



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2013-2018

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INTRODUCTION

A strategy is a combination of **the goals** for which an organisation strives and **the means** and methods by which it seeks to get there. This document defines the roadmap between 2013 and 2018 in order to realise our vision, mission and values.¹

“The vision of the European Youth Forum is to be the voice of young people in Europe, where young people are equal citizens and are encouraged and supported to achieve their fullest potential as global citizens.”

The Youth Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives by representing and advocating their needs and interest and those of their organisations. As the platform of National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations in Europe, we believe youth organisations are the tool through which we empower, encourage, involve, represent, reach out and support young people.

Active young citizens constitute the backbone of any democratic society. However, young people continue to suffer the consequences of the unprecedented economic, social, ecological and political crises. **The outlook for the six years included in this strategic cycle is not promising:**

- Young people may have become more mobile, but they still face major difficulties in accessing their basic rights such as decent employment, quality formal and non-formal education, inclusive participation to decision-making and a sustainable society.
- The demographic structure of the continent will be a driving force in economic and political choices. Without a pact between generations, this will seriously affect the autonomy and well being of young people and the planet that future generations must inherit.
- The youth sector of civil society will face increasing challenges to gain support for its mission to build a more inclusive Europe and to ensure that the voice and concerns of young people are not only heard, but also acted upon in policies and programmes.

The Strategic Priorities respond to the need to equip the platform of youth organisations in Europe with the correct instruments to be able to fulfil its vision in current troubled times and ensure a future generation of engaged youth.

To overcome these challenges, the Forum will strive towards the following goals:

- Greater youth participation
- Stronger youth organisations
- Youth autonomy and inclusion

In order to achieve these goals the Platform aims, by 2018, to:

- Strengthen its position as an agenda-setter on youth affairs
- Base its work on a rights-based approach
- Further empower Member Organisations and increase their ownership of the Platform

The strategic priorities define the overarching direction of the Platform's work within the defined six-year period. The main tool to achieve them will be a **work-plan** adopted by the General Assembly every two years. Each work-plan will thus set the focus of work of the Youth Forum every biennium by establishing clear links with the strategic priorities and a roadmap on how to achieve them. Moreover, each work-plan will be complemented by a detailed and operational **implementation plan** defined under the political guidance of the Board and elaborated and executed by the Secretariat.

¹ The Vision, Mission and Values (participation; empowerment of young people; equality, gender equality and equal opportunities; inclusiveness; intercultural understanding; democracy; respect for human rights; solidarity with all young people; global responsibility; diversity and mutual respect; peace) of the European Youth Forum were adopted by the General Assembly in 2006 in Vilnius and the Vision and Mission were revised by the Council of Members in 2009 in Brussels.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

(the goals)

To overcome the challenges faced by young people, the Forum will strive to achieve the following goals:

Youth Participation

Achieving better youth participation is vital to foster a culture of responsible, proactive and democratic citizenship, not only for young people but also for all European citizens. However, there are still many obstacles to be overcome in order to enjoy the right to volunteer, especially in youth organisations, and to full and effective participation based on a representative and legitimate mandate. Therefore, the Forum will strive for:

- Young people to be empowered as responsible actors in shaping European democracy and be given equal opportunities to participate
- An expansion of democracy increasing young people's participation in decision-making processes at all levels, including in elections
- Youth organisations to be recognised for their role in forming committed and active citizens by providing life skills through quality Non-Formal Education;
- Youth organisations to be recognised as legitimate representatives of young people and therefore represented in decision-making at international/global and European levels on matters that affect young people and future generations.
- National Youth Councils to be recognised as legitimate representatives of young people at the national level and be composed of organised youth.

Strong Youth Organisations

The European Youth Forum will continue to promote the recognition of youth work and mainstream youth organisations as providers of non-formal education, informal learning, and volunteering and youth participation opportunities. More, better and sustainable support to youth organisations and national youth councils is a core policy of the Youth Forum and therefore, the Forum will strive for:

- The financial, legal and political sustainability of NYCs and INGYOs including specific programmes of support for youth work;
- The capacity of youth organisations to work on relevant issues and reach out to more young people and partners;
- The establishment of new international youth organisations, new national youth councils and capacity building of existing ones, as well as the mutual learning process of inter-regional and global co-operation;
- Inclusive youth organisations recognised and supported as actors in fighting social exclusion and empowering all young people regardless of their background.

Youth Autonomy and Inclusion

Young people constitute an integral part of European societies and need to experience the same rights and freedoms as any other citizen. Youth organisations play an important role in this work by striving to make sure that these rights and freedoms are accessible for all young people and spreading these values to other parts of society. The European Youth Forum will work towards ensuring that young people have access to the necessary support, resources and opportunities to lead an autonomous life. To achieve this the Forum will strive for:

- Inclusive and non-discriminatory practices within its member organisations and common efforts to spread these values to other parts of society;
- Mobility for youth in the fields of education, volunteering and employment, contributing to the personal development and cultural enrichment of young people;
- Policies and practices that ensure the quality and stability of transitioning from education to

- employment;
- More quality jobs for young people and an effective reconciliation between free time and working time;
- A renewed social pact between generations that enables complete physical, mental and social well-being, dignity and full social inclusion of young people through fair and universal access to services.
- Safeguarding the needs of future generations, by applying sustainable development as a driving principle behind a fair use of the available resources.

HOW DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IT?

(the means and the methods)

The means and methods are the guiding principles by which the European Youth Forum builds its work to reach the strategic goals. They transversally describe the overarching tools the Forum will use to achieve its work and hence this approach must be mainstreamed in the Forum's work.

Youth Forum as an agenda-setter on youth affairs

Over the years, the European Youth Forum has become the recognised interlocutor on youth issues for its institutional partners. By 2018 the Forum aims to raise its advocacy activity in a proactive manner in order to transform itself from an interlocutor to an agenda setter for the issues that concern youth organisations and young people in Europe and beyond. This will be achieved by:

- defining the political (youth) agenda instead of following the on-going discussions and adding a youth focus to it;
- mainstreaming youth policies and leading relevant pan-European campaigns;
- establishing youth lead processes and organisations as legitimate and representative voices for youth and for placing the needs of young people on the political agenda;
- further increasing the visibility and standing of the Youth Forum in the media and among the relevant stakeholders and partners.

Empowered Member Organisations

The strength and success of the Youth Forum lies in the combination of joint priorities and the diversity of the youth organisations that compose it. The essence of being a platform is to be more than the mere sum of its members and to have more effective advocacy activities, a wider outreach and exchanges among its members. The Youth Forum will strengthen its coordinative and supportive role to Member Organisations in order to use more efficiently the expertise that lies in the platform. This will be achieved by:

- multiplying its capacity by giving a more active role to the membership in external representation on behalf of the European Youth Forum where they are the experts and in line with the agreed policies of the Forum;
- facilitating the European and international engagement of member organisations in all relevant settings;
- exploring innovative ways of exchange of know-how and good practices at horizontal level (between member organisations) as well as vertical level (between the Forum and its membership) in order to make the work and outreach more effective;
- supporting and advising Member Organisations to be able to fully take part in the Platform.

A rights-based approach in all our work

Young people, like all other human beings, are entitled to the full respect, protection and promotion of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Forum adopts a rights-based approach to youth policy that integrates the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the development, implementation and evaluation of youth policy. This will be achieved by:

- youth not being negatively discriminated on the grounds of age or any other factor;
- promoting a youth policy that encourages the participation and autonomy of young people in a cross-sectorial manner and ensures that youth-specific concerns are taken into account in all sectorial policies;
- promoting the recognition, access and monitoring of youth rights by continuing to strive for the adoption of legal tools targeted to the specific needs of young people.