

Motion

Safeguarding National Youth Councils and Guaranteeing the Stability of Youth Policy in Europe

signed by: Lithuanian Youth Council
(LiJOT), Croatian Youth Network (MMH)

National Youth Councils all across Europe have always proven to be an indispensable partners in the field of youth policy. The added value that National Youth Councils create through their activities is self-evident: by providing a forum and platform for youth non-governmental organisations to collectively work for common goals, by sharing a common vision and commitment for creating the most appropriate environment and possibilities for young people from diverse backgrounds to find meaning and flourish by being empowered and enabled to more easily transition to adulthood and become active and civically engaged citizens.

National Youth Councils are youth-led, legitimate, democratically constituted bodies that are independent from governments that represent their respective Member Organisations on various levels – by providing their expertise and knowledge in youth affairs, they constitute a meaningful point of contact for young people to get acquainted with policy, youth affairs and active participation in democratic practices that National Youth Councils apply in their line of work.

The role of National Youth Councils in national and international youth policy is quintessential: by involving the most engaged and active young people, they represent and advocate for the interests of young people, being independent bodies that exercise and pursue their own policies and activities without influence from outside actors.

To this day, not all National Youth Councils receive the recognition that their involvement in civic society brings forward. Additionally, not all of the National Youth Councils receive the necessary institutional support to pursue and enact youth policy through representing, consulting and aiding their membership. Moreover, there have been several cases across Europe where the area and competences of National Youth Councils have been encroached upon by their respective national governments. These are troubling trends that could jeopardise the process of youth policy and the involvement of young people.

In the cases involving the denial of recognition or questioning of the legitimacy of National Youth Councils that are part of the European Youth Forum. There have been several instances of such conduct: for example, the Croatian Youth Council

(MMH) has been facing pressure from the Croatian government concerning the fact that there has been an initiative to create a parallel structure that would seek to supplant the role of National Youth Council from MMH by establishing a structure that would enable the youth wing of the governing party to have an absolute majority, therefore denying representation to other youth non-governmental organisations.

All across Europe, there have been instances of National Youth Councils being questioned as legitimate, youth-led, independent bodies representing the voice of the youth. For example, the Swedish Youth Council (LSU), is referred to as an illegitimate body for youth representation. Additionally, there have been instances where the National Youth Council of Ukraine (NYCU) and the National Youth Council of Poland (PROM) have faced similar problems regarding their status with respect to their national governments.

There may have been instances of other similar circumstances taking place that have not been yet reported in other countries.

We believe that it is of utmost importance that not only ad hoc situations should be addressed and rectified, but that the representation of young people should be prioritised by national governments and so forth be implemented in practical policy, whereas young people are given a platform where they are represented irrespectively of the current governing coalition.

According to the Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council establishing guidelines on the governance of the EU Youth Dialogue, also known as the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2019/C 189/01), section 3h clearly states that “<...”Member States are encouraged to enable youth participation in all phases of implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue by giving, inter alia, a leading role in the National Working Groups to the National Youth Council’ (3).”

Equally, the Council of Europe recognises the role of National Youth Councils via its Committee of Ministers REC(2006)1 Recommendation, which calls upon its 46 member states to “respect the specific nature of National Youth Councils, consider them as partners of public authorities in youth policy devel-

opment, and legitimise their role in this context.” In particular, the following principles should be respected: “the freedom of expression for national youth councils; the possibility for national youth councils to formulate opinions and recommendations on any issue that concerns youth; the right for national youth councils to determine their own working organisation and methods; the possibility for national youth councils to have access to relevant information concerning youth issues.”

Regrettably, not all National Youth Councils have been provided the opportunity and possibility to actively exercise the role that has been designated and enshrined in the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027.

The European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations categorically oppose any attempts to overtake and replace self-organised, youth-led, democratically elected and independent National Youth Councils with any other parallel structures that have been established without consulting the aforementioned National Youth Councils.

Therefore, National Youth Councils are an integral part of the youth policy ecosystem and their existence and ability to act unhindered and be enabled to participate in the framework of providing necessary and relevant expertise to young people, the government and society as a whole are paramount in guaranteeing and ensuring that young people are represented and advocated for in different formats on various levels.

The European Youth Forum calls for:

- Its Member Organisations to share information and actively voice their support for National Youth Councils that are under pressure in any way, shape or form by their national governments or other entities;
- Member States to recognize and actively support the activities of National Youth Councils - including via making available necessary funding streams -, while respecting the principles of independent self-governance;
- Governments of Member States to proactively engage with National Youth Councils and cooperate in the field of youth policy ensuring mean-

ingful dialogue and inclusion in decision-making;

- Governments of Member States to include and guarantee the appropriate role of National Youth Councils in the European Youth Dialogue, as established in the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



The European Youth Forum is funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union, the Council of Europe or the European Youth Foundation. Neither the European Union nor any other granting authority can be held responsible for them.

