



European Youth Forum

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

A *Introduction*

Good and productive co-operation between Youth NGOs and the United Nations System is a requirement for both parties in the work to improve the situation of young people on the global level. This co-operation has great room for improvement. The current mechanisms, with the World Youth Forum of the UN System (WYFUNS) as the main frame for encounter between Youth NGOs and the UN System, have not provided results corresponding to the expectations of Youth NGOs.

The WYFUNS is a sporadic event, not fully integrated into the UN's programmes and benefiting from only very minor funding - more often than not it is the Youth NGOs themselves that have to take the burden of much of the costs associated with this forum.

B *Decision-making versus implementation of policies*

The interaction between Youth NGOs and the UN system can be divided in two levels:

- Influence political decision-making
- Influence implementation of policies

B.1. Political decision-making

The WYFUNS in its current format has not had any significant influence on the political decision-making in the UN. The UN has already 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 to be able to present concerns and proposals when national governmental delegations gather to take political decisions at the General Assembly, Special Sessions, Conferences, Specialised Commissions and other meetings.

Youth NGOs can influence the political decision-making through:

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

In order to be effective in actions towards the UN, Youth NGOs need to be provided with information about the mechanisms of decision-making in the UN system. Furthermore, for those youth organisations which do take part in decision-making at the UN, further "targeted" information should be provided on the complex decision-making processes.

The UN Youth Unit could play a stronger role in this work through providing information to Youth NGOs about youth-relevant issues and perspectives in UN meetings and processes, promoting co-operation between Youth NGOs lobbying in the UN-system, as well as promoting youth delegates in governmental delegations at UN meetings

B.II Implementation of policies

WYFUNS has been the primary contact point between Youth NGOs and the UN system. Considering the level of expectation among Youth NGOs, this contact has not worked well due to a number of concerns, for example:

- A lack of financial and human resources;
- A lack of support by the UN systems and the national governments;
- A lack of results regarding the actual implementation of policies in the UN system, and
- A lack of follow-up and monitoring, as well as limited multiplier-effect.

Therefore, the conditions on which the WYFUNS are arranged, prepared and followed up need to be improved drastically if it is to be worthwhile for Youth NGOs to prioritise this arena for interaction with the United Nations System.

C Consultative meeting on youth

The European Youth Forum would like to suggest a new and additional mechanism for consultation with the UN - a "Consultative Meeting on Youth". This meeting would

supplement the WYFUNS, and one of its aims would be to promote and improve the WYFUNS.

C.I Format and participation in the "Consultative Meeting on Youth"

Such a meeting should take place once every year and this meeting will serve the following purposes:

- To secure the general co-ordination between Youth NGOs and the secretariat level in the different parts of the UN System
- To follow-up the Dakar and Braga declarations, the main youth-led declarations toward the UN System
- To set criteria for future WYFUNS, making sure that they are better organised and more effective in the future

Therefore, the consultative meeting on youth would act as a link between Youth NGOs, the UN System and a full WYFUNS. Until the proper conditions for the WYFUNS occur, or other alternative forms of interaction is developed, the Consultative Meeting on Youth will be the main arena for general interaction between Youth NGOs and the UN system.

The meeting would consist of the following types of participants:

- Regional youth platforms
- International Youth Organisations
- Relevant / interested parts of the UN system (agencies, programmes, initiatives, departments etc.)

C.II Responsibilities of youth organisations

The Youth NGO representatives at the meeting should ensure:

- Global geographical participation (through regional youth platforms).
- Multiplier capacity, through extensive membership and broad alliances.
- Possibility for partnerships for the participating parts of the UN System on issues where Youth NGOs and the UN System have common interest.
- Lobbying strategies towards national decision-makers.

C.III Aims and issues for the "Consultative meeting on youth":

Aims

- Input to the elaboration, decision-making and implementation of policies of different bodies / actors in the UN system
- Input to the follow-up and implementation of the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy and the Braga Youth Action Plan
- Partnership between Youth NGOs and UN programmes and agencies
- Increase knowledge, among youth organisations with multiplier capacities, about the work of the different parts of the UN-system

Issues

- Topics proposed by UN bodies, or youngsters themselves through their representative organisations, according to their policies and priorities.
- Exchange of information regarding ongoing UN-processes
- Promotion and implementation of priorities shared by Youth NGOs and the UN System

C.IV Expected results of the "Consultative meeting on youth":

- Improved plans for the implementation of political decisions taken by UN bodies.
- Closer partnerships between Youth NGOs and UN bodies.
- A commitment from Youth NGOs to use their multiplier effect in issues where UN bodies and Youth NGOs have common aims and priorities.

C.V Technical aspects concerning the hosting of this meeting:

It is natural that the UN Secretariat will be responsible for arranging the meeting. This is due to the fact that the UN System will be the main beneficiary of this interaction. The UN Youth Unit could be responsible for the preparations of the meeting, based on the input from different UN bodies and agencies. The UN Youth Unit will then also be responsible for the technical and logistical aspects of the meeting.

The costs for Youth NGOs, including travel, should be covered by the UN system. This is of special importance when it comes to the regional youth platforms – in order to ensure participation from all geographical regions, and thereby securing global geographical representation. It is possible that the UN bodies that propose topics for the agenda share responsibility for ensuring financial resources for this meeting.

D Conclusion

The European Youth Forum would like to propose a new "Consultative meeting on youth" in order to strengthen dialogue between Youth NGOs and the UN System, to build a link between the on-going activities of youth organisations and the UN, to follow-up the Braga Youth Action Plan and the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy, and also

to improve the functioning of future World Youth Forums. The "Consultative meeting on youth" will be a form of permanent dialogue between youth organisations and the UN, funded by the UN and occurring on an annual basis. This meeting will be responsible for maintaining a high-level of effective contact and creating the stability that will lead to long-term productive relationships between youth actors and the UN.

The major channels for general youth NGO participation towards the UN system would be:

- WYFUNS
- Youth delegates at the UN GA, as well as other relevant UN meetings
- Consultative meeting on youth

The European Youth Forum should facilitate space for discussion among member organisations in order to present and adopt further developed policies at the Council of Members meeting in Spring 2002, including the following items:

- Evaluation of WYFUNS (Dakar)
- Co-ordination of political lobby work towards the UN
- Clarifying aims and objectives for European Youth Forum policies towards the UN
- Ensuring active participation of NYCs in the work towards the UN.

E. Follow-up

The European Youth Forum will include in the agenda of the Council of Members meeting previous to the consultative meeting a point of discussion about UN and will include the items to be put forward to the UN.

- **Web-links:**

Fourth Session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System Dakar, 6-10 August 2001:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/forum/index.html>

Braga Youth Action Plan

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/library/index.html>

World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/library/index.html>

Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/forum/dakar.doc>

The UN Youth Unit

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/>

Relevant documents:

- Framework document to work towards the United Nations (ASSEMBLY 0624-2Ke-final, adopted by the GA November, 2000)
- Framework for the development of tools for global youth co-operation (ASSEMBLY 0616-2Ke-final, adopted by the GA November, 2000)