



European Youth Forum Contribution to the Review of the
World Programme of Action for Youth

May 25, 2005

Background to the European Youth Forum

The European Youth Forum is an international organization established by national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organizations to represent the interests of young people from all over Europe. It is the youth platform in Europe representing youth organizations in international institutions - mainly the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. It serves to channel the flow of information and opinions between young people and decision-makers. The European Youth Forum has 93 members made up of national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organizations, which are federations in themselves, bringing together tens of millions of young people from all European countries. The European Youth Forum works to empower young people to actively participate in the shaping of Europe and the society in which they live. Through our member organizations and our representative role we want to improve the living conditions of young people as European citizens in today's world. The European Youth Forum works for the interests of all young people in Europe. As a platform, we are the representative body of our members in contacts with the institutions and partners in the youth field.

The European Youth Forum and the United Nations

The European Youth Forum is committed with the United Nations Youth Focal Point in contributing to the process of evaluation of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) for the year 2000 and beyond.

The European Youth Forum maintains working relations with the UN General Assembly, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission for Social Development. It has special status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which plays a central role in youth issues. At the level of the UN Secretariat, the Youth Forum's interlocutor is the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The European Youth Forum has also developed relations with certain specialized UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, including UNICEF, ILO, UNESCO and World Bank.

Area 1: Education

Action 1: *Governments agreed to “Improving the level of basic education, skill training and literacy among youth”*

Action 2: *Governments agreed to promoting “Cultural heritage and contemporary patterns of society”*

Action 3: *Governments agreed to “Promoting mutual respect and understanding and the ideals of peace, solidarity and tolerance among youth”*

Action 4: *Governments agreed to providing “Vocational and professional training”*

Action 5: *Governments agreed to “Promoting human rights education”*

Education and training are of utmost importance to young people today in order to ensure their personal development, active participation in society, employability and to prevent social exclusion. The traditional view of education tends to focus on its formal, institutionalised nature. However, education is a lifelong process from cradle to grave. It is also a life-wide process, taking place in formal, informal and non-formal contexts.

The European Youth Forum is particularly interested in non-formal education: learning that takes place outside formal institutions in alternative structures such as youth organisations. Much of our work focuses on promoting greater recognition of non-formal learning in youth organisations. We would like to see non-formal learning given the same status as formal learning. We also try to create greater links between the two to ensure a more holistic approach to education and training.

The European Youth Forum held a symposium in Cyprus from 13 to 15 September 2002 to discuss the Youth Forum's vision for the future of education policy in Europe. Thirty representatives of youth NGOs as well as experts in the field of education met for three days to discuss different aspects of education policy. Examples of good practice in the recognition of non-formal learning in youth organisations were provided.

Particular emphasis was placed on non-formal learning since youth organisations are one of the main providers. Workshops were held on the recognition of formal and non-formal learning. From the workshops, it became evident that while the member organisations of the Youth Forum are in favour of general recognition of non-formal learning that takes place in youth organisations, there is wide diversity of opinion on what forms of recognition are most suitable. It was felt that there are different opinions as to what is meant by recognition and the terms that apply and that greater clarification is necessary. In order to follow up on the outcome of the symposium, a discussion paper has been drafted investigating ways of creating greater links between formal learning in schools and non-formal learning in youth organisations.

Formal Education

The European Youth Forum's work in the area of formal education primarily relates to the European Commission's education programmes. The Socrates Programme (which includes the well-known and successful Erasmus programme) promotes exchanges, transnational projects and study visits of pupils, students and teachers from 31 European countries.

The European Youth Forum is especially active in promoting actions one (Comenius), two (Erasmus) and seven (Joint Actions), set under the Youth program adopted in 1999, for the period of 2000 through 2006. We give information and advice to our 93 member organisations about the programme. We update them on recent developments in the programmes and remind them of application deadlines.

The European Youth Forum also promotes the EU Leonardo Programme for vocational education and training, and gives information and advice to member organisations. We were invited by the Commission to participate in the EC's European Forum on Transparency of Vocational Qualifications which investigates ways of recognising non-formal learning in the work place. The European Youth Forum worked on the implementation of its Action Plan which included measures to create a European format CV and Certificate Supplement. Europass, the single framework for qualifications and skills in the EU, was adopted at the end of 2004 by the Council of Ministers of the European Union and the European parliament. Europass is a portfolio that, for the time being, consists of five documents. The Europass CV and the Europass Language Passport, a form to describe language skills based on an established framework, are completed directly by citizens. The other Europass instruments are issued by competent organisations to citizens who undertake a particular learning experience: Europass Mobility, a record of experiences of transnational mobility for learning purposes; the Europass Diploma Supplement, a personal document, developed jointly with the Council of Europe and UNESCO, issued by educational establishments along with a higher education diploma, outlining the student's educational pathway; and the Europass Certificate Supplement.

Our policy on formal education is very much in line with the EU's Future Concrete Objectives of education as set out by the Commission in January 2001. As stated in our 'Strategy and Key Objectives for a Youth Policy in the European Union' 2001 the Youth Forum wishes to see the open method of co-ordination used: to promote open access to high quality formal education for young people at all levels, ensuring that they have a say on what they learn and how they learn. To ensure that the number of 18 to 24 year olds with only lower level education who are not in further education and training should be halved by 2001 to ensure that strong guidance should be given to provide individualised support to young people.

The European Youth Forum follows carefully the Bologna Process launched in 1999 by European ministers of Education. Currently 45 countries take part in this process. The aim is to establish a European Area of Higher Education, to be realised by 2010. The process is based on recognition of Diplomas, quality recognition and a quality assurance framework. The European Area of Higher Education is closely linked with the goals of the Lisbon strategy, launched in 2000. The Lisbon Strategy endeavours to

make the European Union "*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*". Consequently, young people and especially those undertaking different forms of education, both formal and non-formal, are deemed necessary for the innovation and dynamism needed to drive the Strategy forward.

Non Formal Education and Life Long Learning

By 'non-formal learning' we mean all learning that occurs outside formal education institutions in alternative structures. We believe that youth organisations are very important actors in the field of non-formal education. By participating in youth organisations, young people develop skills relevant to different contexts and have the opportunity to put them immediately into practice. We have published two reports on the subject. 'Building Bridges For Learning: The Recognition and Value of Non-Formal Education', a study carried out in 1999 for the European Youth Forum by Dr. Sahlberg, looks at how youth organisations contribute to non-formal education. The Youth Forum report 'Staying Alive: The Non-formal Learning Domain in Europe', looks at the state of recognition of non-formal education.

The European Youth Forum believes that through their activities in youth organisations, young people acquire important skills such as communication and interpersonal skills, leadership skills, planning, team-work, conflict resolution, intercultural awareness, management, problem-solving skills, language skills, debating etc. In youth organisations, young people are encouraged to develop these capacities to the full.

In addition, through their active participation in youth organisations, young people also develop qualities such as commitment, involvement, responsibility, solidarity, democratic awareness, motivation, participation, initiative, respect for others, tolerance and self-confidence. Therefore, we believe it vital to develop appropriate methods to recognise such skills and qualities.

The European Youth Forum has been very active in contributing to legislative developments in lifelong learning policy. The Commission produced a Memorandum to develop a strategy to promote lifelong learning in Europe.

After a six-month consultation process with national governments and civil society the Commission produced a Communication on Lifelong Learning, 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality' in November 2001. It states that the four broad objectives of lifelong learning are to promote personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability/adaptability. These four areas are very relevant for the work of the European Youth Forum.

The European Youth Forum was invited by the Commission to participate with five other NGO networks in the Consultation on the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. This clearly shows that the Commission recognised the European Youth Forum both as an important stakeholder in the broader field of education and as a centre of expertise in regard to non-formal education. As part of the consultation process, the European Youth Forum asked its member organisations to offer their opinion on the Memorandum and to make recommendations for the Commission's Communication. They were also invited to provide examples of 'good practices' in lifelong learning in

their organisations. The results were incorporated in a report presented to the Commission in August 2001.

An NGO conference on lifelong learning was held in Brussels on 10 September 2001. Member organisations of the European Youth Forum were invited to attend workshops based on the six key messages of the Memorandum and to suggest concrete actions for the Commission's Communication. The main findings of the conference were published.

Based on the findings of the Consultation on the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, the Commission published a Communication on Lifelong Learning, 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality'. The Youth Forum Response was adopted by the Bureau on 6 April 2002 and widely circulated. It sets out our key demands for a lifelong learning policy for young people. While we welcomed the Communication, we regretted the fact that few recommendations were made to promote non-formal learning for young people. We urged the Council to take the 'youth dimension' of lifelong learning into consideration in its draft Resolution.

Following active lobbying on the part of the European Youth Forum, a document dealing with the value of non-formal learning was discussed by the Council of Ministers of Education. At the meeting of the Working Group on Youth on 14 February 2002, the Ministers examined how this form of learning was acquired in youth settings and how it contributed to active citizenship. The Council published a Resolution on Lifelong Learning on 30 May 2002. The Youth Forum welcomed the fact that the Council took the 'youth dimension' into consideration in its broader definition of 'lifelong' learning which makes special mention of non-formal learning for young people. We also welcomed the special mention given to the youth sector and the need for validation of non-formal learning.

In November 2003 the European Youth Forum adopted a policy paper on youth organisations as non-formal educators - recognising our role in defining its position on the recognition of non-formal education, defining the terms that are usually used.

In conclusion, the European Youth Forum believes that:

- the contribution youth organisations make to non-formal education should be valued by local and national authorities and educational institutions.
- the skills and competencies acquired by young people in non-formal education activities should be appropriately recognised by the relevant national and European institutions, schools, universities, trade unions and employer organisations.
- increased funding should be made available from local authorities, national governments and international organisations to youth organisations for activities that encourage non-formal learning. This is essential if there is to be equal access to non-formal education that takes place in youth organisations and if non-formal education is to be put on an equal footing with and given the same consideration as formal education

Active Citizenship through Education

The European Youth Forum believes that active citizenship depends on involvement, participation and influence in political, social, economic and cultural communities. Global shifts in values and rapid social, economic and political change are altering the relationship between the individual and these communities. The decline in traditional structures has led to growing anomie, isolation and more spontaneous individualist methods for expressing values and beliefs. The European Youth Forum is concerned about the falling rate of participation of young people in their communities.

The European Youth Forum believes that youth organisations have an important role to play in promoting active citizenship. Through their participation in youth organisations, young people learn skills and competencies that will be necessary for active participation in other communities throughout their lives. They learn to be committed, to take initiative and to be responsible for their actions. They learn how basic democratic structures function.

The European Youth Forum has set up a Steering Group on Education with representatives from eight youth organisations in the field of education to develop a policy on 'life wide learning for active citizenship'. Two weekend workshops on citizenship have been held to draft the paper. Our policy paper on "Life wide learning for active citizenship" was adopted by the Council of Members on 20 March 2002.

Mobility

The European Youth Forum believes that mobility of young people - through youth exchanges, spending time in another country to study, work or volunteering - is necessary to ensure intercultural understanding, to improve young people's language skills and to give a greater appreciation of the diversity of Europe.

However, there are many obstacles to mobility, including lack of resources, lack of recognition of the value of mobility, uneven distribution of opportunities, social and cultural resistance to the idea of mobility and legal and administrative barriers. In the 'Resolution on Mobility of Young People in Europe', the European Youth Forum sets out its recommendations on how to remove obstacles to mobility for all young people.

We believe that:

- mobility should be promoted from an early age
- by 2010, at least one in three young women and men ending compulsory education should have spent at least six months in another country
- the resources available for the mobility of young people should be at least tripled over the next three years
- the mobility of teachers and trainers should be encouraged
- all administrative obstacles should be removed
- opportunities for mobility should also be available for the unemployed and third country nationals
- All Member States of the Council of Europe should sign the European Convention on the promotion of Transnational Long-term Voluntary Service for Young People.

These recommendations, as well as our previous Position Paper on Mobility, were formulated in view of the adoption of an Action Plan on Mobility by the EU Council of Ministers. We are actively following the developments on the Council's mobility Recommendation of July 2001.

The European Youth Forum also plays an active role in the EU YOUTH programme. The Youth programme aims to contribute to the non-formal education of young people through exchange activities and the European Voluntary Service (EVS) within the EU and non-Community countries. We provide information and support to member organisations on the different actions. We participate in the selection panels for the Youth Programme at European level and are also an observer on the Programme Committee and take part in working groups on the Youth Programme.

In 2004, the European Youth Forum focused its reflection and action on the obstacles to mobility. In April 2004, the Forum adopted *Guidelines for the removal of legal obstacles to mobility in Youth Work*, targeting mainly the problems related to visas. The EYF will launch in the second part of 2005 a campaign on mobility issues, focusing especially on barriers to mobility.

Work Plan 2005 - 2006

The European Youth Forum's work plan for 2005 - 2006 emphasises education as a key area for development. In line with the work plan the European Youth Forum commits itself to:

- promote the development of non-formal education policies within the co-operation framework of the Council of Europe, the EU and UNESCO
- strengthen the relationship and complementarity between formal, non-formal and informal education in the framework of life-long learning
- extend the opportunities of transnational mobility to more young people and at an earlier age including those not benefiting from post-secondary education
- promote the inclusion of development education into all curricula on all education levels
- promote diversified foreign language learning in schools

In order to achieve these objectives, the European Youth Forum commits itself to the following actions:

- make youth achievements visible in the relevant working groups of the EU
- advocate the Junior Erasmus Programme as an individual, long-term school students' mobility programme and as part of the *Integrated Action Programme in the field of lifelong learning*
- develop an action plan on the implementation of the Concrete Future Objectives in
- Education and Training as they were developed by the EU Council in Lisbon 2000
- follow up the Bruges/Copenhagen process lobby for the adoption of 'better recognition of youth work and youth activities, including non-formal education' to be one of the next objectives in the OMC

- lobby the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers on the future generation of youth, education and training programmes
- follow closely the developments of the Europass framework for the transparency of qualifications and competencies and lobby for its effective implementation
- follow closely the development of the Council of Europe portfolio on non-formal learning and promote its use among Member Organisations once in place
- develop a Youth Forum position on quality development and on the validation and recognition of non-formal education to lobby the European Youth Forum's Institutional partners
- actively participate in the debates in the field of the recognition and validation of non formal education, advocating the educational role of youth organisations
- continue the Youth Forum's involvement in the co-operation framework of the Council of Europe and the European Union in the field of non-formal education

In order to achieve these action lines the European Youth Forum will carry out the following activities.

- organise a Training Day for the European Youth Forum Member Organisations on methods to promote the social and formal recognition of non-formal education through their activities

Area 2: Employment

Action 1: Governments agreed to promote “Opportunities for self-employment”

Action 2: Governments agreed to provide “Employment opportunities for specific groups of young people”

Action 3: Governments agreed to provide “Voluntary community services involving youth”

Action 4: Governments agreed to address “Needs created by technological changes”

Employment and social conditions are issues of great concern to young people from all over Europe. With high youth unemployment levels persisting in many countries it can be very hard for young people to find a firm footing in the labour market in a job that is of interest to them. Moreover, young people are more likely to work in unstable and temporary positions, with low wages and poorer working conditions than the rest of the adult population. Young people are also at high risk of social exclusion, particularly during the transition from education to employment. Over the last ten to fifteen years there has been a steady erosion in European countries in the access that young people have to social protection benefits, as well as in the real value of these benefits. This has meant that young people have become increasingly dependent on support from family and friends, and that the number of young people without an adequate income to support themselves has increased. The European Youth Forum works towards improving the social situation of young people in Europe, focusing on promoting the employment and social inclusion of young people and an adequate level of social protection.

In September 2001, the European Youth Forum organised a conference on the Social Situation of Young People in an Enlarged European Union for representatives of national youth councils from the candidate countries and the European Union and for International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations. The aim of this conference was to consider both the social situation of young people, especially those from Central and Eastern Europe, and the implications of enlargement in this field. The conference dealt with employment, social inclusion and equality.

Young people and the European Employment Strategy

The European Employment Strategy was launched in 1997 and aims at encouraging and promoting employment across the EU. The strategy was given significant political impetus by the commitment made at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 *to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*. This was again reinforced by the Stockholm European Council in March 2001 which set a target EU employment rate of 67% overall by 2005 and 57% for women by 2005 and 50% for older workers by 2010. The Barcelona European Council of March 2002 reiterated that full employment was one of the overarching objectives of the European Union. Most recently, at the Spring Council 2005, a mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy acknowledged that full employment, particularly for younger people,

was needed to sustain the EU's economic growth and combat the problem of demographic ageing.

The European Youth Forum has issued a position paper on the Revised European Employment Strategy calling for more detailed consideration of young people in the Strategy and by the Member States of the European Union. It makes recommendations for a stronger focus on increasing youth employment rates, improving the quality of employment for young people and promoting social cohesion and inclusion among young people in all the Member States.

All of this is vital not only for improving the lives and opportunities of young people themselves but will have an added economic benefit of reducing the burden on those in employment to finance the pensions of the older generation.

The European Youth Pact

At the 2005 Spring European Council the EU Heads of State and Government adopted a "European Youth Pact" as one of the instruments contributing to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives. Jacques Chirac, Gerhard Schröder, José Luís Zapatero and Göran Persson had proposed the Pact in October 2004. They pointed out the higher vulnerability of young people in society as well as the decreasing number of young people on the labour market due to the ageing population and proposed to elaborate a "European Youth Pact", to be included in the Spring Council Conclusions.

The European Youth Forum was glad to see the adoption of such a "European Youth Pact" by the European Council and its inclusion in the overall Lisbon Strategy. Going through education and training, taking the first steps on the labour market or – in much higher numbers than the average – facing unemployment, young people are much affected by policies in the fields of the economy, employment, social affairs, mobility, education and training... in short, the policy areas at the core of the Lisbon strategy. Consequently, the pact is a welcome addition in meeting the Lisbon objectives.

The Pact, as it has been finally adopted by the Spring Council, stresses the need for young Europeans to benefit from a set of policies and measures forming a fully integrated part of the Lisbon Strategy. Accordingly, it aims to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young people, and to facilitate the reconciliation of working life and family life. The European Youth Pact also includes the ambition to ensure the overall consistency of initiatives in these areas and to provide a starting point for strong, ongoing mobilisation on behalf of young people. It also notes that it is therefore crucial to involve all parties concerned, in particular youth organisations themselves. Lines of action are proposed for Member States to draw upon in the fields of employment, integration and social advancement; education training and mobility; and the reconciliation of working life and family life.

The European Youth Forum warmly welcomes this result of the European Council meeting and now calls for the objectives of the European Youth Pact to be fully taken into account in the development of the new integrated guidelines of the Lisbon strategy. The European Youth Forum hopes to see a far reaching and continued involvement of all the parties concerned, first and foremost national, regional and

local youth organisations and youth councils as well as the European Youth Forum, to work together to solve the issues of greatest concern to young people

Work Plan 2005 - 2006

The European Youth Forum's work plan for 2005 - 2006 emphasises employment as a key area for development. In line with the work plan the European Youth Forum commits itself to:

- promote active youth participation in the European Employment Strategy and the Employment OMC
- promote active youth participation in the Social Inclusion Process 2005 (OMC on Social Inclusion)
- increase the role of the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sports in the field of youth employment and social cohesion
- promote, encourage and facilitate the information exchange and the active cooperation of youth organisations active in the field
- promote the active participation in the initiative of the creation of a Youth Pact (under the Lisbon Strategy Agenda) and develop it as a European policy to guarantee concrete and positive outcomes for all young Europeans
- strive for a higher participation of socially excluded and marginalised young people in youth participation at all levels

In order to achieve these objectives, the European Youth Forum commits itself to the following actions:

- ensure and contribute to the implementation of the Council Resolution on a new European framework for cooperation in the youth field with regard to the employment and social integration of young people
- promote and actively participate in the partnership in the framework of the Youth Employment Network (YEN)
- lobby the European institutions for a greater consideration of youth in their policies on employment and social inclusion and aim for a quantitative commitment to raising employment levels among young people
- advocate the implementation of the objectives of the Youth Employment Network at the national level
- encourage closer involvement and cooperation of the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sports and other Directorates in the field of employment and social cohesion
- explore co-operation opportunities with the European social partners
- stimulate the membership of the European Youth Forum to exchange information, experience and best practice on social inclusion in youth participation

In order to achieve these action lines the European Youth Forum will carry out the following activities.

- organise a seminar on employment (unemployment, work, youth entrepreneurship) and precarious work and social inclusion

- develop a preliminary analysis for a possible campaign on job creation and sustainable development
- organise an information and networking day on social inclusion in youth participation
- start a working group on social inclusion in youth participation

Area 4: Health

Action 1: Governments agreed to ensuring “Provision of basic health services”

Action 2: Governments agreed to “Development of health education”

Action 3: Governments agreed to “Promotion of health services, including sexual and reproductive health and development of relevant education programmes in those fields”

Action 4: Governments agreed to addressing “HIV infection and AIDS among young people”

Action 5: Governments agreed to “Promotion of good sanitation and hygiene practices”

Action 6: Governments agreed to “Prevention of disease and illness among youth resulting from poor health practices”

Action 7: Governments agreed to “Elimination of sexual abuse of young people”

Action 8: Governments agreed to “Combating malnutrition among young people”

Health has recently become a new policy area for the European Youth Forum. In its last General Assembly the Member organisations decided to include in its 2005 - 2006 work plan a series of objectives and aims to be achieved and monitored by the Youth Forum.

In the last few months this area of work has been developed and the Youth Forum is currently involved in Alcohol Prevention Policy, in a partnership with Eurocare, and has engaged with DG Sanco of the European Commission on the HELP Campaign, an anti-smoking campaign at European level. The Forum also expects to continuously engage in similar processes in the coming months and years, namely in HIV/AIDS, obesity and nutrition, sports and outdoors activities and mental health, among others, with the goal of providing a youth input into the EU policy making on health related matters.

Work Plan 2005 - 2006

The European Youth Forum’s work plan for 2005 - 2006 emphasises Health as a key area for development. In line with the work plan the European Youth Forum commits itself to:

- promote awareness of health, sports and outdoor recreation issues amongst young people

In order to achieve these objectives, the European Youth Forum commits itself to the following actions:

- encourage initiatives taken by Member Organisations and partners on the prevention of health and life threats to youth such as HIV/AIDS and other serious communicable diseases, acute mental illness, exposure to accidents in the workplace and elsewhere
- monitor actions taken by the institutions on issues relevant to youth and health
- encourage actions promoting health rights and care and equal access to it
- support initiatives addressing substance abuse issues such as binge drinking, smoking and drug use
- support initiatives addressing health, diet and lifestyle issues
- provide support to Member Organisations for initiatives being run on health issues

In order to achieve these action lines, the European Youth Forum commits itself to the following activities:

- lobby for a link's page on the European Commission Youth Portal on programmes run by governments, NGOs, INGYOs and NYCs on health issues targeted at young people and have a link to it from the European Youth Forum website.

Area 9: Girls and Young Women

Action 1: Governments agreed that “Actions should be taken to eliminate discrimination against girls and youth women”

Action 2: Governments agreed to ensure “Universal and equal access to and completion of primary education for girls and young women as well as equal access to secondary and higher education”

Action 3: Governments agreed that “Discrimination against girls and young women should be eliminated in health and nutrition”

Action 4: Governments agreed to that “Girls and young women should be protected from economic and related forms of exploitation”

Action 5: Governments agreed to “Enact and enforce legislation protecting girls and young women from all forms of violence, including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, genital mutilation, incest, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, child prostitution and child pornography”

Despite the considerable progress made, gender equality amongst young people remains a pressing issue, especially in some areas of Europe. Young women and men do not have equal access to education and employment, and young women still have lower incomes than young men, with fewer opportunities to participate in society. For the European Youth Forum, a key concern is to raise awareness at all levels of society of the need to promote equality. In the youth field, it takes a very active role in promoting equal participation between young women and men in youth organisations, and in ensuring that this balance is reflected in the decision-making structures of youth organisations. The European Youth Forum's [Gender Equality](#) policy paper and [Young Women's Participation](#) policy paper lay out our key demands in the equality field.

The European Youth Forum believes that full participation of young people in all aspects of society is central to democracy. The European Commission's '[Social Policy Agenda](#)' of June 2000 sets the objective of promoting the 'full participation of women in economic, scientific, political and civic life' as a key component of democracy. Ensuring the full participation of women in society from an early stage is crucial to achieving this aim. The European Youth Forum therefore believes that the implementation of policies in the European Union to promote equal opportunities should take particular account of the discrimination faced by young women.

The European Youth Forum successfully lobbied for the participation of young women in the UN Beijing Platform for Action and the UN Beijing +5 process. In the 45th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2001, the European Youth Forum worked closely with the European Women's Lobby to highlight the need to address the issue of racism as it affects young people. It was also successful in advocating actions and strategies directed specifically at young women and girls.

Work Plan 2005 - 2006

The European Youth Forum's work plan for 2005 - 2006 emphasises gender equality as a key area for development. In line with the work plan the European Youth Forum commits itself to:

- promote Gender Equality and full participation of young women at all levels of decision making
- ensure that the principles of equality and balanced participation are respected in European Youth Forum activities
- advocate the real application of language rights and language equality in Europe
- promote the value of the diversity of individuals
- strive for an increased level of awareness of the multilayered character of discrimination and the diversity of identities

In order to achieve these objectives, the European Youth Forum commits itself to the following actions:

- advocate and follow the Beijing process
- contribute to the development of a European policy on anti-discrimination and ensure the mainstreaming of youth in it
- build on the European Youth Forum's previous experience in the field of gender equality to promote the full participation of young women in society
- lobby European States to pass or to reinforce anti-discrimination legislation
- cooperate with the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe in the implementation of the anti-discrimination policy in the *Revised Charter on the Participation of young people in local and regional life*
- lobby the EU and the Council of Europe to consider and adopt a clearer and fairer language policy in their infrastructures
- elaborate on existing anti-discrimination and equality policies and expertise amongst the European Youth Forum Member Organisations concerning discrimination on the grounds of disability, health status, sexual orientation, gender role, ethnic, cultural or religious background, minority status, citizenship, living in rural and remote areas or socio-economic background etc.
- facilitate the sharing of good practices in equality and diversity issues between Member Organisations
- distribute an education pack developed by the Member Organisations on how to prevent sexual harassment in youth NGO activities

In order to achieve these action lines, the European Youth Forum commits itself to the following activities:

- facilitate an expert meeting of members with experience on diversity management and promotion of equality issues in order to draft a policy paper on equality and diversity issues.

Area 10: Full and Effective Participation

Action 1: Governments agreed to “Improving access to information in order to enable young people to make better use of their opportunities to participate in decision-making”

Action 2: Governments agreed to “Developing and/or strengthening opportunities for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities”

Action 3: Governments agreed to “Encouraging and promoting youth associations through financial, educational and technical support and promotion of their activities”

Action 4: Governments agreed to “Taking into account the contributions of youth in designing, implementing and evaluating national policies and plans affecting their concerns”

Action 5: Governments agreed to “Encouraging increased national, regional and international cooperation and exchange between youth organizations”

Action 6: Governments agreed to “Strengthening the involvement of young people in international forums, inter alia, by considering the including of youth representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly”

Active participation of young people in society is a prerequisite for learning about democracy. Participation, however, is more than a learning process or that for gaining new skills. Real participation has to involve young people’s views being valued and young people having a real say in decisions and actions that affect them. Facilitating participation and motivating young people to participate more actively in society would help to ensure their continuing involvement throughout their lives as well as preventing alienation at an early age. A high level of participation of young people in society needs to be ensured through their involvement in decision-making at the local, regional, national and European level as well as at the global level. Policies to promote participation need to be backed up by support at all levels.

Following the European Commission White Paper “*A New Impetus for European Youth*”, the Ministers of the member states of the European Union agreed on a framework for European Youth Policy in June 2002. The process is going on in the framework of the Open Method of Co-ordination. It means that member States agree on common objectives to be implemented at the national level. Four common objectives were identified: information, participation of young people, voluntary activities and better knowledge of youth.

The European Youth Forum fully supports this process and follows carefully the implementation and development of these common objectives. The whole process is based on youth participation and involvement in society.

In order to support the participation of young people, the Youth Forum also supports the Council of Europe’s Charter, revised in May 2003, “*Revised Charter on the*

participation of young people in local and regional life". In line with many of its principles of participation the European Youth Forum believes that:

- Youth structures should be led by young people themselves. Young people are in the best position to represent and promote the interests of young people. The authorities should support youth structures and ensure their autonomous functioning.
- The vital role of youth organisations as vehicles in promoting the full involvement of young people as citizens should be fully recognised. Establishing a legal basis for their activities where voluntary work is recognised would contribute to youth participation at all levels in society.
- Youth policy should be developed in co-operation with young people and in accordance with their needs at all levels through integrated action and policy co-ordination. The involvement of youth concerns all areas of relevance to youth, not just youth policy.
- Consulting young people should be based on institutional provisions that guarantee their efficient involvement in the decision-making process.
- As full members of society, young people need to have the possibility to participate in the political debate. In order to facilitate it, governments have to remove legal barriers and give the voting right and the right to be elected at 16.
- The local level represents the first level of government that young people come into contact with, and the active participation of young people at this level is crucial to engaging youth in their own communities.
- Youth participation should generally start as early as possible, e.g. in youth organisations and in schools. For the participation of students, citizenship education should also be promoted in schools.
- To ensure the full participation of all young people, equal opportunities standards should be guaranteed by rejecting any kind of discrimination.

The YFJ believes it empirical that representative structures such as National Youth Councils and other such platforms, be non-governmental and independent in nature, in accordance with the principles of open and democratic society. Such independence is embodied in the following rights and privileges of youth organisations:

- The right to choose its own organisational structure, hereunder the right to decide upon its own statutes;
- The right to elect its own leadership and representatives through democratic procedures;
- The right to determine the composition of its statutory bodies and working structures;
- The right to take decisions on issues of membership;
- The right to select its working methods, including the right to have closed meetings for its members only, to set its own agenda, to determine the frequency and dates of meetings, etc;
- The privilege of accountability to its own members;
- The privilege of financial support from the government given freely without infringing upon the rights mentioned above.

The European Youth Forum promotes the right of young people to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, while recognising that youth organisations are of vital importance for the development of society. Youth organisations provide space for the participation of young people in civil society and a platform for the democratic expression of their views and the protection of their interests. Therefore, and having a strong focus on the Eastern Europe and Caucasus countries (EEC) and those of South Eastern Europe (SEE), the European Youth Forum continues to work for:

- the development of youth community work at all levels in society;
- the support of co-operation processes among youth organisations on national levels, which can lead to the establishment of a NYC;
- the development of the youth sector through active collaboration with institutional partners and INGYOs operating in the region.

Developing on this, the European Youth Forum together with Care International is nearing the end of its implementation of a 3-year Balkan Youth Project (2001-2005) aimed at further developing and strengthening the youth sector in the countries of SEE, as well as in promoting the development of youth policy. The Balkan Youth Project connects and integrates youth Organisations from the region with youth Organisations in the rest of Europe and promotes democratic values of youth participation and mutual understanding among the multiethnic population in the region. Achieving a high level of ownership of the local youth Organisations was seen as crucial for the success of the project, therefore a steering group composed of local youth leaders and activists was put into place and is responsible for defining the themes of the activities and monitoring the regular implementation of the project.

The project consists of four components:

- Training activities and capacity building of youth organisations;
- Europe-wide cooperation and contact-making opportunities;
- Youth policy advocacy;
- Information and networking.

In order to achieve the above, concrete activities are being carried out, such as training courses, contact for a, study visits, voluntary service exchanges, youth policy advocacy seminars, development of a youth organisations' resource manual and of a database on funding opportunities or creation of a regular newsletter.

Work Plan 2005 - 2006

The European Youth Forum's work plan for 2005 - 2006 emphasises participation as a key area for development. In line with the work plan the European Youth Forum commits itself to:

- promote the active social and political participation of young people at the local, regional, national and international levels
- reinforce the participatory role of youth organisations in society in generating active awareness of citizenship

In order to achieve these objectives, the European Youth Forum commits itself to the following actions:

- develop and promote tools for the inclusive and effective participation of youth
- promote the participation of youth NGOs in the decision making of the Youth Forum's institutional partners
- demand stronger support for participatory youth organisations from public institutions
- promote a wider recognition of volunteering in youth NGOs
- develop an action plan for the implementation of the 'Revised Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life' and lobby for its recognition and use on the local, regional and national level
- co-ordinate the efforts made by the Member Organisations to implement the Revised Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life
- follow and assist the implementation of the OMC common objectives on youth participation

In order to achieve these action lines the European Youth Forum will carry out the following activities.

- organise an event on Youth Participation in cooperation with the Youth Forum Institutional partners in the framework of the process of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) of the White Paper and the implementation of the Council of Europe *Revised Charter on the Participation of young people in local and regional life*

Conclusion

The European Youth Forum has, since 1996, been a source of youth participation on the European level, involving thousands of young people in the decision-making processes of the EU and providing informed and deliberative youth perspectives to the different working areas of the Institutions we work with.

We recognise that there is much left to be done in the youth field, and that our work will be a source of continuous effort to improve the living conditions of young people across Europe. In addition, it will aim to empower young people to become active helping young citizens to get involved in the daily life and decision-making processes of their societies.

This report is a reflection of the work we have developed in the past 10 years, under the same timeframe as the evaluation process of the worldwide implementation of WPAY.

The WPAY signifies for us the single most valid and important document on youth and on action for youth on at the global level, not only because it was made by young people for young people, but because its broad yet encompassing scope. The WPAY allows us to engage in a continuous development process, eventually leading to a better world where young people are no longer regarded as part of the problem but are viewed as a significant part of the solution.

As the name suggests, the work of the European Youth Forum focuses primarily on European youth and action for youth at the European level. Increasingly though and throughout recent years, our vision has grown to include young people everywhere. Consequently, we have engaged and continue to engage with a series of youth partners on the regional and global levels that we recognize as valid and necessary partners for the implementation of a global policy for youth, such as the WPAY.

These partners are as follows:

- The Global Co-operation Co-ordination Committee (GCCC) - is a network of regional non-governmental youth platforms from around the world. The GCCC was established in 1997 and arose from the need for regional youth platforms to co-operate and work together on common global issues affecting young people. The European Youth Forum convenes the GCCC at least once a year. The current members of the GCCC are: the African Youth Network (RAJ/AYN), Arab Youth Union (AYU), Asian Students Association (ASA), Asian Youth Council (AYC), Caribbean Federation of Youth (CFY), Latin American Youth Forum (FLAJ), Pacific Youth Council (PYC) and the Pan-African Youth Movement (MPJ/PYM).
- ICMYO Global level Youth NGO's - ICFTU - International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, IFLRY - International Federation of Liberal Youth, IFM/SEI - International Falcon Movement - Socialist Educational International, IFMSA - International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, IFRC - International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, IMCS/MIEC - International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS Pax Romana), IYCS/JECI International Young Catholic Students, IUSY - International Union of Socialist Youth, WAGGGS - World Association of Girl Guides & Girl Scouts, WFDY - World Federation of Democratic Youth, WOSM - World Organization of Scout Movement, YDC - Youth for Development and Cooperation, YMCA - World Alliance of YMCAs, YWCA - World Young Women's Christian Association

With these youth organisations the European Youth Forum has been developing a close partnership and promoting a better coordination of youth voices on the global level in order to better address the concerns and needs of young people everywhere. Based on a set of principles and criteria that have been approved by all, we have initiated a dialogue that is helping build bridges between youth organisations everywhere while strengthening the voice of youth.

The European Youth Forum recognises that the best advocates for youth matters are, and must be, Youth organisations that house and develop upon the same principles and criteria agreed on ICMYO.

These principles are as follows:

- Youth NGOs (35 years old as maximum age reference for representatives)
- Democratic processes
- Membership based youth organisations (assuring a link between the local, the national, the regional and the global levels)

- Accountability and transparency
- Legitimacy and credibility
- Constructive, positive common goals
- Effectiveness and efficiency impacts
- Sustainability of global co-operation
- Respect of cultural and ideological diversity and Human Rights

We believe in the WPAY and accordingly are ready to advocate it, as well as to assist in its implementation. However, for this implementation to become a reality we request that the following measures be put into action by the United Nations system and National Governments:

- Better Inter-agency co-ordination in the UN system on youth issues, with this co-ordination being promoted and maintained by the youth unit of DESA. This would be a concrete reply to the efforts of youth organisations in creating the GCCC and ICMYO.
- The creation of National Action Plans on youth based on the WPAY that involve both governments and youth organisations in its definition and further implementation.
- The creation of autonomous and independent national youth councils, composed of youth ngo's, while maintaining recognition of existing ones. This would guarantee the existence of valid, recognisable and accountable youth partners on the national level.
- The creation of a method of co-management between youth organisations and the UN System in all matters that are youth related or that concern youth issues, allowing youth organisations to be involved in the definition and implementation of policies and measures to be undertaken in the youth field.
- Request for more Youth Representatives by Governmental Delegations, being that these Youth Representatives must be real representatives of national youth and contribute for the promotion of youth views and issues next to governments and the UN system.