

# Call for Proposals

## Digital Advocacy Grants - Youth Democracy Cohort

11 March 2025

Project: Digitalise Youth

Countries: Senegal, Benin, Guinea, Mauritania, Togo, Cameroon,  
Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad

## 1. Background information

The inclusion of Youth in politics is more than an issue of representation. Informed, capable and engaged young people can develop innovative solutions to address the modern challenges that democracies face. However, advancing the participation of young people demands that governments and civil society work together.

The [Youth Democracy Cohort \(YDC\)](#) is a multi-stakeholder platform, composed of 9 co-leading organisations and over [350 member organisations worldwide](#), mostly youth civil society organisations. The YDC seeks to enhance the involvement of youth in democratic processes, it is a space to connect, learn and advocate for greater youth political rights. Civil society organisations, youth organisations and government institutions working at the intersection of youth engagement and democracy support are eligible to join the YDC.

The YDC supports member organisations in their advocacy efforts through advocacy grants.

A first call for proposals was launched in 2023, to disseminate, advocate and monitor the [Menu of Possible Commitments](#), a set of recommendations developed through a global consultation with democracy support organisations and youth representatives, providing governments with concrete steps to strengthen youth civic and political participation. [9 youth organisations were supported](#), in the framework of the [WYDE Civic Engagement](#) project, as part of the European Union [WYDE initiative](#).

A second call for proposals is launched in 2025 to promote an open digital space allowing youth to advocate for their rights, by engaging with national governments in multi-stakeholder dialogues. 7 organisations will be supported, in the framework of the [Digitalise Youth](#) project, as part of the Team Europe [Digital Democracy Initiative](#).

The Digitalise Youth Project aims to address the shrinking civic space and rampant disinformation in the Sahel and neighbouring regions by empowering local youth activists and civil society organisations. Launched in January 2025, it focuses on enhancing digital skills, promoting civic tech solutions, and raising awareness about online political engagement. By connecting human rights defenders and the tech community, the project equips young activists and media organisations with the knowledge and tools to navigate the digital ecosystem, protect themselves from digital threats, and fight against disinformation. In addition to its capacity-building work, Digitalise Youth's advocacy efforts seek to promote digital rights at local, regional, and international levels.

## 2. Objectives of the call for proposal

The objective of the YDC advocacy subgrants is to **promote an open digital space allowing youth to advocate for their rights, by engaging with national governments in multi-stakeholder dialogues.** Local organisations are encouraged to propose their own working method and advocacy strategies, specially adapted to their local context. However, the action should focus on promoting youth rights in the digital sphere, influencing regulation of digital spaces, and protecting digital platforms as a space for human rights advocates.

A key focus of these advocacy efforts will be to ensure that digital spaces are safe, inclusive, and accessible for young people to navigate and claim their rights, recognising their fundamental role in civic engagement and democratic participation. The grants will seek to achieve policy reforms or institutional changes at the local or national levels in their respective countries. The advocacy points mentioned below will frame their activities.

## 3. Modality of the support

The amount of the grant is set at 25,000€, for a 9 months project to be implemented between June 2025 and March 2026.

### Financial support

- The organisation recipient will receive financial support under the format of a sub-grant managed by the [European Partnership for Democracy](#). These funds will allow them to cover costs related to the activities, human resources and project office costs. The recipient of the grant will sign a subgrant contract with EPD.

### Technical support

- For greater accessibility to this funding, the level of project design and financial management can be reinforced after being selected as a grant recipient. The organisation will also receive capacity building regarding financial and narrative reporting to facilitate compliance with donor standards.
- During the project, training on communication, visibility and data protection as well as evaluation methodologies (Outcomes Harvesting) will strengthen the organisation's capacity to extract lessons learned and to communicate about the impact of their project. The grant will also enable peer-to-peer learning and networking, to exchange between selected organisations and participate in the YDC activities.
- If needed, EPD can support structural organisational development or provide thematic expertise on democracy support, advocacy and youth participation in decision making.

## 4. Eligibility criteria

### 4.1 Eligible beneficiaries

Organisations should comply with the following criteria:

- Be a registered legal entity;
- Be registered in one of the following countries: Senegal, Benin, Guinea, Mauritania, Togo, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad
- Not be subject to any of the exclusion criteria detailed in Annex 1 of the Application Form

Organisations with limited access to funding and little experience working with larger donors are strongly encouraged to apply.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to [join the Youth Democracy Cohort \(YDC\)](#) and apply to this call as YDC members.

### 4.2 Eligible activities

The activities can take different shapes, but must involve engagement with policy making actors or decision makers, at the national level. Applications with a clear logic of intervention will be favoured, those which demonstrate a clear plan to achieve concrete objectives that are directly linked to the problem identified. We recommend avoiding repetition, unnecessarily entangling different elements and setting unrealistic objectives.

The advocacy project must contribute to promoting an open digital space and the defense of human rights online by strengthening policies, regulations and practices that:

- Protects an inclusive, open and safe digital space that human rights and democracy activists can use for their advocacy work
- Ensures accessibility and open data to uphold the right to access information online for transparency and democratic governance
- Counters disinformation campaigns and protects digital activists from repression, surveillance, censorship, cyber-attacks, and internet shutdowns
- Welcomes digital innovation from civil society to expand public participation
- Promotes the responsible and transparent use of AI and big data to enhance civic engagement, protect human rights and democratic processes, while addressing societal challenges.

As much as possible, the organisations should identify :

- Dialogue platforms between civil society and national authorities that will serve as a framework for their advocacy.
- Advocacy targets inside national institutions (technical digital bodies or general human rights bodies).
- Key civil society actors that can give them access to key stakeholders.

The following types of activities are ineligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions supporting political parties or candidates in elections;
- retroactive financing for projects already in implementation or completed;
- projects for the exclusive benefit of individuals or restricted groups of individuals.
- environmentally harmful projects will also not be financed.

#### 4.3 Eligible costs

Eligible types of costs include: Staff costs and expert fees; Travel and subsistence costs; Costs of consumables and equipment; Costs of service & supply contracts; office rent.

Ineligible costs include: Debts and service charges; Provisions for losses, debts or potential future liabilities; Purchases of land or buildings; Currency exchange losses.

### **5. Application and selection process**

Find below an indicative timeline of the application and selection process from the publication of the guidelines to the start of implementation.

Publication of guidelines	10-12 March 2025
Information session	Wednesday 26th March at 11 am (WAT/CET)
Application deadline	Friday 11th April 2025
Notification to the shortlisted applicants	Wednesday 30 April 2025
Negotiation, finalisation & award	May 2025
Indicative implementation period	June 2025 - March 2026

### 5.1 Draft application submission

The application period is open immediately. The draft submission should be sent before **Friday, 11 April 2025, 23h59 (WAT/CET)**.

The full application package, available online on the [Youth Democracy Cohort](#) website is composed of:

- The application form document, which contains the mandate (Annex 1) and the statement on exclusion criteria (Annex 2);
- The budget document (Annex 3).

The **application form filled and signed, the 3 annexes and the organisation registration certificate** should be sent to the following address: [info@youthdemocracycohort.com](mailto:info@youthdemocracycohort.com), with the email subject "YDC Advocacy Grant 2025". Incomplete applications will not be considered.

### 5.2 Information session

Two online information sessions will be organised:

- in French, on Wednesday 26th March at 11h (CET/WAT), with the link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86349676207?pwd=xnND5ngQTjfyNKQ7KYEsnPbIZXpDIF.1>
- in English, on Thursday 27th March at 11h (CET/WAT), with the link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88290394222?pwd=Lz5BCFofKvFYmdhjbPKqT4jaKixhUW.1>

These sessions will allow interested organisations to get details and to ask questions for clarification.

### 5.3 Administrative compliance

All applications will undergo an administrative check that establishes whether the information required by the online application form has been provided. Applications will be assessed through the following administrative compliance criteria:

- All application documents have been received
- The organisation should provide a registration certificate
- The organisation should be a non-profit organisation based in one of the implementation countries of the project
- The organisation must be able to sign a grant agreement with EPD
- The organisation must not have received a previous grant in the frame of the Digitalise Youth project
- The organisation should not be under one of the excluding criteria mentioned in Annex 2 of the application template.

### 5.4 Screening

All organisations will undergo a due diligence check that verifies the applicant organisation's legal status and eligibility to ensure compliance with basic legal and ethical standards. The reputation of the organisation will be scrutinised ( fraud case, conflict of interest, corruption, litigation)The due diligence will also ensure the organisation is not under EU sanctions.

### 5.5 Technical Evaluation

All applications received before Friday, 11 April 2025, 23h59 will undergo an evaluation against a set of evaluation criteria of the call. The evaluation will be done by an Evaluation Committee.

The evaluation committee will assess the quality of the proposal regarding the following criteria :

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<b>Max points</b>
Relevance of the project as per the objective of this call	25
Identification of concrete advocacy objective	15
Identification of key institutional advocacy targets	15
Identification of key civil society partners for synergies	15
Sustainability of the impact of the project	5
Gender mainstreaming and inclusion	5
Cost-effectiveness	5
Perceived impact of the project	15

Proposals with the highest scores will be awarded. EPD aims to award 7 proposals but retains the right to award more or less depending on the quality of the projects proposed.

### 5.6 Negotiation, due diligence, finalisation and award

Based on the shortlisted draft application, strengths and weaknesses of the project will be analysed by EPD and shortlisted organisations will be mentored through concept definition, narrative redaction and budget building depending on the needs of each organisation.

Additional comments and requests will be sent. A number of additional documents might be asked from applicants. EPD will request the applicant to complete an Organisational Structural Capacity assessment questionnaire in order to identify potential risks of the grant and support needed by EPD.

Once all comments have been addressed and additional information and documents have been provided, a grant contract will be signed between the applicants and EPD.