



Strategic priorities of
the European Youth Forum
2007-2012

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Introduction

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) is a pan-European platform of youth organisations working in the fields of youth policy and youth work development. The YFJ focuses its work on European youth policy matters, whilst through engagement on the global level it is enhancing capacities of its members and promote global interdependence. In its daily work the The YFJ represents the views and opinions of young people in all relevant policy areas and promotes the cross-sectoral nature of youth policy towards a variety of institutional actors. The principles of equality and sustainable development are mainstreamed in the work of the YFJ.

The European Youth Forum bases its work on the following values:

- Participation;
- The empowerment of young people;
- Equality, gender equality and equal opportunities;
- Inclusiveness;
- Intercultural understanding;
- Democracy;
- Respect for human rights;
- Solidarity with all young people;
- Global responsibility;
- Diversity and mutual respect;
- Peace.

Vision of the European Youth Forum

Be the voice of young people in Europe, where young people are considered as equal citizens, and are supported and encouraged to achieve their fullest potential as citizens of the World.

Mission of the European Youth Forum

The European Youth Forum is a platform of youth organisations, which represents and advocates for the needs and interests of all young people in Europe, through their positive and active participation.

PRIORITY WORK AREAS

The European Youth Forum will, over the period 2007-2012, pursue its work with a focus on four priority areas of action:

- **Education**
- **Participation and Youth Policy Mainstreaming**
- **Youth Work Development**
- **Human Rights and Social Cohesion**

EDUCATION

Aim:

- 1. Non-Formal Education (NFE) will be valued as a dynamic and inclusive educational method**

Objectives:

- 1.1. The inclusion of NFE in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the support of Member Organisations in their efforts to include NFE in national qualifications framework
- 1.2. The recognition of Youth NGOs as key stakeholders and main providers of NFE
- 1.3. The development of quality guidelines in the provision of NFE
- 1.4. The widespread recognition of the value of NFE in promoting active youth citizenship
- 1.5. The enhancement of knowledge regarding the impact of NFE for the individual and society

Aim:

- 2. Equal access to quality, Life Long Learning (LLL) opportunities**

Objectives:

- 2.1. Ensure the provision of quality NFE as an integral part of LLL
- 2.2. Be a key stakeholder in the recognition of the real competencies and qualifications of the young person
- 2.3. Contribute to the elimination of all barriers limiting the educational opportunities, as well as the discrimination, within the formal learning structures
- 2.4. Encourage greater support for marginalised groups of young people
- 2.5. Ensure adequate provision of LLL opportunities as a method of combating social exclusion and to assist in dealing with precarious work and unemployment

Aim:

3. Youth mobility and exchanges as an integral step for developing intercultural awareness and understanding

Objectives:

- 3.1. The widespread use of global education to foster the understanding of global interdependence and to contribute to a culture of peace
- 3.2. Provide spaces for intercultural and inter-faith dialogue, and learning through interaction
- 3.3. Promote learning through engagement in mobility and exchange programmes
- 3.4. Promote mobility in education as a learning method and tool for developing better understanding, cultural interaction and open minded society

Aim:

4. A holistic approach to education in Europe

Objectives:

- 4.1. The opening up of the formal education system to other learning providers such as YNGOs and to NFE methodologies
- 4.2. Advocate for the integration of education to sustainable development into formal education at all levels

YOUTH WORK DEVELOPMENT

Aim:

1. The continuous development of civil society, in particular of Youth NGOs

Objectives:

- 1.1. Facilitate the creation of peer support networks
- 1.2. The active promotion of democratic youth initiatives and structures
- 1.3. Encourage recognition of the value and role of YNGOs
- 1.4. Increased solidarity among YNGOs and mutual support for their development
- 1.5. The integration of a strong youth dimension in EU Neighbourhood policies
- 1.6. Promote systems of good governance that involve young people

Aim:

2. Membership development of the European Youth Forum

Objectives:

- 2.1. Strengthen the Member Organisations (MOs) and the structure of the YFJ

- 2.2. Strengthen MOs through the provision of training and spaces for exchange of knowledge and good practice
- 2.3. Provide effective tools for communication and information sharing
- 2.4. Increase cross-pillar and cross-sectoral cooperation

Aim:

3. Youth NGOs to become even more representative of the needs of young people

Objectives:

- 3.1. Advocate for appropriate financial and political support tools that provide opportunities for youth organisations to reach and engage more young people
- 3.2. Promote the development of open, inclusive, membership-based, independent, democratic, representative and accountable Youth NGOs
- 3.3. Implement mechanisms for more diverse representation within and greater accessibility to the YFJ by all young people in Europe

Aim:

4. Greater means for the sustainability of youth organisations and youth councils

Objectives:

- 4.1. Work towards achieving clear and effective legal structures which facilitate youth organisations to function at all levels
- 4.2. Fair multi-annual funding
- 4.3. Provide tailored organisational support to MOs
- 4.4. Provide support and advocate for greater resources to ensure the full independence of young NGO's to counter-act external interference in their autonomy and work
- 4.5. Support the continuous partnership of YNGOs with governments, institutions and other stakeholders in the youth field
- 4.6. Advocate for political and financial commitments from governmental and intergovernmental authorities at all levels to YNGOs

Aim:

5. The consolidation of Youth NGOs, especially in South East Europe, Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

Objectives:

- 5.1. Contribute to the creation of National Youth Councils (NYCs) in all member states of the Council of Europe (CoE)
- 5.2. Promote the development and recognition of youth work in Central Europe (CE), Eastern Europe (EEC) and South East Europe (SEE)

- 5.3. Facilitate networking and joint actions in response to the common needs of young people in South East Europe, Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus
- 5.4. Lobby for support mechanisms responding to the specific needs of young people in South East Europe, Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

Aim:

6. Strong regional and global youth co-ordination structures, initiatives and partnerships as fundamental for global co-operation

Objectives:

- 6.1. Promote greater democracy, human rights, solidarity and global cooperation
- 6.2. Contribute to strengthening the role, institutional recognition and the development of democratic structures within other regional platforms, through the Global Co-operation Co-ordination Committee (GCCC) and International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO)
- 6.3. Participate in partnerships for the full realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth
- 6.4. Sustain and facilitate political co-operation processes at the regional and sub-regional levels with the involvement of relevant actors and stakeholders at the civil society and institutional levels

Aim:

7. To facilitate greater youth mobility

Objectives:

- 7.1. An end to visa requirements for young people participating in youth activities within CoE member states
- 7.2. The development of a globally recognised visa for young people participating in all mobility exercises in Europe, such as youth exchange programmes, internships, seminars, trainings and conferences
- 7.3. Recognition of the benefits of youth mobility and of periods spent abroad in the wider European area, with regards to personal development, civil society development and educational development
- 7.4. Support the development of quality mobility programmes for all groups of young people

Aim:

8. To support youth organisations to empower and address the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged young people

Objectives:

- 8.1. Development and consolidation of tools to assist MOs in effectively increasing outreach work
- 8.2. Encourage the activities of organisations representing marginalised and disadvantaged youth

PARTICIPATION AND YOUTH POLICY MAINSTREAMING

Aim:

1. To promote cross-sectoral youth policy

Objectives:

- 1.1. Strive for a cross-sectoral, cross-institutional and multi level approach to youth policy
- 1.2. The continuous development, monitoring and evaluation of youth policy in Europe
- 1.3. Develop and enhance partnerships with other civil society actors
- 1.4. Provide policy responses to the needs of youth, including children and teenagers, which lead to their greater autonomy

Aim:

2. To promote participation and active citizenship

Objectives:

- 2.1. Promote and advocate for 'a culture of youth participation' in Europe
- 2.2. Ensure the availability of and access to Youth Information enabling greater youth participation
- 2.3. Work with relevant partners for the realisation of the active participation of young people
- 2.4. Advocate for greater youth participation in formal decision-making
- 2.5. Advocate for co-management structures
- 2.6. Develop lobby strategies and co-ordinate actions of MO's for lowering of the electoral age to 16

Aim:

3. To be the leading voice of young people in debates on the Future of Europe

Objectives:

- 3.1. Communicate the Future of Europe debate to young people
- 3.2. Facilitate debate on European integration among young people
- 3.3. Promote a Europe without dividing lines and with equal opportunities for all young people

Aim:

4. Promote volunteering

Objectives:

- 4.1. The adoption and implementation of policies and measures to support, promote and facilitate volunteering by young people as part of Life Long Learning
- 4.2. Advocate for the recognition and valuing of the benefits of volunteering, both to the individual and to society, as well as of the skills, competences and attitudes gained through volunteering

HUMAN RIGHTS

Aim:

1. To promote greater equality and tackle discrimination

Objectives:

- 1.1. To promote the development of diversity plans by public authorities and public administrations
- 1.2. Develop YFJ responses to address multiple-discrimination
- 1.3. Advocate for more gender sensitive youth policies aiming at equal opportunities and to support MO's in their work developing programmes and activities that are more gender sensitive
- 1.4. A Europe valuing the abilities of the individual and celebrating diversity
- 1.5. To increase participation of marginalised and disadvantaged young people in EU programmes

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Aim:

1. More and better employment for young people

Objectives:

- 1.1. An increase in employment opportunities and decent working conditions for all
- 1.2. Advocate for more favourable conditions for entrepreneurship and self-employment
- 1.3. Guide the emergence of a climate where the competences of young people are recognised and valued
- 1.4. Ensure that Youth NGOs are recognised as partners at a local and national level and the YFJ is recognised at a European level
- 1.5. Strengthen the role of the social partners in the collective bargaining process

Aim:

2. To increase the health, safety and well being of young people

Objectives:

- 2.1. To promote healthy lifestyles through non-formal education and within policies affecting the lives of young people (i.e. drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse, sexual health, mental illness, HIV/AIDS)
- 2.2. Advocate for a better work/life balance and the eradication of poverty as key factors in improved mental and physical health
- 2.3. Advocate for the inclusion of young people in the determination and implementation of health policies affecting young people
- 2.4. Promote sustainable development
- 2.5. Advocate for equal access at the point of delivery to health and social services for young people

Aim:

3. To promote Youth Autonomy

Objectives:

- 3.1. Promote policies that respond to demographic changes while encouraging greater youth autonomy
- 3.2. Advocate for housing, transport and infrastructure that respond to the real needs of young people

TOOLS

1. INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

The European Youth Forum will continue to pursue proactive external relations with existing institutional interlocutors - the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. All institutional relations and the development of new partnerships will be assessed on the basis of their relevance to the implementation of the strategic priorities agreed by the membership of the YFJ.

The European Youth Forum will further promote principles of good governance and participative democracy within institutions. The European Youth Forum will seek to involve its members and represent their interests in all institutional settings that directly affect youth work and youth policy development matters.

The institutional relations of the European Youth Forum are focused on:

- Policy implementation and monitoring
- The representation of interests
- Lobbying and advocacy

European Union (EU)

- Follow up to the process of the European Constitution and therefore the future of Europe;
- Follow up to the White Paper and the Open Method of Coordination on youth policy of the European Union, while aiming to further consolidate the efforts of the EU to ensure greater progress and co-ordination of youth policy matters;

- Establishing a continuous structured dialogue between the European Youth Forum and the EU;
- Strengthening the European Youth Forum's engagement with the EU institutions;
- Ensuring the European Youth Forum's involvement in the main EU policy processes affecting youth, including the Lisbon Strategy, the European Youth Pact and any subsequent initiatives;
- Monitoring and contributing to bilateral agreements between the EU and Third Countries, which cover the youth field;
- Ensuring the necessary support for the implementation of the Youth in Action programme and other programmes relevant to youth;
- Promoting youth mainstreaming within EU institutions and policies;
- Monitor and influence EU legislation and policies affecting youth activities and the work of youth NGOs.

Council of Europe (CoE)

- Continuously supporting the co-management system and the structures of the Council of Europe Directorate for Youth and Sports;
- Actively contributing to the development, monitoring and evaluation of priorities, programmes and policies of the DYS and promoting existing CoE tools, programmes and methodologies relevant for youth work and youth policy;
- Sustaining good and structured co-operation with relevant bodies of the Council of Europe;
- Supporting the greater implementation of the Revised Charter on Youth Participation in Local and Regional Life;
- Contributing to the development of the youth programmes of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.

European Union and Council of Europe Partnership

- Actively participating in the definition, development and evaluation of the Partnership projects and activities;
- Supporting innovative initiatives, notably on European Citizenship - ensuring the impact and necessary outreach to Youth Organisations;
- Aiming to further enhance synergies between the EU and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy and youth work development.

United Nations (UN) System

- Contributing to the achievement of the MDGs and promoting global partnership to combat poverty;
- Encouraging greater implementation of the WPAY and further exploring its links to the realisation of the MDGs;
- Facilitating and coordinating the representation of youth organisations at the UNGA and other relevant events;
- Contributing to UN and UN agencies' (ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank) initiatives involving youth and advocating for greater co-ordination among those UN agencies dealing with youth issues;
- Advocating for the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

External Communication and partnerships

The European Youth Forum will increase the outreach and visibility of youth organisations and youth work by adapting its external communication tools and elaborating new ones to reach out to a greater number of stakeholders and young people. It will also build alliances with other NGO platforms that will contribute to achieving the YFJ's strategic aims and objectives.

2. RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

The European Youth Forum is a knowledge-based organisation which will continue to ground its competences in the field of youth policy development on existing data and policy evidence gathered through the engagement and diversity of its members.

The development of research should be based on direct correspondence with the organisation's priorities and should be of the highest quality, thus enhancing the credibility of the YFJ and emphasising its role as a credible partner in youth policy and youth work development in Europe and beyond.

- Gather and systematise information from the membership on the issues that need to be addressed through specific policy;
- Strengthen existing tools for the monitoring of youth policy;
- Establish permanent procedures for the monitoring of youth policy development in European countries;
- Ensure that YFJ publications and external communication are organised so as to reflect existing knowledge within the platform;
- Actively participate in relevant research networks and promote the implementation of such networks at the national level in cooperation with NYCs;
- Support and contribute to the development of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy.

3. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The European Youth Forum is an organisation that continues to grow and learn, and as it enters its adolescence, some structural enhancements are needed. Organisational structures and communication channels have to be permanently adapted so as to best support the work of the membership. The knowledge developed, information gained and results achieved through the organisation's lobby and advocacy work, have to be accessible to MOs and to the current and on-going working structures of the Forum - with the aim to smoothen knowledge exchange and management.

The European Youth Forum has already developed a set of valuable tools for communication with its MOs. All represent a huge potential for information flow within and to the Member Organisations. The international and complex dimension of the European Youth Forum demands highly effective and transparent communication within its structure. Member Organisations should furthermore be provided with clear and sustainable channels through which they can provide input to the different policy positions of the organisation, ensuring greater consultation and accountability.

Diversified funds for the daily work of the European Youth Forum are essential for independent and unbiased work. Therefore it is fundamental to strive for the diversification of the Forum's income using a clear strategy, guided by ethical and environmentally sustainable considerations.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Implementation of the Strategic aims and objectives should be organised in the manner that allows Member Organisations to assume greater ownership of the actions that the YFJ undertakes. Member Organisations should be empowered to contribute fully to the success of the platform through extensive involvement in the definition of actions, and activities. The successful implementation of this strategic plan and the full realisation of these objectives rely on the YFJ putting in place effective and robust mechanisms for the evaluation and ongoing monitoring of its work.

Identification of four priority areas for the work of the YFJ, should find its reflection in the YFJ structure. An adjusted structure that reflects the strategic priorities would allow for greater and more organic monitoring of the implementation of the Work Plan and provide a clear focus for a rigorous evaluation of its success.

Bureau of the European Youth Forum is mandated to:

- Develop an adequate set of indicators for the implementation of the strategy
- Ensure constant monitoring and annual evaluation of the progress of the work plan and bi-annual evaluation on the implementation of the strategy
- Produce a report on the feasibility and adjustments needed to the permanent working structures, with recommendations for possible reform by April 2007
- Establish, if found necessary, ad-hoc structures, involving MO's, that would ensure greater co-ordination and exchange of knowledge within the priority areas of work
- Initiate strategy revision/development process when considered necessary, involving MO's