operating as part of the Youth Atlantic Treaty Association (YATA). We are a non-partisan organization dedicated to engaging young Canadians in transatlantic security dialogue, defence policy, and international relations. Our members include university students, graduate researchers, young professionals, and early-career academics from coast to coast. We believe that the next generation of Canadian leaders must be informed, engaged, and ready to contribute to the security and prosperity of the transatlantic community. Through policy briefs, events, conferences, and international exchanges, we provide platforms for young Canadians to develop expertise, build networks, and make their voices heard on the issues that define our times—from defence modernization and cyber security to climate-related security risks and democratic resilience.
New Brunswick Youth Council	The New Brunswick Youth Advisory Council, a project of Partners for Youth (PFY), is a Government-supported initiative amplifying youth voices on critical issues. Focused on informing public policy, the council addresses youth mental health and the Provincial Stepped Care Model. In the past year, the NBYC has defined its structure, hosted regular meetings, and conducted a province-wide youth survey. Providing feedback on Policy 713 and contributing insights to Bridge the Gap. The NBYC actively engages with the community through various platforms, creating awareness and inviting youth to join the movement for positive change.

Organization	Description
Vote 16 Canada	Vote16 Canada is a non-partisan, youth-led national collaboration bringing together young people and supporters from across the country. We advocate for extending voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds in federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal elections across Canada.
Young Diplomats of Canada (YDC)	Young Diplomats of Canada (YDC) is Canada's premier non-partisan, youth-led authority on diplomacy, international governance, and global public policy. Since 2007, YDC has established nearly two decades of credibility as the official, accredited bridge connecting Canada's emerging leaders aged 18 to 30 directly to the world's highest decision-making tables. Holding UN ECOSOC Consultative Status and serving as Canada's designated youth stakeholder within the G7 and G20 processes, YDC recruits, trains, and fields high-impact delegation cohorts to the UN, G7/G20, WTO, and World Bank/IMF Summits. Rooted in the belief that young leaders are essential architects of global stability and innovation, YDC equips the next generation with the strategic expertise and diplomatic access needed to shape Canada's place in the world.
Young Politicians of Canada	The Young Politicians of Canada is one of Canada's leading youth-run, non-partisan, not-for-profit organizations dedicated to educating, empowering, and engaging the next generation of civic and political leaders. With thousands of members across Canada across six provincial chapters and dozens of local divisions, YPC provides meaningful opportunities for youth to shape the future of Canada. Founded in 2023 on the belief that every young Canadian deserves a voice in the decisions that affect their future, YPC creates opportunities for Canadians aged 14 to 24 to gain hands-on experience in public policy, leadership, advocacy, and democratic participation. Whether through educational programs, policy initiatives, or local engagement, we help young people develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to become active citizens and community leaders.
Youth Apprenticeship Council	The Youth Apprenticeship Council brings together 10 young apprenticeship leaders from across Canada -from Yukon to Newfoundland and Labrador – to help shape the future of apprenticeship in Canada. Council members are current apprentices representing a range of trades, regions, and lived experiences. Their perspectives ensure that the realities facing young trades professionals today help inform national conversations on apprenticeship.
Youth 4 Youth Québec	Y4Y Québec is a non-profit organization committed to addressing the issues facing English-speaking youth (ages 16-30) across Québec. All Y4Y projects and initiatives prioritize the for-youth, by-youth approach to community development and cultural vitality. In addition to many youth-focused programs and initiatives, Y4Y takes pride in publishing multiple policy documents concerning the situation of English-speaking youth throughout the province, holding outreach events that strengthen community at the local level, bringing information to important stakeholders in government,

Organization	Description
European Union of Jewish Students	The European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS) is the umbrella organisation representing over 160 000 Jewish students across 36 countries in Europe. Founded in 1978 by young leaders who believed in a future for Jewish life in a united Europe, EUJS was born in the spirit of empowerment, solidarity, and resilience. From its beginnings in the aftermath of the Shoah to its evolution into a vital voice in European civil society, EUJS provides young Jews with a platform to connect, express their identity, and advocate for their rights. As an independent, pluralistic, and democratic student-led organisation, EUJS has become a powerful network fostering leadership, unity, and action across borders.
European Youth Parliament	Since 1987, the European Youth Parliament has inspired and empowered hundreds of thousands of young people to be open-minded, tolerant and active citizens. Thousands of young people are actively involved as volunteers all over Europe, making the European Youth Parliament (EYP) a genuinely youth-driven programme – run by young people, for young people.
European Youth Press	European Youth Press (EYP) is a network of youth media organisations in Europe. It works to build a society where empowered young media makers are actively participating and contributing to the public sphere by creating fair, independent and responsible media, fostering the development of democracy, international development and a sustainable future. With 34 member organisations and several Committees, the EYP reaches more than 60,000 young journalists across Europe, forming a solid volunteer and professional infrastructure. It is a democratic, non-profit institution, founded and controlled by young media makers, with hundreds of enthusiastic, dedicated, active organisers, trainers, volunteers and a handful of paid project workers, all between 20 and 30 years of age. The organisation serves the national structures through the development and coordination of projects on European level.
Latvijas Jaunatnes padome / National Youth Council of Latvia	LJP is an umbrella organisation for youth organisations and organisations that work with young people and has 33 years of experience on youth participation. Our main work is to highlight youth voice in the policy making process in local, national and international policy.

Organization	Description
Mreža mladih Hrvatske / Croatian Youth Network	The Croatian Youth Network (CYN) is a national platform connecting youth organizations from every corner of Croatia, because when we stand together, we create real change. CYN is a democratic, inclusive alliance of organizations that have come together voluntarily to champion the rights, interests, and needs of young people. We're diverse by design, bringing together groups with different backgrounds, structures, and priorities, and we respect every member's independence and identity. Everything we do is grounded in equality, solidarity, tolerance, and mutual respect. Young people deserve more than a seat at the table, they deserve to help build it. CYN is recognized nationally and internationally as a trusted advocate for democratic participation, transparency, and openness. Through advocacy, partnerships, and collaboration, we make sure young people aren't just consulted, they're genuinely shaping the decisions that affect their lives. Every decision is made transparently and collectively, no top-down here. We support grassroots youth organizations and connect them to a national level, while building partnerships with civil society, institutions, and public authorities that open real doors for young people. From human rights and minority rights to healthy lifestyles and active citizenship, we take a rights-first approach to everything. At its core, CYN is a space for connection, empowerment, and shared purpose, a network that celebrates young people and everyone working alongside them to build a more just, inclusive, and forward-looking Croatia.
Nationale Jeugdraad / The Dutch National Youth Council	The Dutch National Youth Council (DNYC) is an umbrella organisation that represents 43 member organisations, ranging from an organisation for rural youth, to student organisations, to organisations for youth and sexuality. The DNYC strives to empower youth from all over the Netherlands. It is constituted on the firm belief that everyone has something to offer and can use their strengths to help themselves and others. As a national youth organisation the DNYC represents other youth organisations in the Netherlands and links them to relevant actors in the field. Furthermore it offers multiple projects (such as regional and national debates, guest lectures, and funding of small neighbourhood initiatives) to empower all Dutch youth, and offers projects to start discussions on difficult subjects such as mental health or xenophobia. Furthermore it actively advocates the importance of the voice of youth to policymakers and strives to include young people in the early beginnings of policy making.
Nuorisoala / The Finnish National Youth Council and Youth Sector	The Finnish National Youth Council and Youth Sector (FYCS) is an umbrella organisation for youth work professionals and youth sector NGOs. We advocate for sufficient resources to the youth sector and for political decisions that improve the everyday lives of young people. We contribute to the public debate and decision making processes, provide our members with training, networking events and other services, and gather information about young people and their well-being. We also work on democracy education through concepts such as Youth Elections, the Youth Election Compass, and the Week of Politics. Since our message is relevant outside of Finland too, we run a national youth delegate program and coordinate Finland’s implementation of the European Youth Dialogue through our international committee. We are a proud member of the European Youth Forum (YFJ).

Organization	Description
Polska Rada Organizacji Młodzieżowych / Polish National Youth Council	The Polish Council of Youth Organizations (established in 2011) is a forum for cooperation of Polish non-governmental youth organizations. The aim of PROM is to support the participation of young people in public life, to inform the public about the condition of youth policy in Poland and to represent the member organizations. However, the most important goal is to undertake actions in favour of the creation of a coherent and modern youth policy in Poland. PROM is created by over a quarter of million of young people in member organizations, which are associations and foundations operating on national, regional and local level. PROM also includes a structure of Permanent Team for Youth Councils which is the only form of association of local youth councils established as advisory bodies within the municipalities. This is a space for discussion, exchange of experiences and the possibility for their involvement in co-creation of youth policy at the national level. From the beginning of its existence, PROM is responsible for the implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue which is a tool for communication between young people and the decision-makers at the European level. PROM is the official representative of Polish youth at EU Youth Conferences and a member of the European Youth Forum.
Rural Youth Europe	Rural Youth Europe (RYE) is a European Non-Governmental Organisation for rural youth. Established in 1957, it functions as an umbrella for youth organisations working to promote and activate young people in rural areas. It provides international training possibilities and works as an intermediary between national organisations, youth organisations and public institutions on a European level. Rural Youth Europe is a member-led organisation: democratically constituted and led by young people for young people.
Young European Federalists (JEF Europe)	JEF Europe (Young European Federalists) is a trans-partisan youth organisation advocating for a democratic, federal and united Europe. Founded in 1972, it brings together more than 10,000 young people in more than 36 countries. JEF Europe works to empower young people to actively participate in European democracy. Through political campaigns, such as "Democracy under Pressure", "Don't Touch My Schengen" and "EU is Loading", we bring young people into European political debates. We work in the context of the Young World Federalists and are active beyond the borders of Europe, e.g. through our "Federalist Peace Forum" where we work with young Israelis and Palestinians. As European federalists, we advocate for a more democratic and accountable EU that is capable to address global challenges.