

## Concept Note

### NETWORK OF UNIVERSITIES ON YOUTH AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP 2018-2020:

#### The Network of Universities on Youth and Global Citizenship

The Network of Universities on Youth and Global Citizenship, facilitated and coordinated by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe in partnership with Instituto de la Juventud (INJUVE, Spain), Observatoire National de la Jeunesse (ONJ, Tunisia), European Youth Forum (YFJ), Pan-African Youth Union (PYU), Network of International Youth Organisations in Africa (NIYOA), Foro Latino-Americano y Caribeño de la Juventud (FLACJ), Forum Nazionale dei Giovani (FNG, Italy), Consejo de la Juventud (CJE, Spain), Consell Nacional de la Joventut de Catalunya (CNJC, Spain), and Conselho Nacional de Juventude (CNJ, Portugal), is a platform that gathers governmental, parliamentary, local and regional authorities institutions, international organisations, youth organisations and other youth-related entities from Europe, the Southern Mediterranean and beyond.

#### The Network:

- Is a platform with the aim of promoting dialogue and cooperation on youth-related issues at regional, multilateral and global level;
- Encourages the definition of a common agenda and the implementation of common actions to foster democratic participation and global citizenship among young people;
- Contributes to uphold principles, values and standards of the Council of Europe and of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Promotes international youth events called “Universities”, where different organisations have a space to run their own activities within a multilateral cooperation context which encourages networking, peer education and sharing of knowledge and opportunities..

For the period 2018-2020 the Network agreed on a three-year cycle under an umbrella theme that will ensure coherence and greater impact of its work in the medium-term. It represents the thread that connects all the activities taking place in the framework of the universities and it will inspire the reflection during a three-year period. The umbrella theme will be broken down into specific annual focuses which represent different but complementary elements of it. The yearly annual focus becomes the overarching theme of the universities happening in the same year.

#### 2018-2020 Theme:

#### United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16: peace, justice and strong institutions.

Peace, justice and effective accountable and inclusive institutions are largely recognised as the core elements for sustainable development. However, progress in these areas remains uneven across and within regions.

A fundamental shift in the way global challenges are faced needs to be grounded in a rights-based approach. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 represents the major contribution for such a shift, being a transformative agenda and a universal call for action to ensure that all people enjoy democracy, security and prosperity.

Peace, justice and inclusion are the main concerns of the young generations and are on the top of the youth-led organisations' agenda all over the world.

The United Nations in its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges the centrality of youth and their role in the path towards sustainable development: over a third of the 169 UN SDGs targets highlight the role of young people and the importance of their empowerment, participation, and well-being.

Young people represent one of the major driving forces for a global change. However, besides the official recognition of their role and main concerns, challenges remain open when it comes to the effective space young people and youth organisations actually have on what regards the implementation, the monitoring and the review of the global goals following a bottom-up approach.

Therefore, to ensure more efficient and structured mechanisms to participate in the decision making process represent an essential step to guarantee youth contribution in translating policies into action and in making governments efforts more accountable towards their commitment to the UN SDGs and the UN Agenda 2030.

To that end, it is important that governments, parliaments and local and regional authorities work together with young people and youth organisations, and with other sectors of the civil society, to ensure peace, justice and strong institutions.

The strategic importance of the UN SDG16 also comes from the fact that it is strictly related to two other UN SDGs particularly relevant for young people: SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. On one side, education helps to reduce inequalities and to reach gender equality, fosters tolerance between people and contributes to more peaceful societies. On the other side, youth unemployment can lead to marginalisation and peace disruption if it is left unaddressed. Therefore, productive employment and “decent work” for the young generations are key elements to achieving fair globalisation and poverty reduction.

This priority is in line with the youth policy of the North-South Centre and of the whole Council of Europe and represents the core element of the Network of Universities on Youth and Global Citizenship. For this reason, all the Universities of the Network throughout this new three-year cycle will continue to be a space to empower young people, to engage with youth, to build platforms for discussion among young policy makers and, above all, to promote the respect for Human Rights by nurturing civic engagement in Europe, the neighboring regions and beyond..

### **SDG 16 - Focus 2018: the role of young people in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.**

People everywhere need to be free from fear of all forms of violence and feel safe as they live their lives independently of their ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation. However, discriminatory laws and practices as well as unethical or unlawful behaviors are threatening the foundation of peaceful societies in many countries. Violence against children and women, human trafficking and sexual violence are still increasing. The number of journalists killed has also been mounting in the last years.

The lives of many young people continue to be shaped by armed conflicts and their sequels, causing unprecedented population displacements.

Persistent forms of structural discrimination, combined with prejudice and stigma, negatively impact the prospects of social inclusion and well-being of vulnerable and/or young people from minority groups. Sexual orientation and gender identity, disabilities and mental health difficulties are additional factors of the vulnerability that affect youth in general.

Within the UN SDG 16, the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development is an element that aims at involving young people in a multi-stakeholder engagement to prevent and counter-act discrimination, thus fostering intercultural dialogue in the spirit of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue.

The renewed efforts towards those objectives within the SDG 16 confers also a new role to the young people in confidence-building and conflict-transformation activities, in light of the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (SCR 2250). The UN SCR 2250 in fact provides young people with a strong role to play in achieving inclusive and peaceful societies.

The SCR 2250 shifts the international focus from seeing youth as passive victims or a security threat to recognising young people as a large sector of the population with the potential to contribute to constructive change.

As in the SDG 16, the SCR 2250 clearly demonstrate the links with education and employment where economic growth and constructive political engagement appear as strategic factors both for conflict prevention and reconciliation.

In this context, youth and youth organisations are becoming essential actors to guarantee freedom of expression and disputes-resolution through the functioning of political and justice systems.

### **Activity description**

The Universities are a space to explore the concept of global education and global citizenship, to encourage dialogue between decision makers and young people, to advocate for youth participation and to empower young people towards their rights and duties.

Each University gathers for one week hundreds of participants, becoming an international hub for meeting, training and action planning among international students, youth workers, youth movements and youth-related institutions.

The Universities bring different dimensions of the global debate to the daily work of grassroots organisations, developing young leaderships and building confidence between young people and all the actors of the “quadrilogue”<sup>1</sup>.

### **Targeted groups:**

The Universities represent an opportunity to build confidence between young people, institutions at governmental and non-governmental level and international organisations. Therefore the target groups are: representatives from national governments, parliaments and local and regional authorities responsible for youth policy; international organisations; international, national, regional and local youth-led and youth-oriented organisations; youth workers, educators, students and young activists.

### **Targeted outputs:**

- At least 40 (target) capacity building, advocacy or networking activities are organised in the framework of the Universities in the cycle 2018-2020.
- At least 1200 (target) participants are equipped with knowledge, skills and tools on democratic participation, peacebuilding and global development education.
- Participation of governments, parliaments, and local and regional authorities' representatives is increased and structured and effective dialogue between youth representatives and decision makers is encouraged.

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<sup>1</sup> Representatives of the governments, parliaments, regional and local authorities, and civil society.

- Awareness about the Global Agenda 2030 and the role that young people and youth organisations have in implementing, monitoring and evaluating the SDGs - with particular emphasis in the SDG 16 - in their communities is raised.
- Lessons learned best practices and recommendations on youth, peace and inclusive societies are collected and shared among the different youth actors.
- Council of Europe tools and other international standards related to youth participation, human rights, global development education and peacebuilding are disseminated in the framework of the Network of Universities on Youth and Global Citizenship.

**Targeted outcomes:**

- Bottom-up multilateral cooperation among youth stakeholders on issues related to peace, democratic participation and global development are enhanced through peer-learning, networking and the exchange of good practices.
- Civil society and youth organisations improved their capacity to contribute to issues related to the global agenda and youth participation and are able to identify and address challenges regarding youth policy, peace and global development locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Multilevel governance structures are better promoted and understood and the awareness of decision makers and youth representatives about each other's' role and relevance on issues of youth, development, peace and democracy is increased.
- Youth participation and partnerships are promoted at different levels to address the major challenges faced by young people worldwide, contributing to a global youth partnership for development.
- International youth work and non-formal education methodologies are promoted and gained recognition as a complement to formal education to educate fully fledged citizens.
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- Council of Europe's youth strategic priorities 2018-2019 and the Action Plan "Building Inclusive Societies", the "United National 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and other international guiding documents are fostered, analysed and used.