



Guidelines for Policy Work on Sustainable Development

Adopted by the European Youth Forum / Forum Jeunesse de
l'Union européenne / Forum des Organisations européennes de la
Jeunesse Council of Members / Extraordinary General Assembly
11-12 November 2005, Brussels (Belgium)

1. Introduction

1.1 The Aim of these guidelines

This document sets out the guidelines for the policy work on sustainable development of the European Youth Forum. It is also a framework for a future policy paper on sustainable development. The final policy paper will be developed through further consultation with member organisations. The discussions will be based on this document although changes will be done to both the structure and the content. Till the policy paper has been adopted, these guidelines will guide the European Youth Forum in its sustainable development work.

The European Youth Forum has worked specifically on sustainable development before. Moreover, most of the other work of YFJ is in many ways also connected to sustainable development. It is thus a logical step to endorse these guidelines. The paper will start with a short context presentation, following the identification of some of the main areas for youth organisation involvement in sustainable development. Finally, there will be a discussion on actions that could be taken by youth organisations and the European Youth Forum.

1.2 Sustainable Development and Youth

One of the main challenges of sustainable development is not only to let many different areas to co-exist, but also to aim for the same goal. Consequently, everything from social, economical, environmental and cultural dimensions will have to be taken into account. Another main challenge is to achieve solidarity between generations, including generations to come. This follows from that sustainable development is usually defined as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs”.¹ In order to keep options open for the future generations, economic growth must not be at the expense of natural resources and environment or social development and cohesion.

Youth organisations are main actors in the work for sustainable development. Youth are one of the keys in materialising sustainable development no matter if it is on the global, national or local level, and no matter if the focus is social, economical, environmental, cultural, or all of them.

Sustainable Development has been an important policy issue for twenty years. On the global level the discussion on actions needed have been taken up in two of the largest and highest level meetings in history, the UN Earth Summit in Rio 1992 and the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002.² Youth have had a special recognition as main actors

¹ As defined by the United Nations High Commission on Environment and Development (the “Brundtland Commission”) in 1987.

² For more information see www.johannesburgsummit.org/

in both these summits. Consequently, youth organisations have also played a major role in the preparation, policy development and implementation of the outcomes. Another important global process is the Millennium Development Goals, which are a set of monitored goals that was adopted in the UN 2000 in order to halve poverty till 2015.³ In this context, the youth aspect has hardly been included. However, the Millennium Development Goals should be connected to the World Programme of Action for Youth, which is a powerful global tool to work with youth policy.⁴

2. Sustainable Development Policy

As sustainable development encompasses such a variety of areas and policies, the success in reaching it also depends on many other international institutions and processes - from environmental to economical. Even if it is of global dimensions, the success of sustainable development relies undeniably also on the actions taken on the local and national level. In this context, youth organisations have, and can, also play a major role.

Poverty eradication

Poverty is more widespread among certain groups. Youth, women, and persons with functional disabilities are all examples of this. If youth is not specifically targeted, the vicious cycle of poverty passed on between generations will be harder to break. Until women and men have equal opportunities, the conditions for sustainable development will be unfulfilled.

There are several concrete measurable actions that can be taken relating to poverty eradication. To begin with, an important step in reducing poverty would for example be that all the Millennium Development Goals should be reached before 2015 and they should be connected to the World Program of Action for Youth. Needed to achieve this is, among other things, for the EU member states to keep their promises from Agenda 21 in 1992 in providing 0.7% of their national income in aid. Financial support should not be used to pressure countries to reforms that would profit the donor but hurt the recipient. It is also essential that this co-operation is realised in an equal partnership for development, involving all the parties as stakeholders in the process. Finally, market access should be expanded for developing countries and fair trade should be encouraged.

3 The eight main goals are 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger , 2. Achieve universal primary education, 3. Promote gender equality and empower women, 4. Reduce child mortality, 5. Improve maternal health, 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases , 7. Ensure environmental sustainability, and 8. Develop a global partnership for development . For more information see www.millenniumcampaign.org

4 For more information see www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/library.htm#resolutions

An effective way of targeting poverty is to target youth, thereby combating poverty in the beginning of a person's life. Therefore, resources and policies should be directed in creating employment and decent work, especially to young people. Micro credits are another measure to reduce poverty among young people. Large parts of the youth population in developing countries live in rural areas and depend on agriculture. In order not to make their situation more difficult, agricultural subsidies which create overproduction that is dumped in developing countries have to be reformed.

Many poor countries have such high debt burdens that several generations to come will have to pay it off even if the original loans were corrupted away. Likewise, the rich part of the world has an ecological debt towards the poorer part, as the western countries are using the ecological space of new generations and developing countries. To begin with the debt problem should be solved by cancelling in full the un-payable and illegitimate debts of the world's poorest countries, by fair and transparent means. It should not be done by depriving poor countries of new aid. Finally, international institutions whose policies affect poverty eradication must be more transparent and work within the framework of sustainable development.

Environment

Environmental sustainability is of the utmost importance for reducing poverty, for avoiding armed conflicts, and for preserving economic and cultural wealth. Natural resources should be managed so that future generations' needs are not compromised. For example, deforestation must be halted and biodiversity must be preserved. Involvement of local communities and youth is crucial for a sustainable conservation of biodiversity. Pollution must be reduced. It is important from a health perspective as children and youth are more sensitive to pollution and as a large portion of young people live in city slums, where they are subjected to much air pollution, unsafe water and poor sanitation. Indigenous knowledge should be preserved for coming generations and intellectual property rights' frameworks need to be reviewed so that they do not threaten biodiversity, food sovereignty or the fight against diseases. Water is not an ordinary commodity. There should therefore be a rights-based approach to it and the access to water should not be hampered by the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The role of youth in water-management should also be acknowledged.

Climate change is the clearest example of where younger and coming generations' needs are compromised by older and current generations' lifestyles. It is one of the largest threats to humans ever and it is natural that youth take an active role in advocating for measures to diminish green-house gas emissions, both in Europe and globally. Youth organisations are important in pressuring national governments as well as the EU to develop better environmental policies. A first step is for the EU and other European countries to fulfil all their commitments under the Kyoto-protocols. As climate change is also a question of

lifestyles, it has to be combated through awareness-raising, in which youth organisations are key actors as main providers of non-formal education.

Current consumption and production patterns in large parts of Europe are unsustainably using up the resources of the world. This is an issue that youth groups have been advocating during for example UN World Summits on Sustainable Development. Making up a disproportionate large part of the unsustainable consumption and production, the EU has a particular responsibility in taking measures concerning this; subsidies for polluting production has to be removed, economic incentives for green production should be introduced, and awareness raising on consumption patterns needs to be carried out, particularly through non-formal education. Agriculture should also be within the limits of sustainable development and agricultural policies should aim for food security.

Education for Sustainable Development

Education is a foundation for sustainable development. Education is a right for every child and young person. It should be free and of equal access for all. Being so, sustainable development needs to be introduced into all levels of education and all fields of studies. Education for Sustainable Development, through formal and non-formal education, is an important tool for addressing anything from rural development, HIV/AIDS, environment, human rights, equality, and involvement of youth in society. Of importance in this context are also Human Rights and Development Education. Being experts on how to reach young people as well as experts on formal and non-formal education, youth organisations have to play a crucial role in this. On the formal level, the right of education for all should not be constrained by trade agreements or debt reduction requirements.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is one of the main obstacles to poverty reduction with 40 million people living with the virus today. We have already lost 20 million people, and there are 15 million orphans whose parents have passed away from AIDS. Young people, particularly girls and young women are the most seriously infected age group. In order to fight the pandemic, all young people should have the right to basic health services. HIV/AIDS must be prevented through campaigns encouraging responsible sexual behaviour and condom use. All young people, both those in school and out of school, must be reached, why youth organisations are key partners in combating the pandemic, together with comprehensive sexuality education in schools as well as access to sexual and reproductive health services. Gender equality is crucial in fighting HIV/AIDS.

Mainstreaming Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is the overall goal of policy-making. As different policy areas are increasingly interdependent, they need to be coherent with sustainable development. Coherence is of utmost importance in a global

world where the interdependence is growing between countries. Youth and gender issues should not only be dealt with separately but must always be mainstreamed into areas such as international development policies and sustainable development policies. The EU Sustainable Development Strategy must be the framework in which the Lisbon strategy can be carried out, and not the other way around. The EU policies on trade, agriculture, and fisheries must be coherent with sustainable development. The WTO has to review its agreements from a sustainable development perspective and the World Bank has to ensure that it only finances projects that are in line with sustainable development. The role of business in achieving sustainable development is important, which is why corporate accountability should be implemented.

3. Promotion of Sustainable Development

Youth organisations have an important role to play in the area of sustainable development both concerning awareness raising and advocacy. The role of the European Youth Forum is to ensure appropriate youth participation in important decision-making processes, enhance awareness raising, and support member organisations working, or interested in working, on the area as well as highlight the role of young people and the contributions they can make to sustainable development. Of particular importance for the European Youth Forum is to make sure that former commitments and promises are not forgotten. This is important relating to both European institutions as well as when working on the global level. Apart from enabling the engagement of youth organisations in international processes, YFJ should encourage member organisations to take actions nationally to ensure the implementation of policies. More specifically, actions need to be taken on the following areas by the European Youth Forum:

- **Support for member organisations to engage in Sustainable Development**
 - YFJ should spread good and interesting ways for member organisations to work on the issue, both in relation to advocacy work and awareness raising. Good practices among member organisations should be exchanged.
 - YFJ should also keep track of and spread information on processes of interest for member organisations' advocacy work, both on the European and global level.
 - The European Youth Forum should spread information through common information channels (such as newsletters). YFJ should also explore the possibilities of doing so through possible trainings.
- **UN**
 - The European Youth Forum should promote the recognition of youth as key actors in achieving the Millennium Development

Goals and that these are linked to the World Programme of Action for Youth.⁵

- YFJ should cooperate with the Millennium Campaign as a way of advocating for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.⁶
- YFJ should take part in the UNESCO launched Decade on Education for Sustainable Development.
- The European Youth Forum should continue to be involved in the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) and support member organisations to also be so.⁷

- **The World Bank**

- YFJ should promote non-formal education as a concept that the World Bank should invest in. Non-formal education should be seen as complementary to formal education in WB programmes.
- YFJ should advocate for youth participation in Poverty Reduction Strategies in line with the outcome of the Youth Development and Peace conference, 2004.⁸
- YFJ should advocate on Millennium Development Goals and the World Program of Action for Youth towards the World Bank.
- YFJ should advocate for mainstreaming of youth and gender issues within the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

- **Council of Europe**

- YFJ should advocate for the positions of the European Youth Forum on sustainable development to be considered by the Council of Europe and the North South Centre (for example in our position as member of the executive committee of the latter).
- YFJ should lobby the Council of Europe to follow up the "Europe, Youth and Globalisation Event".
- YFJ should promote Education for Sustainable Development within CoE.
- YFJ should advocate the Council of Europe to take actions on its non-formal education programmes to promote sustainable development.

- **EU**

- YFJ should promote the inclusion of the principles of the World Program of Action for Youth in EU policies.
- YFJ should lobby the EU for the implementation of Agenda 21 and the plans of implementation adopted at the Rio and Johannesburg World

5 The World Programme of Action for Youth, WPAY, is the only global action programme on youth policy adopted on a high level. The WPAY and MDG are in many senses covering the same areas.

6 The Millennium Campaign is a UN initiative to encourage citizens around the world in their efforts to hold governments to account for the promises they made in the Millennium Development Goals.

7 The "Youth Caucus" in the CSD is one of the most advanced involvements of Youth into the UN system. The Commission for Sustainable Development also gets a higher and higher profile for each year due to that it partly deals with the Millennium Development Goals.

8 For more information see <http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/EURVP/web.nsf/Pages/YDP2004-Home>

Summits on Sustainable Development as well as other international processes.⁹

- YFJ should follow up the EU sustainable development policy, development policy and Millennium Development Goals commitments.
 - The Youth Forum should take active part in relevant networks pushing for sustainable development and enhanced development cooperation by the EU.
 - The European Youth Forum should highlight examples of youth led development cooperation as well as propagate for more support to such.
 - YFJ should lobby the EU to take into account the social, political, cultural and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in youth policy.
 - YFJ should promote Education as a right for all and Education for Sustainable Development and should lobby for the inclusion of Education for Sustainable Development in the Youth Program.
 - YFJ should advocate a sustainable development approach to the youth pact.
- **Internally**
 - Sustainable Development should be integrated within the other working areas of the European Youth Forum.
 - Achieving sustainable development cannot only be done by actions from international institutions. It is also absolutely crucial that individuals take actions themselves and evaluate how their lifestyles should change. Likewise, the European Youth Forum will not only advocate sustainable development, it will also have to analyse its work from a sustainable development perspective through for example an environmental plan. The member organisations of the Youth Forum should also be encouraged to do so.

4. Conclusions

Today, there are almost three billion people in the world under the age of 25. More than half a billion of them live on less than two dollars a day and more than 100 million school-aged children are not in school. Although we know that environmental sustainability is absolutely indispensable, it is threatened and human contribution to climate change is not adequately dealt with. At the same time we know that there are more means than ever to change all this. No generation before has had the possibility of putting an end to extreme poverty. No generation has either had so much information on the environmental challenges facing us as we have. That is also why youth are the key in achieving sustainable development.

⁹ For more information, see <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/english/agenda21toc.htm> , or <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org>