



## Policy Paper

# A Youth Vision for Co-operation and Development - principles and institutional relations -

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*This policy paper further develops the ideas of the position paper 'Youth Responses to Global Issues - consultative practices'<sup>1</sup> and provides a framework for the European Youth Forum to work in a globalised world, by prioritising institutions and thematic content, as well as by defining the principles of participation in institutional processes leading to decision making.*

## **Introduction**

Globalisation relates to global flows of capital, goods, knowledge, people and technology. It reflects the growing interrelation and interdependence between people, communities and economies around the world. It impacts on areas as sensitive as poverty, human rights, environment and employment. At the same time, it makes dramatically visible the divides between and within countries and regions.

Globalisation has introduced important changes in the international political architecture where international institutions with a global scope of action are growing and changing the traditional relations between states and between those and their citizens. The different processes of regional integration are currently designing new spaces of a political, economic and social nature. A global political agenda and commitments are currently framing the way the different countries address issues of a global dimension. Global decisions taken inside international institutions have a direct influence on the lives of young people worldwide.

As youth organisations we need to further develop our capacity to participate in global political processes and actions in order to strengthen our role in the elaboration, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the decision making processes of the international institutions. It is crucial to secure the legitimacy and representativity of the input to these processes so that it reflects the needs and aspirations of young people worldwide.

If we consider the United Nation's definition of youth (15-24 years old), youth represents currently 20% of the world's population, meaning more than 1 billion young people in the world. 60% of the youth population live in the developing countries of Asia, 15% in Africa and 10% in Latin America and the Caribbean. Only 15% of the world's youth population live in developed regions. At the same time, half of the world's unemployed are youth; almost 240 million live below the poverty line (1 USD/day); around 7000 become infected by HIV/AIDS daily and more than 130 million do not have access to basic education; many live in rural areas or remote communities and lack access to opportunities and development resources.

When looking at these figures, it becomes clear that global policies are mainly a question of development and that development policies need to have a strong youth dimension. Development can only be achieved when we live in peace and we will not have peace while social justice, gender equality and democracy are not fully implemented worldwide. In this context education, and non-formal education specifically, constitutes a means for young people to have the knowledge and the tools to be active and responsible citizens.

## **The Global Vision of the European Youth Forum**

The view of the European Youth Forum is that globalisation can be translated into concrete benefits for peoples and countries everywhere and that development must

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<sup>1</sup> COMEM 0715-03 adopted at the Council of Members in Rome on 21-22 November 2003.

be achieved globally. For it to happen, the interrelation and interdependence of the issues and processes must be recognised and sufficient assistance must be given to the integration of those who are left behind.

The vision of the European Youth Forum is that of an interdependent and peaceful world based on mutual respect and solidarity, knowledge, health, social and economic justice and environmental sustainability.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for:

➤ **Sustainable development worldwide**

Sustainable development is the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs”<sup>2</sup>.

In order to keep options open for the future generations, economic growth must not be at the expense of natural resources and environment or social development and cohesion.

It is crucial to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, when 85% of the world’s youth population live in developing countries. The developed world needs to support the developing countries in combating poverty, poor health, stopping environmental degradation and achieving democracy and good governance both politically and by allocating financial resources for development strategies and co-operation between countries. It is also essential that this co-operation is realised in an equal partnership for development, involving all the parties as stakeholders in the process.

➤ **Long-lasting peace**

War and conflict set in motion an endless cycle of violence, destroying human life as well as the potential for economic and social development. More than being just the absence of war, peace lies on the presence of structural social economic, cultural and political stability.

Action towards building lasting peace needs to focus on prevention and on addressing the causes of conflict. The respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the struggle for social justice and against poverty worldwide are essential.

Children and youth are most affected by conflict and there is no war or conflict, which directly or indirectly does not involve young people. In this context, education is paramount to building a culture of peace that promotes mutual dialogue, exchange, understanding and respect.

➤ **Link Human Rights to human development**

By looking at the prevailing situations of extreme poverty, violence and war, economic inequality or ecological threat, we can understand that we have been failing to respect the so-called third generation of rights. While the civil and political rights, as well as the social, economic and cultural rights are nowadays commonly accepted, even though they continue not to be fully respected, the collective rights that embrace the perspective of the future generations continue to lack recognition.

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<sup>2</sup> as defined by the United Nations High Commission on Environment and Development (the “Brundtland Commission”) in 1987.

Collective rights of peoples and societies are based on solidarity. They imply the recognition of the right to development, to a shared and fair exploitation of natural resources, to peace, to basic health care, to communication and humanitarian assistance.

These rights need to be fully recognised as universal, inalienable and interdependent, as well as a pre-condition for societies to ensure the adequate conditions for the implementation of Human Rights everywhere and especially in the developing world.

➤ **Equal opportunities**

Throughout the world, gender discrimination and stereotyping limit the full development and participation of girls and young women, as well as of boys and young men. Until both genders have the same opportunities, their fundamental rights will be denied and the conditions for sustainable human development will be unfulfilled. Youth organisations have a powerful role to play in the development of autonomous, supportive, responsible and committed young people in a truly equal society. It is vital to promote the understanding of gender issues by policy-makers and stakeholders in order to take account of women's needs and achieve a more gender-sensitive global governance.

➤ **Democracy and good governance**

Legitimate decision making lies on its participatory, accountable, transparent, responsive and inclusive process and in following the rule of law.

The concept of democracy and good governance needs to apply at the world level. It needs to be defined universally and leave no room for selective application, be it in the social, economic or political, as well as the internal, bilateral or multilateral fields.

Good democratic governance is as much an aim as it is a vital component of development. The current system of global governance shows a weak political will to jointly undertake effective actions to tackle the global divides. International institutions whose policies affect people all over the world must give developing countries greater access to the policy design and decision making, increasing both the ownership and the commitment to their implementation.

➤ **Social development**

Governments and international institutions must show a concrete political commitment towards creating a fair and equal world where everyone matters. All citizens in a country and in the world should have equal opportunities to accede to resources and the benefits derived from them, as well as to contribute to the development of their societies. Equal employment opportunities and equal protection against discrimination on the basis of age, gender, social, economic or cultural background must be given to all, and special attention must be given to the integration of minorities and immigrants.

40% of the 160 millions unemployed are young people and many more have jobs that are unproductive or poorly paid and subsist on the margins of the economy. Considering the existence of a global workforce, to address the global unemployment

problem requires concerted efforts in education and adequate training for decent and productive jobs alongside social development. Employment creation needs to be based on a framework of social justice, equality and solidarity, especially between the north and the south and in relation to human dignity and to focus on eradicating poverty.

➤ **Universal access to education**

Today's society is a society of knowledge, where education is the means that can empower people and provide them with the needed knowledge and skills to be active citizens. Non-formal and formal education needs to become the foremost priority of development policies in every country and globally if we are to bridge the gap between those who have access to knowledge and those who do not. The access to education needs to be universal, regardless of age, gender and social, cultural or economic backgrounds. Moreover, in a changing world, education can no longer target solely the young people; lifelong learning and training are vital to facilitate the integration into the labour market and to adapt to change.

Non formal education constitutes a key tool to help people to learn to participate in society and to respect the essential values of living together. If people want to make informed choices about the present and the future they need to be aware of the influences and consequences of those choices. Human Rights and development education raise awareness and understanding of how global issues affect the lives of individuals, communities and society in general and, therefore how to influence and shape the world for the better.

### **The Principles of Global Youth Co-operation**

Young people are not only a vital large sector of the world population but are also most affected by the challenges and problems that appear globally. The current divides that prevent development call for solidarity, international co-operation and coordination between youth organisations all over the world, with the common aim of empowering youth and making young people full citizens and active agents of change in our societies.

The European Youth Forum encourages its member organisations to contribute to the capacity-building of youth organisations from other regions and thus strengthen their role in global youth co-operation.

The European Youth Forum believes that youth co-operation should ensure that objectives and actions, resources and agendas are prioritised according to a global perception. Global co-operation between youth organisations contribute to maximise resources and to rationalise efforts. The advocacy work of youth organisations at the global level must be based on a regional knowledge and approach and must be built on the national and local perceptions and implementation capacity.

An effective participation of young people in global decision making processes and policy implementation implies that youth organisations with a global and regional scope of action are able to:

- exchange information, experience and concerns
- influence political processes and decisions of international institutions working/impacting on youth

- increase co-operation at the regional level in order to be stronger and overcome individual limitations
- work together on common thematic priorities and to put focus on global youth work

It is vital that the youth organisations that come together at the global level maintain a close link to the regional, national and local levels in order to secure outcomes that are faithful to reality. Hence, it is necessary to guarantee that the youth organisations are membership based, representative and have a strong grass root presence in the different regions of the world.

The European Youth Forum believes that the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO), by bringing together regional youth platforms and international youth organisations with a global outreach (representing non-formal education organisations, rural, political youth, trade unions, entrepreneurs, students, etc), constitute a coalition of youth organisations that are representative and legitimate both in the eyes of international institutions and of the youth movement worldwide. The European Youth Forum will therefore promote ICMYO as the most legitimate process of youth organisations when it comes to institutional consultative practices on youth issues at the global level and will actively contribute to strengthen it.

Simultaneously, the European Youth Forum recognises that the conditions for the establishment of efficient democratic youth structures are not yet uniformly present and satisfactory in all the regions of the world. It is vital that we continue to promote regional integration processes of youth organisations and to contribute to consolidate the regional youth platforms, namely by improving their organisational procedures and openness to diversity. The European Youth Forum together with its partners in the Global Co-operation Coordination Committee (GCCC) and in ICMYO should identify and establish means and projects of co-operation to strengthen regional youth platforms, so that they become the most representative and efficient interlocutors between the young people of the respective region and the regional and global institutions.

### **The Relation of the European Youth Forum with International Institutions**

The World Programme of Action to Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond<sup>3</sup> defines strategies and policies, identifies priority areas and establishes the means of implementation at the national, regional and global levels, stressing youth participation. Together with the five new issues of concern identified at the Expert Group Meeting on Youth (Helsinki, 2002) it represents the agreed political framework for youth at the global level.

The Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes<sup>4</sup> establishes the commitments of the World's Youth Ministers to increase youth participation.

(Article 12 of) the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises the right of children (under 18) to directly express their opinion and to fully participate in the decision-making process.

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<sup>3</sup> A/RES/50/81, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> A/53/378, 1998.

(Article 27 of) the Universal Declaration on Human Rights recognises the right of every individual to participate in the life of a community.

(Paragraph 153 of) the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development calls for the participation of youth in development programmes<sup>5</sup>.

(Chapter 25 of) the Agenda 21 calls for the involvement of youth in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of the related programmes.

Coming from the side of youth organisations, the Braga Youth Action Plan<sup>6</sup> and the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy<sup>7</sup> represent the common position on the role of youth in human development. They call for the development of a new partnership between all the parties involved in global policies and for the mainstreaming of youth policies. They call for the recognition of young people as actors in development; for the allocation of adequate resources to young people to enable them to become active partners in development; for the equal participation of all young people; for youth participation in the national and local, regional and global levels of the decision-making processes.

In addition, the Millennium Declaration set concrete measurable development objectives and a timeframe to achieve them. Most of the international institutions have embraced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and are working towards their achievement. Most of the MDGs are directly related to the youth population and therefore constitute a key framework for youth organisations.

Together, these documents constitute the normative framework that guides the actions of the European Youth Forum at the global level. The challenge is to make the link between all of them and to bring the youth dimension into the MDGs. Simultaneously it is crucial that national governments live up to their commitments to finance development and direct financial means to achieving the MDGs.

In order to achieve that, there are a multitude of international institutions with which the European Youth Forum could engage in dialogue. Taking into account the resources and capability of the European Youth Forum a prioritisation is needed. Furthermore, the European Youth Forum will annually evaluate the outcomes of the international processes according to defined criteria.

- At the *global level*, the European Youth Forum will prioritise international institutional processes which:
  1. deliver concrete results for young people and/or youth organisations within a reasonable amount of time;
  2. experience a committed involvement from the Youth Forum member organisations in terms of involvement in the process;
  3. involve youth according to good practice.
- At the *regional level*, the European Youth Forum will work with the relevant sectors of the European Union and the Council of Europe on European issues with a global dimension.

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<sup>5</sup> "153. [Agreed] Promote and support youth participation in programs and activities relating to sustainable development, through for example supporting local youth councils or their equivalent and by encouraging their establishment where they do not exist."

<sup>6</sup> the outcome document of the III Session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, Braga, Portugal, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> the outcome document of the IV Session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, Dakar, Senegal, 2001.

- At the *interregional level*, the European Youth Forum will cooperate with the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the Ibero-American Intergovernmental Youth Organisation (OIJ), which play an important role in youth co-operation between Asia and Europe and Europe and Latin America, respectively. Furthermore, the European Youth Forum should seek channels of co-operation with the African Union on youth issues.

There are as well many different ways that dialogue or co-operation could materialise. Taking into consideration that it is necessary to be effective and efficient the actions of the European Youth Forum should complement and not overlap with the activities and operational capacity of its membership.

- The European Youth Forum in its relations with international institutions will focus on advocating the establishment of permanent or structural spaces for dialogue and consultation with youth organisations as regards policies that affect youth.
- The European Youth Forum will coordinate the political inputs to international institutions together with the regional youth platforms and international youth organisations with a global outreach through the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO).
- The European Youth Forum will as well advocate and facilitate the participation of youth organisations, and its member organisations more specifically, in the design and implementation of programmes and operations that international institutions develop at the international or national and local levels.