



**ECOSOC  
YOUTH  
FORUM**

**#YOUTH2030**

## 8<sup>th</sup> Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

### DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

### EUROPE, NORTH AMERICA AND OTHER STATES

**8 April 2019  
CR 12, 1.45-3.45 p.m.  
United Nations Headquarters, New York**

IDENTIFICATION	
<b>Session focus</b>	Europe, North America and other States
<b>Session title</b>	Empowering, Including and Ensuring Equality in Europe, North America and other States
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<b>Session note-taker 1</b>	Nikita Sanaullah, European Youth Forum
<b>Session note-taker 2</b>	Jan Mayrhofer, European Youth Forum MGCY/YOUNGO (TBC)
BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES	
More than three full years since the start of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, many governments and institutions in Europe, North America and other States, are not yet using	

the potential of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a framework to develop social, economic and environmental policies in an integrated manner. More than 40 countries from Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand will have undergone Voluntary National Reviews on their progress towards the 2030 Agenda by the end of this year's High-Level Political Forum, and some have already volunteered twice. While there are some positive policies and promising movements in some countries, many States in the region are not demonstrating enough progress and failing to either adopt or implement comprehensive sustainable development strategies.

While access to primary and secondary education is generally secured across the regions, inequalities persist in access, as well as in educational attainment. Equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education remains more of a challenge in some countries in the region, as does education for sustainable development.

Youth unemployment rates are decreasing in many parts of the region, but still remain higher than for the working-age population as a whole. Young people are overrepresented among those involuntarily taking up temporary or part-time work, and face a higher in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate than other age groups in many parts of the region. Questions of access to jobs of quality, equal pay for work of equal value and access to labour rights are therefore unresolved for young people in the region.

Inequality is an issue of great concern in many States in the region, with inequalities within countries often on the rise. Young people face economic inequality, as the age group at greatest risk of poverty and social exclusion in the European Union, for example. Young people from more vulnerable and marginalised groups face further challenges.

The full access of young people to their fundamental rights and freedoms, including the opportunity to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life and access civil and political rights, is necessary for young people to be empowered, included and equal. Yet, young people in the region face barriers in accessing their rights by virtue of their age, often coupled with other forms of discrimination. Among others, young women, young people with disabilities or young migrants, face additional barriers, for example.

While the impacts of climate change may be less dramatic in this region than in other parts of the world, weather- and climate-related extremes have become more frequent. Countries in the region are not yet adequately living up to their commitments or their responsibilities to take urgent action to combat climate change and deliver upon the Paris Agreement. In response to this inadequacy, young people in many countries across Europe have begun organising climate marches on a regular basis, to call upon policy-makers to act against climate change.

Young people are systematically underrepresented in politics and policy-making, often being excluded from decisions that affect them and future generations. Many young people in the region continue to feel remote from governments, institutions and policies, where there is

insufficient transparency, accountability and inclusivity, and bottom-up and participatory vision is lacking. Policies targeting young people often 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. In response to such situations, young people have been trying to make their voices heard. In addition to climate marches such as Fridays for Future, young people in the USA led the March for Our Lives in 2018 in an effort to call for more peaceful societies. These are just some examples. Yet, even as these demonstrations take place, the shrinking of civic space is an increasing challenge in the region.

Intolerance, misinformation, nationalistic tendencies, xenophobic, racist, anti-migrant and other discriminatory behaviours are increasing in an economic, political and social system that has failed too many people and caused irreversible harm to the environment and natural resources. There is evidence, however, that young people remain open to cross-border cooperation, inclusion and solidarity. Young people and their organisations have a strong role to play in building and sustaining peaceful societies in the region.

Youth and their organisations are contributing to sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda 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.

#### **SESSION OBJECTIVES**

The objective of the session is 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, brainstorm on ideas and solutions to those challenges, and means for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The session will focus on the theme "Empowered, Included and Equal", and will particularly consider the SDGs under review at the High-Level Political Forum 2019: 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17. Discussions will focus on the challenges to progress in these areas, in particular as regards young people, as well as positive examples of governmental policies, young people's contribution, and their engagement in decision-making processes.

#### **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The session will identify challenges and positive examples in relation to SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17 to feed a regional perspective into the ECOSOC Youth Forum sessions focused on specific SDGs, and inform the work of the ECOSOC Youth Forum, High-Level Political Forum and other 2019 events. Recommendations to governments and institutions to further progress towards the SDGs under review and the 2030 Agenda as a whole will also be

formulated on the basis of the discussions. In addition to an outcome summary of the session, the discussions will provide a substantive foundation for participants to take forward into other sessions.

### **APPROACH USED TO GENERATE REGIONAL NEEDS ANALYSIS & CONTRIBUTION**

The session will be interactive, allowing participants to exchange views and discuss the main regional challenges, priorities, possible solutions, lessons learned and opportunities.

Given the number of expected participants, different facilitation methods will be used to allow as many participants as possible to input into the outcomes of the session. A European youth representative will moderate the session and participants will break into smaller, moderated groups to discuss challenges, ideas and recommendations.

Participants are encouraged to prepare to discuss the challenges facing young people in their country or in the region, based on data and quantitative evidence and perceptions of young people or policy positions within their organisations or institutions. Participants should also be prepared to share promising practices as regards policies, implementation of the 2030 Agenda or contributions of young people and youth organisations in their country or in the region.

### **OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW**

Indicative structure and flow:

- Who is in the room?

Participants identify themselves according to their region, what type of participant they are.

- Scene setting and introduction to flow of session

Moderator introduces background, objectives and flow of session.

- Agree or disagree?

Participants are asked whether they agree or disagree with a series of statements related to the theme and the SDGs under review and are offered the opportunity to discuss, with a focus on challenges to progress and positive examples.

- Group discussions

Participants break into smaller groups to discuss particular questions with a focus on identifying promising policy practices, examples of youth contributions and recommendations for governments and institutions.

- Feedback from group discussions

A summary of group discussions is provided to all participants to support the session organisers in formulating a summary of outcomes from the session.

This structure and flow may be subject to modification, including based on the number of session participants, to ensure interactivity, participation and opportunity for exchange.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Participants should be prepared to discuss the following questions and issues during the session:

- What specific challenges face young people in Europe, North America and other States, and how can regional and global frameworks support in addressing these challenges?
- How can we address equity gaps in access to quality and inclusive education, and education for sustainable development?
- How can we address the challenge of quality in relation to employment and how might this challenge change in the context of the future of work?
- What kinds of discrimination and challenges do young people face in accessing their rights and how does this impact their social, economic and political inclusion?
- How can governments strengthen climate action and how can we ensure that the true social and environmental costs are reflected in the market?
- What steps need to be taken to ensure young people's participation in peaceful, just and inclusive societies, including in politics, governance, policy-making and peace processes?
- How are young people and youth-led organisations contributing to sustainable development and what is needed from governments and institutions to support this contribution?
- What are the roles of different stakeholders in ensuring that the voices, experiences, and expertise of young people and youth organisations are listened to and taken into account in sustainable development processes at national and regional level?

## PREPARATORY EVENTS

A regional youth consultation organised in the context of the UNECE Regional Forum for Sustainable Development by the UNECE, the European Youth Forum, the UN Major Group for Children & Youth and the Issue-based Coalition on Adolescents and Youth in the region will serve to provide input for the session. The regional youth consultation, taking place on 21 March, will bring together around 70 people from the UNECE Region to identify challenges and solutions for the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals under review. Outcomes of the regional youth consultation will be taken forwards by the organisers of the regional session at the ECOSOC Youth Forum to inform the discussions.

Participants for the regional session at the ECOSOC Youth Forum are otherwise encouraged to prepare for the session through the suggested reading.

## SUGGESTED READING

Institutional documents (UN, Council of Europe, European Union)

- Global Education Meeting 2018, Brussels Declaration: [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/2018-12-07\\_brussels\\_declaration.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/2018-12-07_brussels_declaration.pdf)
- ILO, World Employment and Social Outlook Trends, 2019: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_670542.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_670542.pdf)
- Global Commission on the Future of Work, Work for a Brighter Future: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms\\_662410.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_662410.pdf)
- Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Youth and Human Rights: [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/39/33](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/39/33)
- 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](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016806a93e2)
- UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention): <https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf>
- Synthesis of the main messages of the reports of the Voluntary National Reviews, 2018: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20027SynthesisofMainMessages2018\\_0607.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20027SynthesisofMainMessages2018_0607.pdf)
- Eurostat, Sustainable development in the European Union: Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs at the EU context, 2018 edition: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/9237449/KS-01-18-656-EN-N.pdf/2b2a096b-3bd6-4939-8ef3-11cfc14b9329>

#### Additional background materials

- Europe Regional Consultation on Youth and Human Rights, 2018: [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Youth/Report\\_Regional\\_Consultation\\_Youth\\_and\\_Human\\_Rights.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Youth/Report_Regional_Consultation_Youth_and_Human_Rights.pdf)
- Youth Progress Index, 2017: <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/page-pdfs/Youth%20Progress%20Index%20FULL%20REPORT.pdf>