

Motion

# The Protection of Youth Freedom of Expression and Solidarity with Enes

signed by: Czech Council of Children and Youth  
(CRDM)

co-signed by: Belarusian National Youth Council  
(RADA), Flemish Youth Council (VJR), German National  
Committee for International Youth Work (DNK),  
National Youth Council of Turkey (GoFor), Slovak  
Youth Council (RMS), Swiss National Youth Council  
(SAJV/CSAJ)

## Introduction

In **February 2026**, the main trial of **Enes Hocaogullari** — a Youth Delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe — will take place, following politically motivated charges related to his public statements delivered within an official Council of Europe setting. This impending judicial process underscores the **urgent nature of this motion** and the necessity for **immediate solidarity and advocacy** to protect young people exercising their democratic rights.

Freedom of expression lies at the heart of democratic societies. It is a right protected under **Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights**<sup>1</sup> and reaffirmed by the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (Council of Europe, 2003)<sup>2</sup> and the **Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2** on the participation of children and young people under 18 years of age.<sup>3</sup> These instruments underline that meaningful youth participation must always be exercised in a safe and enabling environment.

The **European Youth Forum** therefore expresses its deep concern over the ongoing criminal prosecution of **Enes Hocaogullari**, a Youth Delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, who was detained and charged following his public intervention during the 48th Session of the Congress. His case sends a worrying signal to young people across Europe who engage in civic life and expect protection when exercising their rights within democratic institutions.

## Context and background

**Enes Hocaogullari**, a young civic and LGBTI+ activist, was selected as a **Youth Delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe** on **14 February 2025**.<sup>4</sup> During the **48th Session of the Congress** in March 2025, he delivered four oral statements addressing local and regional democracy in Georgia, combating homelessness, and the unjust dismissal of mayors in Türkiye. His remarks, grounded in civic engagement and transparency, reflected the Council of Europe's values of democracy and accountability.

Soon after his participation, Enes became the target of a **deliberate defamation campaign** by pro-government media and online actors in Türkiye. His remarks were distorted and misrepresented as “espionage,” fuelling a wider disinformation effort against youth civil society and LGBTI+ organisations.<sup>4</sup>

Upon his return to Ankara on **5 August 2025**, Enes was detained at the airport and later charged under several articles of the Turkish Penal Code, including “inciting hatred and hostility,” “spreading misleading information,” and “insulting the Turkish nation.”<sup>4</sup> These charges have been widely condemned by civil-society organisations as politically motivated and aimed at silencing a young activist committed to democratic values. After several weeks in pre-trial detention, Enes was released, but the judicial proceedings continue, with the main trial due to take place in February 2026.<sup>4</sup>

**The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe** has likewise acknowledged his case as part of its **Resolution on “Youth movements for democracy”**, recognising **Enes Hocaogullari's** detention as an example of **civic courage under pressure** and urging Turkish authorities to end politically motivated arrests of young activists.<sup>5</sup>

The **European Youth Forum** and the **National Youth Council of Türkiye (GoFor)** have publicly condemned the case and called for Enes' full acquittal, emphasising that his speech is protected under **Article 10 ECHR**.<sup>6</sup>

## Broader standards and implications

At the European level, the **Council of Europe** has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting youth civil society through the **Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)6** on protecting youth civil society and supporting young people's participation in democratic processes,<sup>7</sup> and the **Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11** on strengthening the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe.<sup>8</sup> Both urge member states to guarantee that no person faces reprisals for exercising civic participation or cooperating with Council of Europe mechanisms.

The **Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of human-rights defenders and promotion of their activities (2008)** further calls upon all member states to ensure that individuals engaging with Council of Europe bodies are free from intimidation or retaliation.<sup>9</sup>

At the global level, the **UN Human Rights Council Resolution 50/12 (2022)** on Youth and Human Rights highlights the duty of states to create enabling conditions for youth expression and participation.<sup>10</sup> The UN Secretary-General's Guidance Note on the Protection and Promotion of Civic Space (2023)<sup>11</sup> and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency Report on Civic Space (2024)<sup>12</sup> both document increasing restrictions on youth organisations and activists in Europe.

Criminal proceedings against a youth delegate acting within an official Council of Europe forum contradict these standards and risk discouraging other young representatives from speaking openly about public issues.

## Our concern

The **European Youth Forum** has repeatedly warned of shrinking civic space, including in its **Resolution on Combating Shrinking Space with Expanding Opportunities for Youth Organisations (COMEM II 2019)**.<sup>13</sup> Enes's case shows that freedom of expression for young representatives cannot be taken for granted.

This motion is based on verified information and the explicit consent of **Enes Hoccoğulları**, who encouraged his peers to express solidarity on his behalf. His situation mirrors a wider global trend: according to the **UN Secretary-General's Report on Youth, Peace and Security (2024)**, over **40% of young human rights defenders worldwide** have faced intimidation or legal harassment related to their activism.<sup>14</sup> The **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** has likewise warned that criminalising peaceful expression has "long-term chilling effects on civic participation, especially among youth."<sup>15</sup>

**Therefore, we, the members of the European Youth Forum:**

- **Express** our full solidarity with **Enes Hoccoğulları**, acknowledging his courage and reaffirming that no young person should ever face prosecution for exercising their right to freedom of expression.
- **Call on the Turkish authorities to** release and drop all charges against all young people who have been arbitrarily charged, imprisoned and faced legal intimidation, including Enes Hoccoğulları. We call upon them to act in line with the recommendations of the European Commission and the European Parliament in relation to Türkiye, as well as the values and commitments embodied by the Council of Europe, of which Türkiye is a member.
- **Commit ourselves**, as the European Youth Forum and its member organisations, to pursue continuous advocacy and public support for Enes and all young people facing repression — through awareness-raising, political advocacy, and direct solidarity actions.
- **Mandate** the European Youth Forum to ensure that Enes's case and similar violations remain visible in European and international youth forums.
- **Encourage** all member organisations to share verified information, stand in solidarity, and use their own advocacy channels to support young activists under threat.
- **Reaffirm** that this commitment goes beyond the individual case, representing a collective pledge to defend the civic space of young people and protect their role in democracy now and in the future.

## References

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12. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Civic Space Report 2024: Protecting Participation and Democracy in Europe, Vienna 2024.
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15. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Annual Report on Civic Space Trends, Geneva 2024.





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