

European Youth Forum

Framework document to work towards the United Nations

Adopted by the General Assembly
of the European Youth Forum
19-21 October - Brussels (Belgium)

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1 Introduction

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) representing European youth, acknowledges, encourages and respects the right of young people to participate at all levels in society, including participation at the global level. The European Youth Forum works to influence the shape global society, in all spheres, not only in those fields including the word "*youth*".

According to its Charter, the UN has four purposes: to maintain international peace and security, to develop friendly relations, to co-operate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights, and to be a centre for harmonising the actions of nations. The European Youth Forum supports these ideals, which include the promotion of tolerance, justice and solidarity at the local, national and global level.

The European Youth Forum recognises the UN System as one of the main global actors and it works to ensure that the UN System recognises the role of youth and the benefit of working with actors such as the European Youth Forum. The European Youth Forum is an "NGO with consultative status to the Economic and Social Committee of the UN (ECOSOC)". ECOSOC is one of the main policy-making organs of the United Nations. This consultative status means that all relevant documentation is received from the UN and the European Youth Forum is able to gain access to consultation meetings where NGOs are allowed to participate.

It should be noted that the European Youth Forum has a large and diverse membership of national and international non-governmental youth organisations and also that it has limited resources to work with the very large United Nations System. Often each member organisation of the European Youth Forum has its own priorities vis-à-vis the UN System and therefore finding a balance between what is desired and what is achievable is essential.

This document seeks to clarify the role of the European Youth Forum in the UN area and ensure that its work toward the UN complements members' activities, taking into account member organisations' needs and matching them with the resource capabilities, that is time and money, of the European Youth Forum. This document on "future strategies towards the UN" seeks to inform the European Youth Forum's internal planning process, particularly the creation of the Work Plan 2001 - 2002, which is the organisation's main planning tool.

2 UN policies of interest to young people

In order to understand young people's thoughts on policy priorities for the United Nations, the European Youth Forum does not need to look further than the outcome of the World Youth Forum III, that is the document written in 1998 known as the *Braga Youth Action Plan*. This political document is a central reference point for all European Youth Forum policy as it highlights a number of areas that the youth movement throughout the world wishes to focus on in its work toward the UN. Some of the main points from the Braga Youth Action Plan are detailed below: -

- Poverty eradication and development

This includes an assessment of the impact of the debt crisis on young people and a focus on the need to strengthen networks committed to the task of effective poverty eradication.

- Education, formal and non-formal

All education should be free and available at all levels. Governments should and must recognise and promote the importance of non-formal education and formal education through the incorporation of the teaching of languages, including local and indigenous languages, global citizen education, emphasising universal concepts such as human rights, intercultural understanding, environmental protection, sustainable development and gender equality.

- Health

Health issues should be addressed through the implementation of a integrated national health policies with the active participation of youth, through co-operation between youth NGOs, governments and the UN system.

Other priorities include the fight against HIV/AIDS; the provision of youth friendly health services; and the implementation of reliable research, monitoring and assessment concerning the health needs of young people.

- Employment and social development

Unemployment is a complex problem with multi-faceted socio-economic effects, and should be tackled by governments, social partners, youth NGOs and the UN system.

- Human rights, including youth rights

Human Rights education must be recognised as a basic human right. There is a great opportunity for youth organisations to actively participate in the decision-

making process that concerns human rights education. Pressure should be exerted on the UN to produce a youth-friendly compendium on existing youth rights. There should be a UN Special Rapporteur on Youth Rights.

- Participation of young women

Young women must be given the opportunity to actively participate in the society in which they live and therefore all government policies should ensure equality of access and opportunity for young women.

- Participation of all young people

Attention must be paid to the creation of suitable meeting places at the global and regional level that enable an exchange of experiences for all types of youth work, with particular reference to young people living in poverty, indigenous youth, disabled and people requiring protection from violence.

The political priorities outlined above may be related to specific parts of the UN system that may act as possible co-operation partners¹:

- Poverty eradication and development

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat/UNCHS)

- Education, formal and non-formal

United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

- Employment for social development

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

- Health

World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

¹ This list is by no means exhaustive. It merely serves to act as an indicator or reference.

- Human rights, including youth rights

United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the (UNHCHR), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Office of the (UNHCR), UNICEF

- Women's rights

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

- Participation of young people

UN General Assembly, Commission on Social Development, UNESCO, UN Summits, UN conferences on Youth, UNICEF

Areas of the UN covering a wide variety of these points:

UN General Assembly, Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Secretariat specifically the inter-agency meeting on youth (agencies, secretariat and regional youth organisations), the UN Youth Unit, the UN Youth

Fund, the UN Advisory Committee on the Youth Fund, UNDPI (department of public information) and also the UN Commission for Social Development.

3 Methods of action toward the UN

In order to achieve the priorities mentioned under Point 2, the European Youth Forum may use these the following specific means:

an integrated "cross-sectoral" approach, that is an approach which identifies youth issues throughout the UN System rather than just focusing on those areas where youth is mentioned in the title, therefore, the European Youth Forum must be known as a point of contact with the UN youth divisions where they exist within the various UN agencies. The European Youth Forum should identify key persons within each UN agency responsible for youth in order to empower member organisations to act on their own initiative.

Also, the European Youth Forum may participate and represent European youth in meetings making use of the consultative status with ECOSOC by sending representatives to relevant meetings and sessions, ensure information exchange between the UN system and its member organisations (MOs), and become involved in the process of defining a common strategy for its MOs.

In accordance with the priority areas defined by the European Youth Forum Bureau, the European Youth Forum should offer itself as a co-operation partner to the relevant UN agencies and programmes.

4 Conclusion - policy priorities toward the United Nations System

In addition to setting policy priorities, attention must be paid to the organisational capacity of the European Youth Forum to practically implement these ideas. The main instrument for converting these ideas into effective practice is the European Youth Forum's Work Plan. Therefore, this document offers the following points for consideration under the next work plan (Work Plan 2001 - 2002), taking into account the resources available for their implementation.

- There is a need for the creation of a relevant UN compendium on existing youth rights
- The European Youth Forum should work to increase the number of - and improve the co-ordination among - youth representatives at UN assemblies, conferences, summits and sessions
- Work should be done on co-operating with the UN system in the battle against HIV/AIDS
- The European Youth Forum should work for the continuation of the World Youth Forum on a 3 year basis as a representative body of non-governmental youth organisations. The European Youth Forum should work to make sure that the outcome of the World Youth Forum of the UN System (WYF/UN) is taken into account by the UN General Assembly.
- The European Youth Forum should work with the UN to provide a list of all UN programmes and agencies that have youth divisions and units, thereby allowing member organisations to work with the entire UN System
- The European Youth Forum should monitor and influence the work of the UN Commission on Social Development, that is the Commission charged with formulating youth policy. This work may be extended to include any special summits and their follow-up, such as the recent World Social Summit "Copenhagen +5" process, and any other meeting that has a direct impact upon this work
- The European Youth Forum should monitor and influence the annual Commission on the Status of Women and any related process, such as the recent World Conference on Women and its follow-up, the Beijing +5 Summit.
- In recognition of 2001 UN International Year of Volunteers, the European Youth Forum, directly or through its member organisations, should actively participate in policies and activities, to promote, support and celebrate volunteerism now and in the future.

- The European Youth Forum should develop concrete propositions on issues indicated as a priority in this document.
- The European Youth Forum should assist its member organisations to prepare the World Youth Forum of the UN System, by organising a regional European Youth Forum of the UN System.
- The European Youth Forum should monitor and influence the work of the UN in combating racism, in particular, to participate in the UN conference on racism in 2000.
- The European Youth Forum should facilitate European Participation in the UNESCO's Youth Forum.
- The European Youth Forum should participate in the Advisory Committee of the UN Youth Foundation.
- The European Youth Forum should monitor and influence the processes related to global conferences and UN-GA special sessions on topics of particular relevance to Youth, such as the Children Summit in 2001.