



European Youth Forum
Policy Paper on
YOUTH PARTICIPATION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

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Malta, 14-16 November 2002*

PART I: INTRODUCTION

1. THE AIM OF THIS POLICY DOCUMENT

This policy document aims to provide a framework for the European Youth Forum in its work to promote youth participation at the global level. This includes the United Nations work the Youth Forum does as well as Global and Regional Youth Co-operation. The document presents the convictions and policies behind the European Youth Forum's actions in this field of work.

In addition to offering policy suggestions to improve and continue the work of the European Youth Forum, this document contains an annex with background information on relevant topics and actors and on the challenges and opportunities for youth participation. In this sense the document presents a coherent and comprehensive framework for the European Youth Forum's positions on youth participation at the global level.¹

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

The aim of the European Youth Forum is to improve the living conditions of young people, namely by combating the different forms of age-related limitations youth face as a social group. Having young people and youth organisations contribute to the formulation, development and implementation of the policies and programmes affecting us is a necessary means to achieve this goal. In this context and through the work developed at the Global and UN level, the European Youth Forum aims to:

1. provide political input to relevant regional and global policies and programmes of relevance to youth and make the opinion of youth organisations heard;
2. provide service to member organisations by disseminating information and facilitating training and exchange opportunities, preferably in partnership with our member organisations or other relevant actors;
3. promote fora for discussion and co-ordination by developing and or participating in relevant activities and engaging with other regional structures.

The European Youth Forum promotes intercultural dialogue and co-operation between youth organisations from the different regions in order to better co-ordinate inputs and strategies with relevant international institutions, and to promote youth work development in general.

¹ It replaces the documents "Framework for the Development of Tools for Global Youth Co-operation" (ASSEMBLY 0616-2K, Brussels, 19-21 October 2000), "Framework Document to Work towards the United Nations" (ASSEMBLY 0624-2K, Brussels, 19-21 October 2000), and complements the document "An Additional Mechanism for Co-operation between Youth NGOs and the United Nations"¹(COMEM 0719-01, Athens, 15-17 November 2001).

The European Youth Forum has three different roles when addressing these above-mentioned aims:

- provide services to member organisations, directly or through partners; recognising information and training as ways of enhancing youth organisations' work at regional and global level;
- advocate the recognition of youth organisations as fundamental actors in the design and implementation of policies and programmes affecting youth.
- Influence and effectively participate in the design and implementation of development co-operation policies.

In a more concrete way, the European Youth Forum acts as a facilitator for the participation and visibility of youth organisations and its regional partners in relevant regional and global co-operation events. It also works to influence the relevant policies of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

What is more, the European Youth Forum plays a role in promoting awareness of global interdependency and sustainable development, going beyond Europe. In this work, development education is a key factor for educational processes.

PART II: PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Despite the broader recognition of young people as actors for development (witness the many resolutions and recommendations on the effective participation of youth and the increasing number of parallel youth fora to the UN Conferences), much still remains to be done to achieve an effective involvement of youth through the member states, the UN Secretariat or NGOs.

The European Youth Forum's interaction with the United Nations must be oriented towards gaining influence in the political decision-making process and securing the implementation of the resulting policies. Therefore, a key priority for the European Youth Forum is to support the relations of its member organisations with the United Nations System.

The European Youth Forum should lobby the relevant international and global institutions on behalf of its member organisations and convey their concerns and aspirations at the global level. At the same time, it should promote increased communication and training opportunities for work in the global arena.

The United Nations work the European Youth Forum engages in should, therefore, be guided by the following aims:

- promote youth participation in the United Nations System, primarily through youth organisations;

- increase the number of youth representatives to the UN General Assembly and facilitate co-ordination of European Youth representatives in order to have an effective youth perspective;
- support and develop the existing spaces for dialogue and co-operation between youth and youth organisations and the United Nations System (such as the World Youth Forum, the existing Youth Advisory Councils, the NGO Committees and Conferences, the expert meetings on youth);
- promote quality and concerted inputs to United Nations documents;
- strengthen the UN Youth Unit as the focal point for youth within the United Nations System;
- support initiatives to capacitate the work of member organisations and their participation in the UN;

1. POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

The UN already has a number of mechanisms to facilitate the presence of civil society when decisions are taken, and these mechanisms are also opportunities for Youth NGOs to influence the decision-making processes.

Youth empowerment on a global level implies that Youth NGOs have and use the possibility to influence the decision-making processes in the UN system. This means being able to present concerns and proposals when national government delegations convene to take political decisions at the General Assembly, Special Sessions, Conferences, Specialised Commissions and other meetings.

Youth NGOs can influence political decision-making through the following approaches:

- Lobbying national governments to influence their positions and priorities
- Attending the different UN fora in order to lobby delegations
- Lobbying NGOs and NGO coalitions with a presence in the UN

To ensure that actions aimed at the UN are effective, Youth NGOs need to be informed about the decision-making mechanisms in the UN system. Furthermore, for those youth organisations taking part in decision-making in the United Nations System, further "targeted" information should be provided on the complex decision-making processes.

The UN Youth Unit could play a stronger role in this work by providing information to Youth NGOs on youth-relevant issues and perspectives in UN meetings and processes, by promoting co-operation between Youth NGOs lobbying in the UN system, and by promoting the inclusion of youth delegates in government delegations at UN meetings

1.1 THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

With regard to the UN General Assembly:

1. Facilitate the information flow between the member organisations
2. Co-operate with the member organisations present at the GA and assist in the preparation of policies and input to the GA
3. Prepare a policy input in due time when there is a youth resolution in the 3rd committee (every 2nd year).

The European Youth Forum does not want to be included as a youth delegate in an official delegation (such as the EU Presidency), as it would like this to be the role of its member organisations.

With regard to the Commission on Social Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development:

1. Prepare policy input in due time when especially relevant agenda points are expected;
2. Facilitate co-ordination between member organisations ;
3. Facilitate co-ordination between partners outside Europe;
4. Promote, and if necessary, contribute to the facilitation of youth caucuses during the sessions.

With regard to UN agencies, funds, programmes, conferences, summits and their follow-up processes:

1. Facilitate the flow of information between member organisations;
2. Facilitate the flow of information between partners outside Europe;
3. When member organisations have developed policies on the topic, consult with the whole membership to determine whether to use such policies as European Youth Forum policies;
4. Facilitate co-ordination between member organisations;
5. Facilitate co-ordination between partners outside Europe;
6. Through its member organisations promote and contribute to the facilitation of youth caucuses or other mechanisms promoting the views of youth NGOs in the respective context.

1.2. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES

The key criteria for a successful institutional dialogue between youth organisations and the United Nations System are:

- sufficient financial and human resources
- sufficient support by the UN system and the national governments
- perspectives for concrete advancement in the implementation of previous commitments made by the member states through the UN system

- mechanisms for follow-up and monitoring
- a secured multiplier effect through broad-based and cross-sectoral youth NGO participation

Regardless of the future status of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System (WYFUNS), there is a need for a political space for large-scale general dialogue between youth organisations and the UN System, as well as a space for programme planning.

As an additional mechanism² for continuous and sustainable interaction between youth NGOs and the secretariat level in the different parts of the UN System, the European Youth Forum has actively proposed regular consultations on youth issues in the form of expert meetings. This is an arena where expert input can be provided for the relevant implementation and preparation of youth policies in the UN System. It is also a place for direct contact and general co-ordination between youth organisations and the United Nations Secretariat. Here the necessary youth perspective and expertise on the realities facing youth can be presented in the discussions at the substantive committees and follow-up of existing UN youth policies ensured.

PART III: CO-OPERATION BETWEEN YOUTH NGOs AS A TOOL TO PROMOTE YOUTH PARTICIPATION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

In order to establish the fruitful participation of young people in decision-making processes at the global level, it is imperative for youth NGOs, both at the global and regional level, to be able to:

1. exchange experiences and realities
2. share concerns, opinions and policies
3. establish and co-ordinate common policies and recommendations for relevant political actors.

1. PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

Decisions taken at the global level can have a huge impact on the present and future living conditions of young people. For them to be recognised as actors responsible for their own development, young people from all the different regions of the world need to participate and have their voice heard on the policies that affect them.

Having spaces where youth organisations and young people can meet and exchange ideas increases the level of co-ordination and co-operation and helps bridge the gap between North and South. It also plays an important role in achieving a strategic and long-term global vision for youth policies and for policies in general.

² See document 0719-01, "An additional mechanism for co-operation between youth NGOs and the United Nations," adopted by the Council of Members, Athens, Greece, 15-17 November 2001.

Development co-operation policies must be developed and implemented in consultation with those people directly concerned by them. Such policies are more effective when all the parties involved have a sense of ownership and are responsible for their implementation.

1.1. WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL

The World Youth Festival is the only global cross-sector, pluralist space entirely designed and developed by and for youth organisations. It offers young people and youth organisations a unique opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas on issues of common concern, to establish new partnerships, and to increase the visibility of their work.

The key to a successful World Youth Festival is to ensure plurality at the geographical, cultural and political level and any other level when preparing the Festival and deciding its programme. Fostering and supporting the active participation of regional platforms and global international organisations in the design, development and implementation of the Festival.

Good preparation and co-ordination of the different organisers and adequate financial support and diversity are essential if full advantage is to be taken of the event and it is to have the desired impact.

1.2. CO-ORDINATION OF REGIONAL YOUTH PLATFORMS – THE GLOBAL CO-OPERATION CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

At the level of independent co-ordination, the Global Co-operation Co-ordination Committee of the European Youth Forum helps youth NGOs from different regions of the world come together to share and discuss their experiences, realities, concerns and policies. By bringing the different regional youth platforms together, the Committee aims to help youth organisations better co-operate and co-ordinate their work at all levels and help member organisations achieve a coherent strategy and policy with the different regional platforms. It also provides a framework where the different regional youth platforms can co-ordinate their participation in global events and their political lobbying of political actors at the global level. The European Youth Forum aims to strengthen the role of the GCCC in order to achieve these goals.

1.3. INTERGOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING SPACES FOR GLOBAL YOUTH CO-OPERATION

As far as the intergovernmental institutions are concerned, the North-South Centre is particularly aware of the importance of involving youth NGOs and has experience in this area. For that reason, the European Youth Forum considers it an important partner for global youth work - work based on interdependence and solidarity - and aims to continue providing input from our member organisations through the Executive Committee and the Youth Programme. We also aim to facilitate and co-ordinate (where possible) the participation of member organisations in the training and dialogue opportunities created by the

Centre in order to promote effective youth participation in global development policies.

2. PROMOTING REGIONAL YOUTH CO-OPERATION

Global youth co-operation must have a strong regional basis, which is why it is important to promote regional youth co-operation and in so doing strengthen the dialogue and co-ordination among the different regional partners.

The European Youth Forum promotes regional co-operation by organising and participating in activities with its regional partners at the Global Co-operation Co-ordination Committee and by facilitating and participating in NGO fora and other relevant events where there is intergovernmental co-operation between Europe and other regions of the world.

The European Youth Forum's regional co-operation actions aim to:

- promote and facilitate youth co-operation between European youth organisations and youth organisations in the different regions;
- promote and facilitate a general framework for youth co-operation in each region by maintaining regular contacts with the regional youth platforms;
- promote national and regional cross-sector co-operation between youth organisations in the different regions;
- work for the implementation of programmes for youth exchanges and co-operation between Europe and other regions;
- facilitate input from youth organisations for the decision-making structures in the field of regional co-operation;
- support political-strengthening and capacity-building actions for regional youth platforms.

The European Youth Forum advocates an increase in the resources made available by the EU, the Council of Europe and the UN for youth organisations and their development co-operation and development education activities with other regions of the world.

The European Youth Forum plays a role in influencing the development policies and programmes of the EU. Monitoring the level of youth participation in them and lobbying for the effective recognition of youth organisations as crucial actors in development assistance and therefore for their inclusion in the EU development policies. This means granting youth organisations access to EU budget lines, like other NGOs working in the field.

Here, the European Youth Forum aims to work closely with partners who have a complementary role to play in the development co-operation field, such as Development NGOs. The European Youth Forum must continue to explore different spaces, like the Liaison Committee, where it can discuss the development co-

operation and development education issues of the European Union and its Member States, and in so doing benefit from relevant information.