



**ECOSOC
YOUTH
FORUM**

#YOUTH2030

8th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

ONLINE REPORTING

EUROPE, NORTH AMERICA AND OTHER STATES

“Empowering, Including and Ensuring Equality in Europe, North America and other States”

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IDENTIFICATION	
Session focus	Europe, North America and other States “Empowering, Including and Ensuring Equality in Europe, North America and other States”
Session lead	Stephanie Beecroft, European Youth Forum Jan Mayrhofer, European Youth Forum
Session rapporteur	Tina Hočevar, European Youth Forum
Session moderator	Tina Hočevar, European Youth Forum, With support from facilitators identified through MGCY and YOUNGO for smaller breakout groups.
Session note-taker 1	Nikita Sanaullah, European Youth Forum,
Session note-taker 2	Jan Mayrhofer, European Youth Forum,

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

What is the current landscape for this region or SDG, including issues, opportunities, recent trends, gaps, challenges?

Despite progress in some areas, young people in the region are still facing multiple challenges that jeopardise progress towards the 2030 Agenda. Youth unemployment, worsening inequality, climate change and other environmental problems, young people's lack of access to rights and challenges in quality and inclusive education due to poor education systems were all identified in the context of the youth pre-meeting to the 2019 UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and further discussed during this regional session.

In Europe, North America and other States, national governments are not sufficiently adjusting their policies to the SDGs. Change is mainly happening bottom-up, through initiatives led by local authorities or by youth organisations, and there are insufficient efforts to support that change and to promote connections between different levels of governance, policy-making and implementation. Governments are still not listening to the millions of young people marching for climate action in the region, and are not taking doing enough to avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis. In addition, tax evasion and avoidance, including by large corporations and wealthy individuals, exacerbate inequalities and make it more difficult for governments to finance the implementation of the SDGs.

There continues to be insufficient investment in youth, including in youth-specific services in mental health, for example, and a lack of youth mainstreaming across policies. Decision-making often remains closed and inaccessible to young people.

Young people face discrimination, in policy and in practice, just for being young. In some countries in the region, age-based discrimination is prevalent in laws and policies related to political participation, employment and wages, or social protection, for example. Some young people face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including but not limited to young women, young Muslims, young people of colour, young LGBTIQ people and young people with disabilities. There are insufficient efforts to support the social, economic and political inclusion of more marginalised and vulnerable young people.

Young people face barriers to accessing their rights to participation, education, employment and social protection. The discrimination and violation of rights that young people in the region face prevent them from being truly empowered, included and equal. If these issues are not addressed, young people will be left even further behind and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda will not be possible.

YOUTH SOLUTIONS AND ACTIONS

(What are youth doing to address the current situation and leverage opportunities? And what are some of the most transformative solutions?)

Young people and their organisations are leading the change and fighting pressing issues like climate change, both on an individual and collective level. They are well connected and able to mobilise through social media for collective action, as exemplified by the climate marchers. But youth are also using their power as individuals and the impact their choices can make. Youth organisations are raising awareness on sustainable consumption choices.

Young people and youth organisations also play an active role in their communities, using non-formal education and innovative approaches to raise awareness and create spaces to better understand local problems and find solutions collectively. Youth are particularly concerned about reaching the most vulnerable and marginalised groups and including them in the process. Beyond the community level, youth organisations are also promoting youth mobility and exchange from different cultures and backgrounds, thereby working on the foundations for shared innovation and transformative ideas across borders to find solutions to our global problems.

LOOKING TO THE HORIZON

What can the UN and youth do together to make sure young people's contributions have a deeper and wider impact, and that they are better served and engaged by member states?

The UN must work with Member States and youth organisations to ensure equal access to quality and inclusive education for all young people, irrespective of their background, as well as ensure recognition and validation of non-formal education and its role in empowering young people. In the transition from school to work, young people's equal access to opportunities must be promoted, including through the elimination of unpaid and poor quality internships.

There is a need for Member States, institutions and other donors to offer long-term funding for youth organisations to maximise the positive impact of their actions. Common guidelines for youth organisations to report on these actions should be developed as an important tool to secure funding by showcasing their work. The UN should further support youth organisations to connect across borders and at international level.

The UN System must make decision-making more responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative and support youth organisations in calling for Member States to do the same by opening new spaces for participatory democracy, involving local and national youth councils in policy processes, taking steps to increase youth participation in politics, and lowering the voting age to 16.

Finally, we must recognise that young people face age-based discrimination both in law and in practice, violating their economic and social, civil and political rights. The UN System should play an important role in highlighting and calling for the elimination of these laws and practices, together with youth organisations. The social, economic and political inclusion of all young people must be promoted if we are to achieve progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and truly leave no one behind.