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To ensure the governance of the organisation, it is important to put emphasis on the diversity among Board members, both by representing the various Member Organisations, the knowledge they bring to the organisation but also in terms of skill-set and competencies to ensure that the individual Board members complement each other and come together to become a strong, strategic and effective Board.

For this reason we have divided the application form in different sections.

The first identifies the general information and availability of candidates.

The second one focuses on the individual candidates experience as well as vision for the organisation. Please ensure in this section that no answer is more than a page.

The third section looks at the different skills and competencies that the Board as a whole should have when they come together as one body. This is to ensure that the Board as a body has all the necessary skills and competencies through the various individuals that compose it.

This means that no one individual needs to have all the necessary elements, but by bringing together these 11 individuals the board as a whole would. Good governance starts with a well-rounded board, meaning that the Board skills composite, or Board as a whole, should ideally have strength in each of the areas. The last section is therefore a self-reflection exercise on these skills and competencies.



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FORM TO APPLY FOR THE POSITION OF

Vice-President of the European Youth Forum

This form must be filled in and sent back (in pdf and doc format) to the Secretariat (governance@youthforum.org), together with the nomination and acceptance letters by **Tuesday 06 October 2020 (23:59 CET)**.

This form will be published on the European Youth Forum website after the deadline for application and be accessible to Member Organisations and the general public.



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SECTION 1 - General information & availability

NAME	Benjamin
SURNAME	Günther
MEMBER ORGANISATION	DNK - Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Internationale Jugendarbeit (German National Committee for International Youth Work)
NOMINATING MEMBER ORGANISATION	DNK - Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Internationale Jugendarbeit (German National Committee for International Youth Work)
DATE OF BIRTH	11.05.1992
GENDER	male
PRONOUN	he/him

Would you be able to attend at least 20 meetings per year (on average 2-3 days each) on weekends or weekdays – and be available on other occasions on an ad hoc basis?

YES

Are you fluent in English or French, with preferably knowledge of the other language?

YES, I'm fluent in English (A C2 certificate is available. I do not speak French)



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Are you available to travel extensively?

YES



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SECTION 2 - Experience & vision

1. What is your proudest achievement in the youth space (either individually or as part of a team)? Why is it so meaningful to you?

This question goes back to my days as a young student. I had just completed my voluntary social year at the Lower Saxony Memorial Foundation and facilitated my first training in Human Rights education for school students when I was approached by the foundation again whether I wanted to co-create an international youth exchange project in the field of family history together with them that involved participants from three European countries – Ukraine, Poland and Germany – and would involve three encounters of the participants in the period of one year. The whole programme had to be drafted and negotiated by myself on behalf of the foundation in close cooperation with the partnering organisations from Poland and Ukraine. For the purpose of the planning I had to travel to Poland for several times in order to meet with our partners. We named the project “Dialogue of Generations” and it involved the discovery of different historical and cultural narratives regarding the narration of World War II. Beyond the planning of the content I was involved in drafting applications for different funders which was necessary in order to increase the number of participants, pay for their travel costs and create a website that would share the results and outcomes of this collaborative learning activity in the long run. Both the planning and the implementation of the project were a huge success. We managed to secure enough funding allowing the students to travel and visit each other in all three countries for the duration of one week each time throughout the project’s year. We designed our own process, programme and content and the outcome was really rewarding. The participants were accompanied by us during each meeting and were supported by us through an online mentoring programme that accompanied them between the physical meetings. This project was so significant to me since I did not only acquire an incredible amount of skills that taught me how to apply for funding or manage a team but also how to co-create a process on an international level. Furthermore, I learned to manage a youth exchange on the international level myself. The project was such an immense success that we were even granted additional funding to translate the results on the website from English into the languages of the participants. It is always rewarding to start a process that not only leads to a successful outcome but also teaches oneself a set of different skills ranging from teambuilding to administrative abilities. Similar processes and events happened throughout my time as a volunteer in different fields of youth work but this was the first



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one that granted me such an immense level of autonomy paired with an immense responsibility which is why it still stands out.



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2. What do you consider key principles of teamwork? How would you resolve a disagreement between team members?

For me, a team is not a static unit. It thrives by the successful combination of different members that complement each other. Although each team member brings their own skills and competences into the teamwork; it is essential that all team members share common values and a team culture. The European Youth Forum is based on shared principles and values which must be part of any team that works within the organisation. In order for the team to be functioning effectively it is essential that a common vision exists. Therefore, the common goals of the European Youth Forum should be recognised as central and important by each team member. Only if all team members are working together and identifying themselves with the common goals, a feeling of cooperation and togetherness is created within the team. Beyond that an open communication is key to a successful team structure. As the board is taking strategic decisions jointly the flow of information needs to be going towards every member of the board allowing full transparency and trust into the processes. Another aspect that I would highlight in the sense of creating an effective and reliable team would be to flatten the hierarchies within it. Although the board and certain elements of the organisation are structured in a hierarchical way and both responsibilities and hierarchies are necessary for some functions within the organisation it is more helpful to reduce the impact of strict hierarchies without questioning the roles of certain team members. However, responsibilities must remain throughout all processes. It should also be possible for each team member to flag any concerns at any point. Beyond that it is an essential element of a team to allow its members to develop themselves. This is generated by several means but one of the most successful and integral ways in a team is to offer a positive feedback culture. It is therefore absolutely important that team members acknowledge each other's successes and celebrate positive outcomes that was generated by a successful process which could be and impactful advocacy work. This is necessary both in the individual communication between team members who are giving feedback to each other but also within the entire team. These mechanisms are not natural components of any newly formed team hence why it is necessary that a team building process is initiated at an early stage and facilitated throughout the continuing work of the team. Although the above-mentioned measures should prevent conflicts from arising it is by no means certain that they will not occur. It is therefore essential for those team members who bear responsibility within it to recognise conflicts at an early stage and to start analysing them. Hence safe spaces need to exist where potential elements of conflicts can be solved and discussed. If individual



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discussions do not resolve the conflict a mediated process might be the next appropriate step.



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3. Vice-presidents are the trusted 'ears' of the Board. How will you ensure you are accessible and trusted? How would you bring a concern to the President / Secretary-General that had been shared with you?

As a vice president of the platform I would always aim for an equality between the different board members regardless of their 'position' within the board. The board needs to be a safe space that allows a harmony between its members and ensures that it functions as a team so that each board member can always rely on the rest of the board when they are facing difficulties; whether it is a structural or a personal issue. Combining one's private life with the volunteering as a board member of an international youth organisation is not always easy and the natural physical distance between individuals can be challenging for each board member even in non-COVID times. Therefore, I would work together with the fellow vice president on establishing a system that would be used to regularly check in with fellow board members. Each vice president would be responsible for a set of board members with who they would regularly discuss their needs and worries. Throughout the previous mandate I've already worked on establishing a well-being system for board members. As a vice president I would see it as my duty to be approachable by each and every board member whenever problems arise. I would however see it as my duty to discuss the personal well-being of my fellow board members at least once per month which I would do through a system of scheduled individual calls. This would also be used to exchange knowledge and ideas that would positively feed into the overall work of the entire board. While I will aim to be accessible through the above-mentioned means, I will ensure fellow board members that any discussion between me and them is taking place in a safe environment and remains strictly confidential. However, it is also essential that the board has common spaces where it trains its team skills. Therefore, I would also see it as my duty to arrange joint meetups outside the regular board meetings that increase the solidarity, dynamics, cooperation, and friendship among board members. I would forward concerns towards the president or the secretary general anonymously unless the board member raising the concern explicitly states that they want to be named. If the matter only concerns the board, the issue would be flagged by me with the president and I would ensure a safe space that is solution oriented. Confidentiality remains at the centre of all communication should issues arise and I would ensure that the code of conduct of the European Youth Forum is going to be maintained throughout the entire work of the board. If the board member wishes to be involved in presenting the concerns, I would offer myself as a mediator in the dialogue between them and the president or the secretary general (if applicable). I would see it as an essential part of my work



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as vice president that any concerns of board members are taken seriously and resolved quickly and, if possible, by means of a dialogue.



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4. What is the best public speech you have ever seen/watched? Why? What is your personal experience in public speaking?

Although this is not an easy question to reply to since there is a variety of amazing public speeches that I've watched in my life, there is one that really stands out: It is the TEDx Talk of Brené Brown. She is a researcher of interpersonal relationships, a professor and social worker. The specific talk is on "the power of vulnerability". It stands out among all the other presentations and public speeches no matter whether they were given by politicians, activist or professors since it combines all the good elements of a perfect speech: it is lead by a narrative framework, funny, confident and empowering although it deals with a sensitive topic. She manages to present her topic with a strong yet inviting body language and has a close relationship with her audience by embracing their reactions. What's more, her talk reaches a climax and closes with one of the most empowering phrases: "I am enough." The overall package of her appearance and public speech convinces the audience to stick with her throughout her entire presentation and leaves the audience moved by it.

Public speaking has been a very important part of my voluntary work in the past few years and I was lucky to have gained many competences through my involvement in different youth organisations. The mandate in the board of the European Youth Forum has provided me with a variety of public speaking events during which I was able to expand my skills on panels, as a key-note speaker or simply during a presentation as a guest speaker in a workshop. I am passionate about public speaking and really enjoy the moment of interaction with the audience. At the beginning of our current mandate we received a professional training on public speaking which enlarged my skills in this field. Since I have been a public speaker even before the current mandate, I facilitated an internal public speaking training for board members myself. Prior to my mandate in the board of the European Youth Forum I practised my public speaking skills in a variety of settings ranging from events in youth organisations, during political party congresses, as a guide for historical sides or simply as a trainer in different non-formal education settings. Although the pandemic has changed the general setting of our external representation, public speaking remains a key of advocacy work. Hence it is key to transmit the core messages in an appealing setting while one is not sharing a physical panel or is not seeing an audience. Luckily, I have been able to practice this skill a lot in the recent months and can therefore interact with a virtual audience in an effective manner. Beyond the classic field of public speaking, I am constantly gaining a lot of public speaking skills in my daily work as a teacher for secondary high schools. Although I'm still finishing my professional education in that field, I'm teaching



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almost on a daily basis which is always accompanied by both interpersonal communication and public speaking skills.



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SECTION 3 - Self-assessment

This section looks at the different skills and competencies that the Board as a whole should have when they come together as one body. This is to ensure that the Board as a body has all the necessary skills and competencies through the various individuals that compose it.

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How to fill it in?

7 competencies are presented and explained in the matrix below. Each candidate is invited to self-assess their competencies by rating from **1 to 5**, meaning:

- 1 - Expert**
- 2- Experienced**
- 3 - Ok**
- 4 - Less experienced**
- 5 - No experience**

The candidate can provide further explanation if needed in the last column.

Competencies	Explanation	Why	Self-assessment	Short justification of your response
Leadership	<i>Ability to provide vision to the organisation and to lead by example.</i>	The Board will have to lead the conversation to develop the next Strategic Priorities.	1	I've been a board member and even president of several local youth policy institutions since I turned 16. Furthermore, I have let and organised more than a dozen different international youth meetings in the sector of non-formal youth education. The past two years on the board of the



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				European Youth Forum have provided me with countless insides on how to lead an international youth organisation including how to develop the strategic priorities during the first year of the current mandate.
Governance	<i>Understanding of the principles of good governance, the organisation's structure and functioning & the distinction between the roles of the Board, Management and Secretariat.</i>	The Board will need to ensure oversight of the work of the different bodies of the organisation (CBMA, FCC, Secretariat etc.)	1	After two years on the board of the European Youth Forum I am highly experienced in the governance of the European Youth Forum. I know the different bodies, how they function and how they are linked to the statutes. The mandate has seen a close cooperation between the different bodies hence I got all the insights into the functionalities of the different bodies. Beyond that I have a long history as an international youth delegate to the European Youth Forum prior to my work as a board member and have therefore been familiar to the functioning of the different bodies for a long time. My work on other board of youth organisations like e.g. DNK provided me with an immense inside into a variety of principles of good governance.
External representation	<i>Ability to represent the organisation and bring key messages to relevant events and meetings.</i>	The Board is the public face of the organisation. Board members are invited to attend and represent the organisation at numerous events and meetings.	1	As I elaborated above, I have a long history of public speaking and am highly experienced in representing different youth organisation and especially the European Youth Forum. I have represented YFJ as a board member for more than 90 days externally during the first year of my mandate and am thus used to represent the organisation on a variety of settings. The external representation within the board of the European Youth Forum however includes a lot of strategic thinking during different steering group and planning committees which I have also done towards different institutions ranging from the CoE (especially the North-South Centre of CoE) and the EU.
Financial management	<i>Ability to interpret financial documents</i>	The Board is financially and legally responsible for	2	I have a lot of experiences in overseeing finances in different boards of youth organisations and managed to even apply for funds myself in the past. During the



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	<i>and trends to assess financial health of an organisation.</i>	the organisation and has oversight of the finances.		current mandate I was involved alongside my fellow board members to keep the oversight of the finances. Being on the board of YFJ implicates huge financial responsibilities which deepened my understanding of the financial management of this organisation.
Policy & Advocacy	<i>Ability to provide strategic direction to the development of the organisation's policy positions and advocacy actions.</i>	The Board has to provide direction to the development of policy positions (policy papers, resolutions, positions etc.) based on the Work Plan and Strategic Priorities, adopted by the Member Organisations	1	The current mandate has seen the development and adoption of several essential policy papers that expanded YFJ's positions on issues like climate change and future of work but also saw the adoption of the new strategic priorities. Here I was tasked to provide my strategic input and expertise as a board member. I also co-facilitated the drafting process of the University on Youth and Development's declaration that was adopted by the membership during the second COMEM in 2019. During my previous work as DNK's international representative I have been familiar with the policy directions of YFJ for a long time and given my strategic input from both the perspective of a member and a board member.
Team work	<i>Ability to work in a constructive manner within teams and with different people bodies of the organisation.</i>	The Board is made of 11 volunteers and has to interact with various other actors (other Board members, Management, Secretariat, working structures, Member Organisations etc.)	1	I have always worked in a team environment whether it was during my work as a volunteer in different youth organisations or as a co-creator of different projects. I have had several professional trainings on how to foster sustainable team structures during my time at the Goethe Institute and participated in several informal team building activities of which I organised one myself for the mandate of the current board. To me, both a good atmosphere and a functioning team are essential indicators for a functioning organisation.
Members & Stakeholders relations	<i>Ability to engage with a wide range of actors with different interests.</i>	The Board is the main interlocutor of the organisation and the main contact point	2	During the mandate I have tried to stay closely connected to as many organisations as possible and fostered the cooperation wherever I saw the potential to do so. I have co-facilitated the drafting process of the UYD's declaration. Before my time on the board, I cooperated closely on behalf of



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		<p>for Member Organisations. It also has to engage with various stakeholders (institutions, partners, media etc.).</p>	<p>DNK with NYCs in the frame of the Eastern Partnership of the EU (e.g. National Youth Council of Ukraine – NYCU, National Youth Council of Belarus – RADA) as well as with the twelve NYCs of the BICC-Cooperation. Together with LNU, LSU and ALIANSI DNK is one of partners in the RADA-Coalition, supporting the work of the youth organisations in Belarus. The solidarity with member organisations that are affected by shrinking civic space is one of my core topics which is why I think that the solidarity between member organisations is one of the biggest advantages of YFJ.</p>
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