



Policy Paper On Global Governance

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Executive summary

Through the Policy Paper on Global Governance the European Youth Forum gives a youth perspective to the developments in matters that concern the entire humanity and are dealt with at the global level. It furthermore proposes ways of involving young people and their representative organisations in deliberations of a global scale and impact.

The United Nations is highlighted in this paper as the body most relevant to govern global matters, and one that has a remarkable record of standard-setting in the area of human rights. It is however challenged by a need to reform towards more legitimate decision-making processes, as well as by still lacking the willingness of its Member States to implement the many instruments that aim at ensuring human rights and human dignity.

Moreover, the Policy Paper moreover puts a strong emphasis on how youth organisations can build upon the United Nations' commitment to young people, and importantly contribute to its improvement and strengthening – if only they are given the opportunity and the means to do so. It also calls for the youth voice to be heard in matters of institutional reform, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and recognition of specific youth rights.

The paper concludes by looking at the role that the World Bank, the G20 as well as Europe play on the global level, and proposes certain steps on how to involve the concerns and needs of young people in these frameworks as well.

1. Introduction

Government may come top-down but governance does not. Responsible decision-makers, from the local to the global level, facilitate participation in order to foster active and responsible citizenship and in order to ensure the legitimacy of their decisions. Continued participation is only encouraged, however, when citizens see that their involvement makes a difference. It is not always evident how the citizens can and should contribute to the governance of global matters. The European Youth Forum believes, however, that they should be able to do so.

Globalisation is a range of complex and interlinked processes. On the one hand, these processes increase the travel of goods, services, people, capital, knowledge and culture throughout the world and may contribute to more efficient responses to global challenges. On the other hand, globalisation processes lead to challenges linked to social and economic costs of integration based on unequal starting points for people, states and businesses, to increased vulnerability, potential erosion of culture, and a lack of stakeholders' responsibility to act in a way to ensure that the common good remains available and of quality, also for generations to come. Regardless of how we look at globalisation, be it in its economic, cultural, communications or political dimension, it is evident that it cannot be decoupled from the need for governance.

Global processes may seem to some to be going on in an unstructured way and this is a major challenge arising in the context of global levels of governance and policy-making: in a

globally open space, the governance of common interest is far away from the citizen. There is no explicit mandate given by the population of a state for deliberations in matters of inter-state interest, nor for decisions taken there. Governments assume this legitimacy as something that naturally comes from their national-level electoral legitimacy.¹ To balance this deficit, certain international governmental organisations typically and structurally include non-governmental actors in their deliberations, so as to increase their legitimacy. This can take place in the form of consultative bodies, where representatives of different stakeholders are involved, in the form of ad-hoc consultations, observer status, etc, and can range from more to less substantial opportunities for input. Nevertheless, this practice is not evenly used in all regions, and at the global level, one can observe a gradual decline in civil society involvement, in particular since the terrorist attacks in 2001, when the focus turned more towards ensuring security through military and police actions, rather than through involving all layers of society. Such a situation requires increased civil society participation in international organisations.

In this context of the inter-connected world of today, several levels of governance become intertwined and they affect people in different ways. This paper aims at looking into the level of global governance, and takes the perspective of young people as the group affected by it, as well as the group which can, if given the opportunity, contribute to its functioning and its legitimacy.

2. Youth in a global context

There is no unified definition of youth, globally speaking. Countries and institutions use their individual statistical approaches to measure the size of their young population and this can vary anywhere between the upper limit of 24 and 35 years of age. Suffice it to say that if we only take into account people up to the age of 25, these already represent almost half of the world population.² Differences between regions, mostly related to their economic performance, are significant, and bring about several challenges. Richer countries face an increasingly ageing population, which causes challenges to the sustainability of their social, political and economic systems. In most developing countries, on the other hand, youth is the majority. Needless to say, these parts of the world will not grow out of poverty without ensuring that their youth have access to food, education and decent work.

From this perspective, then, youth is a definite stakeholder in the context of global governance, and should not be sidelined. When policies are adopted, and decisions taken in the framework of global-level players, such as the United Nations System, they should always be assessed against the impact they will have on youth. An important first step would be to ensure that data are disaggregated by age. Moreover, to also be legitimate and to correspond to the needs of young people worldwide, youth and their representative organisations should be called to take part in these deliberations, and to participate in decision-making

1 The situation with the EU, being both regional and economic, and having the character of a supranational body, is different to a certain extent (e.g. direct elections to the European Parliament, possibilities for petitions and complaints to EU bodies, the European Citizens' Initiative).

2 Data taken from http://www.wpf.org/reproductive_rights_article/facts#young_people. According to the UN, 19,8% of the population are children between 5 and 14 years of age, and 18% of the population are youth (aged 15-24). See <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/qanda.htm#2>.

processes, implementation and evaluation.

3. Governance of global matters

With increasing globalisation, cooperation at the global level has grown in importance. Although sovereign states remain the principal subjects of international law, challenges can no longer be adequately addressed merely at the national level, and governments are not the only legitimate actors anymore. This has been increasingly recognised and intergovernmental bodies, be they regional, interest-based or wealth-based, have grown almost exponentially and have attempted to embrace global issues with different scales of impact. For example, the Charter of the United Nations invites States Parties to also consult other international governmental and non-governmental bodies, wherever appropriate.

The European Youth Forum believes that no form of governance can or should assume that they have the mandate to take decisions without involving the wider society - in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies. The civil society and, when it comes to the concerns related to young people, representative, democratic and youth-led youth organisations worldwide, need to be called to action, be given the opportunity and also the responsibility to contribute with their knowledge and skills.

3.1. UN and legitimacy of governance

One organisation stands out for its nearly universal membership: the United Nations and the many entities and bodies that together constitute the United Nations System. As such, it remains the most relevant space to deliberate and decide on issues of global importance. It draws together Member States on an equal footing within the General Assembly, and is, through its entities, concerned about the improvement of the lives of all people, without discrimination. Nevertheless, the UN membership of an applicant state needs to pass through the Security Council, in which five countries have veto power. The truly democratic "global governance" character of the UN can be challenged, if any of the five countries has the power to oppose such a decision as membership. Similarly, the security-related and most politically sensitive questions undergo the decision making in the Security Council, which raises the same question of legitimacy.

In this sense, reform is needed in order to progress towards a more legitimate governance system within the Security Council, one that will reflect the reality, which is significantly different than when the United Nations was established. Veto power needs to be abolished, thus enabling the body to discuss and decide on those issues that are now pushed aside despite their importance for global security. Moreover, the composition of the Security Council needs to be increased in a way to better serve the interests of the international community. This reform should be an intrinsic part of the general overhaul of the UN, which should keep adapting itself to the society of today, and at better serving the needs of people worldwide.

What makes the United Nations both excellent and difficult, is that it cannot surpass the will

of its members. This is a challenge that calls for mature governments with a forward-looking perspective, which are committed to finding truly global solutions to global challenges and are ready to put their resources at disposal. At the same time, they must be able to communicate with their constituencies and develop an understanding that, what may in the short term not always be of their benefit, is meant to overcome a bigger challenge. The European Youth Forum calls for governments to include representatives of Parliaments and civil society in their delegations to the UN.

The approach to the protection of human rights can be used as a case in point, showing the need for a strong role of a global body and a commitment for implementation at the national level. It is true that individual countries often enshrine human rights standards in their constitutions, thus giving them the status of highest importance. At regional level, likewise, rather strong international treaties, with more or less rigorous monitoring mechanisms have been agreed. In some cases, the enforcement of rights and punishment of violators are dealt with through specialised courts. Within the UN context, a set of major human rights instruments has been adopted as well, and ratified by the majority of Member States. Monitoring mechanisms are put in place and they function. However, the will of the Member States to commit to their implementation remains too weak to ensure a lasting change in the perception of human rights and human dignity. All the thematic and country reporting, as long as it is accompanied by mostly voluntary reports and confidential inquiry mechanisms, will not pave the way for the recognition of every individual's equal basic rights. This is a challenge that the UN needs to take urgently.

3.2. UN and youth as a global priority

How to bring the UN closer to the citizens who are the users of UN services, contributors to its humanitarian programmes, and finally, (future) voters, is another question that governments should pose themselves. The understanding of the impact of the UN system does not come on its own, and the political deliberations of the General Assembly and the Security Council are often only an item in the news, but too distant to be meaningful. Therefore, governments should ensure the space for learning about global issues for everyone – especially for young people. Formal education at school and non-formal education through youth organisations are such tools that, if properly supported, would bring about a better understanding, and a more active involvement of people in matters of global interest.

Youth organisations are an excellent environment for young people to learn about global matters and the importance of participation, through participation itself. They offer a space to explore these issues, to exchange with peers from all over the world, to participate in UN programmes, and to bring forward the youth concerns. International youth NGOs have the capacity to practice intercultural learning and solidarity, and have the expertise to do so in a non-discriminatory and inclusive way.

The engagement of young people in global issues would have a stronger character if the United Nations would recognise its added value. However, currently, youth issues play a rather marginal role within the UN system, which is reflected in the organisational matters. Challenges for youth actors wishing to be active within the UN comprise a lack of financial

and human resources; lack of support by the UN system and the national governments; lack of results regarding the actual implementation of policies; and lack of follow-up and monitoring as well as limited multiplier-effect. Although different UN agencies do increasingly tackle youth matters, these efforts are too loosely coordinated to have a meaningful impact.³ In order to overcome this deficit, the YFJ sees a need for and therefore demands more resources to the UN Programme on Youth to fulfill its role.

UN entities should recognise investment in youth as a smart investment to achieve development. Youth organisations have shown their willingness to contribute to the reform and to bring forward their needs as well as the capacity to deliver at their level.⁴ At the same time, youth organisations need to show that they are able to act together, and to advocate for the benefit of young people within the UN System. Coordination across regions and issues and efficient communication are necessary to achieve this, and remain a challenge that youth organisations recognise. They currently often come together in regional platforms, and, moreover, have spread their coordination to the global level as well. Whilst retaining an informal character, the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO) has been an excellent frame for youth representatives to discuss common challenges and to seek common solutions. Such civil society cooperation should receive recognition and support from governments and international institutions, in order to continue developing the quality and impact of its work, for the benefit of young people. The UN Inter Agency Network on Youth Development should partner with ICMYO as a platform to increase youth participation in the UN System.

Moreover, the United Nations need to put more emphasis on young people beyond the existing practice. The European Youth Forum proposes several concrete steps that need to be implemented with the involvement of young people and their organisations.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) need to be linked with the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), adopted in 1995. The WPAY focuses on the challenges faced by young people and is strongly interrelated with the MDGs. Namely, young people represent a large percentage of the population, in particular in developing countries, so the MDGs are to a great extent also youth development goals. Strengthening regional and global youth cooperation and the collaborative work with international organisations and institutions will contribute to the full realisation of the MDGs and the implementation of the WPAY. The new UN entity UN Women should have a clear focus on girls and young women in policies and programmes.

Moreover, through regional and global dialogue and cooperation frameworks, young people and youth organisations will be able to tackle global issues, contributing to the development of coordinated and coherent policies and programmes and promoting awareness raising, information sharing and opportunities for capacity building. National ownership is crucial and youth must be empowered to take action, but also to monitor policies, budgets and actions and ensure good governance. Involvement of youth does not

3 See 0470-08 YFJ Strategy Towards the UN System.

4 Such involvement of youth civil society in the United Nations' work, would go in line with the Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations – Civil Society Relations, A/58/817, 2004.

only lead to empowerment and long-term development, but also makes implementation faster, cheaper and more effective.⁵

In this sense the United Nations has a crucial role to play in order to fill in the existing gaps in youth participation. With their global presence, through different agencies and bodies, the United Nations should be interested in providing support to the establishment and sustainability of National Youth Councils in countries where they do not yet exist, international youth organisations and other independent and democratic civil society structures. This would be an investment in building a solid civil society tradition, which would more than pay off in the long term.

On the global level, the United Nations should show its commitment to youth by incorporating within its system the regular holding of World Youth Conferences every ten years.⁶ They should serve concrete aims, directly influencing UN youth policies and work, and the United Nations should co-organise the World Youth Conferences with representatives of Youth NGOs; they should bring together the youth civil society worldwide but should also be linked to the reporting on the implementation of the WPAY and other political processes on the agenda of the United Nations; progress should be evaluated there, and the major challenges or obstacles for implementation should be discussed with young people, in order to find viable solutions. In this sense, the first challenge ahead is known: the WPAY by 2015 needs to be revised so as to better reflect the real needs of young people, and this exercise must be linked with the revision of the MDGs as well. The review of the WPAY should include the launch of a new effort towards goals and targets for each policy priority in order to achieve a measurable and goal-oriented youth policy. The second, but no less important challenge is to ensure the revision takes place through a meaningful cooperation with young people.

The Security Council should also recognise the relevance of youth well-being, freedom from fear and freedom from want for the security of society. As the concept of human security as defined in the 1994 Human Development Report aptly explains, human security has several inter-related components: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security.⁷ Guaranteeing an increase in human security among all young people, and especially supporting it in the most hard-hit areas, be it for economic, political, environmental or other reasons, should be a primary concern of the Security Council. At the same time the important role that youth organisations play in conflict resolution and in post-conflict society building must be recognised, and this potential needs to be put to use and supported. The European Youth Forum thus calls upon the Security Council, as a first step towards the recognition of the well-being of youth as an important aspect of security, to adopt a resolution on this matter, which will both recognise this reality and ensure sufficient support to youth organisations in their efforts, and to request both the UN and its Members States to take the necessary steps to implement it.

The United Nations would ultimately also be the right venue to recognise the specific needs

5 For more, see 0363-10 Position Paper on the Millennium Development Goals.

6 The first World Youth Conference was held in Portugal in 1998, the second one in Mexico in 2010.

7 See UN Human Development Report 1994 at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994/>.

of young people, and grant them specific rights. Different regions, notably the Ibero-American space and Africa, have already recognised, through respective instruments, what kind of rights youth, as a specific transition period from childhood to adulthood, entails, namely in the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Young People and the African Youth Charter. The European Youth Forum, advocating for a Council of Europe convention of similar character, believes that this transition period is filled with new responsibilities and duties, but it does not ensure the same rights as adults have. In this sense the Forum has engaged in concrete advocacy, which has so far led to several expert meetings at the European level, tackling political, legal and fact-based arguments. Moreover, it has produced a report on the State of Youth Rights in Europe,⁸ as well as successfully advocated for a motion for a resolution to be launched on the matter within the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The latter means that the Parliamentary Assembly has designated a rapporteur who will engage herself in exploring the issue. Thus, at the European level, things are slowly moving forward.

Despite different regional efforts, the European Youth Forum is strongly convinced that the United Nations, having the global responsibility and the possibility to address this lacking level of rights, is the appropriate body to bring different regional concerns together, taking into account the very different situations young people live in, and ensure a legal framework that will protect all young people, regardless of their background, social situation or other characteristic.

3.3. World Bank and Youth

When considering global governance, one cannot overlook the important role of the World Bank.

The main attempts to put youth higher on the global agenda, made by the former president of the World Bank James Wolfensohn, through the Youth Development and Peace initiative, and by the former Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan, with the Youth Employment Network, where the World Bank plays a crucial role, have lost the momentum and the political backing reached between 2002 and 2004. While the World Bank is stepping up its work with children and youth, the involvement of youth-led civil society organisations is on an alarming all time low level. This trend is surprising and worrying and the situation has to be tackled.

The European Youth Forum will, in a coordinated effort with its global partners, address the World Bank on this situation.

3.4 G20: Global Governance outside a legitimate framework

The recently emerged “premier forum for [...] international economic development that promotes open and constructive discussion between industrial and emerging-market countries on key issues related to global economic stability”⁹, which consolidated its

8 <http://issuu.com/yomag/docs/youthrightsineurope2010>.

9 http://www.g20.org/about_what_is_g20.aspx.

structure after several short-lived G-formations had been tried, is one of the major players affecting not only the economic, but the global development agenda. It remains, however, a system with rules that do not foresee structured involvement of the civil society.¹⁰

In this sense, the G20 needs to reflect on its indisputably important role in framing the global economic governance. It should not abuse the fact that its members are the most economically and/or strategically powerful states. It needs to design mechanisms that will give everyone a say, including the countries of the global South. It must allow the civil society to give its contribution in a structured, transparent and periodic manner, and needs to develop towards a system of good governance for all. Most importantly, it should not assume the right to dictate to the United Nations and its financial institutions, what it deems to be the appropriate way to tackle global issues.

4. The role of Europe in the global context

Europe plays an important role on the global level, both as a result of strong regional integration and of relatively huge economic power. This is not only visible in the United Nations, the World Bank and the G20 where the EU and partner countries should act in a strongly coordinated way but also in its tradition of upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and in its bilateral cooperation with other countries and regions of the world.

Europe has the power to demand more legitimacy in the way global matters are governed. It should insist that durable solutions can only be found through equal partnership with all stakeholders, including civil society. The European Youth Forum therefore welcomes the inclusion of "Youth in the World" as a priority in the EU Youth Strategy. We emphasise the need for the European Commission and the Member States to implement this priority area in cooperation with youth NGOs.

In the youth field, Europe should thus support both content and process developments: it could give an impetus to further the work on a global system of protection of the rights of young people; at the same time European governments should ensure that youth delegates participate in all governmental delegations prior to and at the UN General Assembly and other relevant bodies as well in the preparation of these meetings, and should also support the inclusion of delegates from other regions of the world. Progressively, a General Assembly with as many young delegates as there are countries, would come closer to being a more representative deliberating body.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of youth organisations and the wider civil society, the legitimacy of decisions taken is as important as their effectiveness. As noted in the 2009 evaluation of the

¹⁰ It is commendable that before its last meeting, the host of the G20 meeting welcomed representatives of the civil society from 17 countries, and listened to their concerns, but such ad-hoc consultations, without any accountability from the part of the government representatives, do not correspond to the vision of involvement and participation in the shaping of the future. See <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/g8-g20/blog-global-view/g20-keeps-it-friends-close---and-enemies-closer/article1603578/>.

Global Youth Advisory Panel of the UN Population Fund, through ensuring wide participation the decision-makers “gain legitimacy for their decisions, build trust and get better decisions and more efficient implementation of policies”.¹¹ Even if there is no global civil society as such, or at least it is not a strongly organised one, it has shown in several instances that it can mobilise large masses to send a message to decision makers (e.g. demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq in 2003, demonstrations ahead of meetings of G formations). Local, national and regional/international civil society, however, plays an important role as well. Europe as a strong partner is able to mobilise forces and contribute to the decision-making processes at global level as well as implement actions on regional and local level. Translating global decisions into lower levels of implementation will, without sufficient legitimacy, remain a largely ineffective approach. Only an approach that involves people affected by the decisions is going to lead to responsible, active and engaged citizens contributing to building a sustainable and inclusive global society.

11 Global Youth Advisory Panel of the UNFPA: A participatory evaluation, 2009.