

Motion

# UNited Europe: Strengthening the partnership between UN Youth Delegates and the European Youth Forum

signed by: Austrian National Youth Council (ÖJV),  
Flemish Youth Council (VJR)

co-signed by: British Youth Council (BYC), Council  
of the German-speaking Youth of Belgium (RdJ),  
Finnish National Youth Council and Youth Sector  
(FYCS), National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI),  
Polish Council of Youth Organizations (PROM), Slovak  
Youth Council (RMS), Swiss National Youth Council  
(SAJV/CSAJ)

United Nations Youth Delegates (UNYDs), like the European Youth Forum (YFJ), advocate for full, effective and meaningful engagement of young people in policy and decision-making across all policy domains and at all levels. As such, and in strong collaboration with the National Youth Councils, European UNYDs play a crucial role in implementing YFJ motions and driving their advocacy at the United Nations (UN). Given that UN resolutions are often negotiated collectively by EU countries, UNYDs must coordinate and advocate jointly to amplify the impact of European youth on the UN stage. This motion sets out to support this effort by enhancing coordination with the YFJ to ensure a strong, unified, and impactful youth voice in (inter-)national policymaking. The European Youth Forum and multiple youth-led and youth-focused organisations strengthen the work of youth in Europe by providing diverse platforms for young people to voice their opinions. Therefore, UNYDs seek strong partnerships, mutual support, and stronger coordination with the YFJ and European countries to ensure meaningful engagement in UN processes.

All across Europe, UN Youth Delegates act as vital links between European youth and (inter-)national policymakers, promoting a more sustainable, democratic, and value-driven Europe. They amplify youth voices, enhance intergenerational dialogue, and engage with UN bodies on issues like human rights, peace, and sustainable development. Through delivering speeches, organising UN Side Events, sharing expertise with Permanent Missions in high-level meetings, negotiating UN Resolutions, and serving as contact points for UN Agencies and Civil Society, UNYDs ensure that youth perspectives are more strongly integrated into the work of the UN. Working closely with National Youth Councils and youth-led and youth-focused organisations, UNYDs engage their peers through workshops, social media work, campaigns, the sharing of opportunities, and many other innovative ways, thus serving as ambassadors for both member state and civil society. In addition to the UNYDs from individual countries, the European Union's UN Youth Delegate Program serves as a key platform for amplifying the collective perspectives of European youth.

Deep-rooted structural barriers, including voting age restrictions and limited opportunities for direct engagement, hinder meaningful youth participation, preventing young Europeans from shaping policies that directly impact their future. UN Youth Delegates play a crucial role in bridging this gap at the international level, yet their programmes too face structural challenges and a lack of funding. They struggle with underutilisation, fragmented coordination with youth organisations and European institutions, as well as inconsistent and insufficient funding, which hampers their advocacy efforts. To draw attention to this issue, the YFJ adopted a motion in 2023, addressing the declining number of UNYD programmes and their decreasing financial support within Europe. With the European Union and European countries committing to enhancing youth participation in decision-making (including, for example, the EU Youth Strategy), now is the time to take action and strengthen international youth representation programmes.

The Future Agents Now<sup>1</sup> project developed minimum standards for European Youth Delegate Programmes to the UN, together with national UNYDs and EU UNYDs. Currently, not all European countries with UNYD programmes fulfill these core principles, we therefore ask that this list be the foundation of all programmes. Only this guarantees the safety, meaningfulness, and effectiveness of the representation and empowerment of young people.

Another central concern is the lack of resources (at all levels) provided for the invaluable work of these young volunteers. Whilst the work of the UNYDs is not standardised and varies at the national level, UNYDs generally provide political education, peer-to-peer empowerment, and opportunity sharing through organising workshops, events, and hybrid consultations, and doing communication and meet-up tours across the entire country to actively meet youth, including those from underrepresented and marginalised communities.

The EU can expand its outreach to youth and youth networks beyond its borders and strengthen collaboration by leveraging existing international youth networks, like the AU-EU Youth Action Lab, and focusing on youth programmes in candidate

1 Publication of the Erasmus+ project 'Future agents now': Minimum Standards for European Youth Delegates Programmes to the United Nations, [https://duf.dk/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Editor/FINAL\\_-\\_Minimum\\_Standards\\_booklet\\_web.pdf](https://duf.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Editor/FINAL_-_Minimum_Standards_booklet_web.pdf)

countries for EU membership. Within the EU, we recognise the established and institutionalised work with young people and youth organisations with an international scope, and call for strengthening it by supporting UNYDs with (1) proper financing, (2) the removal of institutional and legislative barriers that hinder youth policy engagement, and (3) robust coordination and capacity building support. These measures will empower young people to influence policy, position Europe as a leader in youth inclusion, and contribute to global stability and development in line with European values. It will also foster greater trust in the EU and its institutions. A sense of participation and inclusion encourages young people to become more engaged in working within the EU and its supporting institutions, which recognise youth as a valuable and integral part of society.

### **We, the European Youth Forum:**

#### **POLICIES TO REMOVE BARRIERS**

1. call upon national governments across Europe to establish UN Youth Delegate programmes that respect the minimum standards for European Youth Delegate programs to the United Nations, aiming to ensure quality UNYD programmes across Europe. Should programmes already exist, we call upon national governments to ensure these standards are upheld. The five minimum standards are the following: a maximum age of 35 for the representatives, a representative mandate, an engagement on equal footing with UNYDs as members of their country's national delegations, a mandate of appropriate length, and a fair and transparent selection process.<sup>2</sup>
2. urge member states to establish the engagement of UNYDs as a standard practice at United Nations working party (CONUN) meetings, the Human Rights Council sessions, UNGA, and other intergovernmental processes, prioritising the in-person attendance of youth delegates.

#### **COORDINATION, SUPPORT, AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

3. stress the need for coordinated communication between UNYDs and other youth actors, such as youth organisations and youth fora in Europe,

inter alia, YFJ and the European Commission's Youth Sounding Board. We therefore encourage the board of the YFJ to consider including an objective in the future YFJ action and activity plans to establish coordination.

4. stress the need to coordinate the UNYDs and YFJ and reinstate an in-person preparatory meeting for UNYDs prior to the UNGA. This meeting should focus on capacity-building, network-building, coordinating with the EU and European priorities, exchanging experiences, and collaborating with European UN Youth Delegates, to prepare for the upcoming session of the General Assembly.

#### **FUNDING**

5. urge all member states to improve the funding process for UN Youth Delegate programmes, with the European Youth Forum coordinating transparency efforts.
6. urge the EU Commissioner responsible for youth and DG EAC to advocate for sufficient, consistent, and equitable financial support for UN Youth Delegate Programmes across Member States.
7. call upon national governments across Europe to ensure adequately financed youth networks and councils that allow them to amplify collective global impact and foster meaningful youth engagement on a broader scale. In their work and activities, UNYDs engage with and rely on the knowledge and resources of local, national, and European-wide youth networks and groups; therefore, they need proper support at all levels.

<sup>2</sup> publication of the Erasmus+ project 'Future agents now': Minimum Standards for European Youth Delegates Programmes to the United Nations, [https://duf.dk/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Editor/FINAL\\_-\\_Minimum\\_Standards\\_booklet\\_web.pdf](https://duf.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Editor/FINAL_-_Minimum_Standards_booklet_web.pdf)



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