



**Regional Breakout session: Europe, North America, Other States  
Wednesday 16 April, 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM**

IDENTIFICATION	
<b>Session/plenary title</b>	Europe, North America and Other States Regional Breakout Session: Youth perspectives on regional development - challenges, priorities, and actions for the SDGs
<b>Session/plenary focus</b>	Europe, North America and Other States: SDGs 3,5,8,17
<b>Session/plenary UN co-lead UN 1</b>	UNECE
<b>Session/plenary UN co-lead UN 2</b>	UNFPA
<b>Session/plenary youth co-lead 1</b>	Europe & North America Regional Youth Caucus: AEGEE-Europe (European Students Forum)
<b>Session/plenary youth co-organizers</b>	Soroptimist International
BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES	
<p>With new shifts in social structures due to evolving technologies and economic systems, children and youth must be considered and made a meaningfully engaged part in all decision-making processes. Global and local issues point at the clear fact that beings are interconnected, and we acknowledge that if one suffers, so do we all. Especially children and youth, who are oftentimes disregarded as inexperienced and not educated enough. This perception leads to many barriers when it comes to representation and meaningful participation in various spaces.</p> <p>The systematic vulnerability of young people originates from how they are represented in laws and policies, oftentimes leading to disadvantageous economic conditions, labor exploitation, and intersecting forms of slow violence.<sup>1</sup> According to UNICEF, an estimated 26% of deaths in children</p>	

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<sup>1</sup> Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). Nixon defines slow violence as harm that unfolds gradually over time, often unnoticed, with long-term environmental and social consequences, particularly for vulnerable communities.

under five years old can be prevented by addressing environmental risks.<sup>2</sup> Young people are also the ones inheriting polluted environments and civilizational diseases from older generations.

Due to the continuation of wars worldwide, economic tensions, and capitalistic greed the youth are often left without a voice and political influence. We perceive this forum as a chance to change that and speak up globally about what systematically impacts us from accessing a future we all deserve, and shift the priority in decision-making to a sustainable future for upcoming generations. This year, the youth of Europe and North America, representing some of the richest countries in the world, wishes to highlight the following struggles:

#### Decent work and the Digital Space:

Children and young people often times work more than adults over 35, due to pursuing socially demanded education to combat degree inflation, supporting their families, getting involved in volunteer or unpaid work, and striving to earn money to pay for basic necessities such as housing, food, and healthcare. Yet, our labor is left unnoticed, and our experiences not being valued in the same way as those of older generations. At work alone, those below 35 spend on average 27 minutes of 'free' work more than those aged 35-44, and even more than older age groups. At the same time, around 16% of the time they do not expect to receive a pay rise at their company<sup>3</sup>.

Young people are further narrated to be the ones spending most of the time on digital technologies, still, with no much more protection than any other age group. We are not informed about the what, why and how. Our data starts being globally available from before birth, impacting our social standing and opportunities. An unsafe internet environment, including a lot of false and debatable quality content is one that most young people are exposed to without notice. Their technological activity makes up a large part of profit for various global entities and corporations.

#### Technocracy and Inclusion:

Technocratic and bureaucratic approaches, which demand everything to be labeled and measured without room for personal uniqueness, stifle access to sustainable futures for new generations. Our health, including mental health, is increasingly facing new challenges and barriers that were less prominent in previous decades. Young people are often forced to conform to existing medical frameworks, yet they are not provided with sufficient, unbiased information. This lack of transparency can worsen overall health and have severe impacts on our holistic wellbeing.

The current social system often pressures young people, limiting their ability to explore and express their own visions for their lives. Many e.g. understand their gender roles differently, yet these personal perspectives are at times disrespected. When such things happen, children and youth may feel

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<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, "Healthy Environments for Children," *UNICEF*, last modified May 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/health/healthy-environments>

<sup>3</sup> ADP Research Institute, *People at Work 2023: A Global Workforce View - ADP Research* (ADP Research, April 2024), p. 13

compelled to follow norms that do not align with their beliefs, leading to e. g. feelings of shame, exclusion, and unworthiness<sup>4</sup>. They need a space to explore their own meaning in the world.

Those profit-oriented measures often overlook critical aspects of society, such as postwar waste and pollution, grassroots charity efforts, and inclusivity that isn't driven by financial gain. In a world increasingly shaped by data, individual faces and lived experiences can be forgotten. As a globally connected youth—many of us migrating, traveling, and adapting—we seek a meaningful connection with our surroundings, both social and natural. And we strive to collaborate to ensure that this connection is not only possible but sustained.

### OBJECTIVES OF SESSION/PLENARY

To foster intergenerational dialogue that facilitates the exchange of perspectives on current issues. This session aims to highlight the involvement of young people from Europe and North America in these challenges, demonstrate how youth and children are impacted by them, and identify the needs necessary to ensure a sustainable generational transition.

### OVERALL FORMAT/STRUCTURE

Dialogue between representatives of young people of Europe and North America and representatives of Member States. We are communicating with 5 Member States, representative for various geographical regions of ECE, to speak during the moderated panel talks. Firstly opening speeches of a moderator and the Ambassador of Poland, then moderated by questions talks in the presented format, then opening the floor to interventions of Member States and young people, questions and experiences of the young people that join the session, also in the presented format. For each of the guiding questions, firstly the youth speakers and Member States will deliver their speeches.

Time (11:30am-1:00pm)

Segment Structure:

7 min - Opening Speeches: Rochelle Prasad (moderator) and Honorary Speech of the Ambassador of Poland H. E. Krzysztof Szczerski in the 80 Anniversary of the End of the World War II

5 min (2 min each speaker) - Question 1: How are we going to ensure that young people can shape their educational pathways and freedom, without fear of remaining in or falling into poverty? - Panelists (a youth speaker and a Member State)

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<sup>4</sup> Roberts, A., Rosario, M., Slopen, N., et al., *Childhood gender nonconformity, bullying victimization, and depressive symptoms across adolescence and early adulthood: an 11-year longitudinal study*. (JAACAP, 2013), 52(2): 143-152

5 min (2 min each speaker) - Question 2: How are we going to ensure that young generations have access to resourceful digital space, without putting their data at risk of financial and personal abuse, and manage the just sustainable development of technologies, including so-called green technologies? - Panelists (a youth speaker and a Member State)

5 min (2 min each speaker) - Question 3: How to lessen the stressful work pressure that is currently put on young generations, and support their secure personal development in terms of health, mental health, reproduction, and financial stability? - Panelists (a youth speaker and a Member State)

5 min (2 min each speaker) - Question 4: What are tangible policy actions that would ensure non-conventional gender and parental roles are also equally supported, aside from the conventional ones? - Panelists (a youth speaker and a Member State)

5 min (2 min each speaker) - Question 5: How will the voices of even younger generations be included in shaping the social narratives, not leaving them out with nor tokenizing their unique perspectives and approaches, recognizing and providing support to their work? - Panelists (a youth speaker and a Member State)

54 min - Open Discussion/Q&A/Interventions - All attendees

4 min - Closing - moderator

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- How are we going to ensure that young people can shape their educational pathways and freedom, without fear of remaining in or falling into poverty?
- How are we going to ensure that young generations have access to resourceful digital space, without putting their data at risk of financial and personal abuse, and manage the just sustainable development of technologies, including so-called green technologies?
- How to lessen the stressful work pressure that is currently put on young generations, and support their secure personal development in terms of health, mental health, reproduction, and financial stability?
- What are tangible policy actions that would ensure non-conventional gender and parental roles are equally supported, aside from the conventional ones?
- How will the voices of even younger generations be included in shaping the social narratives, not leaving them out with nor tokenizing their unique perspectives and approaches, recognizing and providing support to their work?

### **NAMES AND TITLES OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)**

Speakers and moderators:

- Soroptimist International, Rochelle Prasad (moderator)
- MGCY (moderator To Be Announced)
- UN Co-Lead Agency (supporting moderation, To Be Announced)
- Kandamkulangara Sureshkumar Neelima Marymount Manhattan College, Student (Indian migrant in USA)
- Gojayev Roman Representative, Gender Hub Azerbaijan (Azerbaijani migrant in the UK)
- Ip Nathanael Canadian Institutes of Health Research (Canada)

**OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY EVENT/CONSULTATION**

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2025 Youth Assembly is a 2-day event, happening both online (30th March) and in person (1st April, Geneva). Its focus is on involving young people's experiences and suggestions through peer round tables, as well as developing a throughout paper, covering perspectives on current SDGs under review of the young generations. The outcomes from the Youth Assembly will be showcased during RFSD's High Level Policy Segment, and further intertwined into the opening speech of the ECOSOC Youth Forum's regional session.

The Youth Assembly, organized with the support of UNECE, aims to gather up young people from across the ECE region, providing them with space to share on observed by them issues regarding wellbeing, gender, work and economy, water spaces, and partnerships towards SDGs. Together with those issues, we hope to provide suggestions on tackling them (depending on the input of the participants). The event is fully youth-led and will include an hour of a panel with high-level speakers from UN Agencies.