



#YOUTH2030

6th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum CONCEPT NOTE

Regional Session on Europe, North America and other States

31 January 2017
CONFERENCE ROOM E

9:30 – 11:00 am

United Nations Headquarters, New York

1. Background and context

The 2030 Agenda provides a unique opportunity to consider social, economic and environmental policies in an integrated and interlinked manner through comprehensive and coherent sustainable development strategies. In many parts of Europe, North America and other States, however, governments and institutions have yet to deliver on that opportunity. Many countries have not yet sufficiently considered the impact that the 2030 Agenda should have on their policies, governance and ways of working across the government as a whole. **Comprehensive sustainable development strategies** based on the 2030 Agenda are still lacking.

The situation of young people in Europe, North America and other States shows inadequate progress in relation to poverty eradication and shared prosperity in a changing world. In many cases, the **situation of young people has worsened over recent years**. Young people are among the most affected by economic crisis, austerity measures and cuts in social investment. In the European Union, young people are the group at highest risk of poverty and social exclusion and in OECD countries, children and young adults are 25% more likely to be poor than the population as a whole.

The alleviation of poverty and social exclusion is necessary to ensure that young people are granted **full access to their fundamental rights and freedoms**, have the opportunity to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life and enjoy an adequate standard of living and well-being. The promotion of shared prosperity requires welfare systems that are able to guarantee the social rights of all, including young people.

In many European countries, welfare systems lie at the heart of traditionally strong social models that protect and promote the economic and social well-being of citizens. In reality, however, young people face clear access barriers to these systems in many cases, with welfare



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systems that discriminate against young people on the basis of their age or are out of date and incompatible with the current realities faced by young people. Other countries within the region do not have such strong traditions of welfare systems or are witnessing a significant erosion of such systems due to austerity measures and political choices.

In a difficult economic situation and a context of decreasing living standards, rising inequalities, lack of quality jobs and a rise of precarious work, greater **risk of poverty and social exclusion for young people**, anxiety regarding increasing movements of people and the failures to guarantee the rights of migrants and refugees, citizens lack control over their common future. Young people are systematically underrepresented in the current political arena, often being excluded from decisions that affect them and future generations, as well as excluded from society and facing barriers in accessing their rights.

Too many young people feel remote from governments, institutions and policies, where bottom-up and participatory vision is lacking. Due to the **lack of youth political participation** and access to policy-making, policies targeting young people can tend towards short-term, tokenistic initiatives rather than long-term solutions, developed with young people's input and with the overall objective of sustainable development and shared prosperity.

Intolerance, misinformation, nationalistic and regressive tendencies, and xenophobic, racist and other discriminative behaviour are increasing in this economic, political and social system that has failed too many people. In both Europe and North America, however, there is evidence that young people remain open to cross-border cooperation, global solutions to global challenges, and solidarity. During particularly challenging times, the imperative to listen to young people and actively engage them in decision-making is even greater to ensure the cohesion of societies, the inclusiveness of politics and a sustainable path for the future.

Participation of and investment in young people is key. With strong investment in youth and access to their rights, young people can contribute enormously to society, to the promotion of shared prosperity and to sustainable development. European youth organisations are contributing to sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda, to poverty eradication and the promotion of shared prosperity in many different ways. However, without investment in youth and youth organisations and in the spaces, support and possibility for them to participate in decision-making around sustainable development, the work that youth organisations and young people are doing can only take us so far.

2. Objectives

The Regional Breakout Session for Europe, North America and other States will provide an opportunity for representatives of youth organisations, youth delegates, representatives of Member States, the UN system and other institutions to discuss the challenges the regions' youth is facing.



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Through a moderated, interactive discussion, participants in the session will exchange views and openly discuss the main concerns and opportunities regarding youth, poverty eradication and shared prosperity in the regions in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. Issues at stake

- Investment in young people and youth organisations.
- Young people's risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- Social protection and quality jobs for young people.
- The challenge of young people's access to rights.
- Young people's participation in democratic life and in society, including in politics and policy-making.
- Contributions of youth and youth organisations to sustainable development and promoting shared prosperity.
- Comprehensive sustainable development strategies and shift in macroeconomic policies towards inclusive and sustainable development.

4. Questions for the participants

- What are the specific challenges facing young people from Europe, North America and other States? How can regional and global frameworks help in addressing these challenges? What is required in order for these frameworks to provide a means of addressing the challenges?
- How can the 2030 Agenda support a reverse of the negative trends regarding young people's risk or experience of poverty and social exclusion in the regions?
- What measures should be taken in Europe, North America and other States to promote social inclusion, address young people's barriers to social protection and ensure access to rights for all young people?
- What measures should be taken to address youth participation in politics, in democratic life and in society in the context of the 2030 Agenda? How can these support and harness the contributions that young people can make to society, shared prosperity and sustainable development?
- In difficult political circumstances, how can youth organisations and young people ensure that their voices, experiences, expertise and ideas are heard to promote shared prosperity and ensure a sustainable path for the future? How can regional and global institutions support in this regard?

5. Suggested reading materials

Frameworks and institutional documents

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

EU Youth Strategy

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth_strategy/index_en.htm



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Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people's access to rights https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016806a93e2

Reports

[Young People and Social Inclusion – Excluding Youth: A Threat to our Future, European Youth Forum](#)

<http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2016/05/Excluding-youth-a-threat-to-our-future.pdf>

Shadow Report on Youth Policy: A youth perspective, European Youth Forum

<http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2015/10/Shadow-Report-on-Youth-Policy.pdf>

Young People and Democratic Life in Europe: What next after the 2014 European elections?, European Youth Forum

http://www.youthup.eu/app/uploads/2015/11/YFJ_YoungPeopleAndDemocraticLifeInEurope_B1_web-9e4bd8be22.pdf

World Employment Social Outlook: Trends for Youth 2016, International Labour Organisation

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_513739.pdf

Tackling the youth employment crisis: A macroeconomic perspective, International Labour Organisation

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_policy/documents/publication/wcms_190864.pdf

Youth in the Crisis: What went wrong?, European Youth Forum

<http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2014/11/YFJ-Publication-What-went-wrong.pdf>