

Youth and Sustainable Development

REJUVENATING POLITICS
COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONGRESS YOUTH DELEGATES PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF THE AGENDA 2030: PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR BETTER YOUTH PARTICIPATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT AT THE CONGRESS.

THE POTENTIAL OF YOUTH TO ACHIEVE THE AGENDA 2030

Based on the consequent work carried by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to ensure decent living conditions of youth in each of its member states and pave the way to a more inclusive society, this document aims to emphasize the role of youth empowerment towards sustainable development, in line with the Youth Sector 2030 strategy. Putting youth empowerment as one of its priority for the 2016-20 period, the Congress highlights its commitment to youth through key documents such as the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. Welcoming the Congress' aim to encourage the creation of a "young European in the 2020s" vision, and encourage "greater level of commitment and improved dialogue between local and regional authorities [...] in order to enhance civic involvement, encourage greater youth participation and combat the radicalization of young people" (Congress priorities, 2016), sustainable development also needs to be taken into consideration.

Challenge of our time, sustainable development needs to be addressed to ensure Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law. Sustainable local and regional initiatives are necessary to shape the future of our world. The Agenda 2030 offers an international framework for all the Congress' members to work conjointly with local and regional authorities. To pursue the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, civil society participation is essential. Developing awareness campaigns, educational incentives, consultations as well as meaningful participation processes including youth offer stakeholders the opportunity to leverage youth commitment for a better world. 29.2 percent of European young citizens aged 18 to 24 are most at risk of poverty or social exclusion (European Commission, 2019). This fact highlights the importance youth need to receive in order for them to be provided with skills, opportunities, and trust. While young people are often the first victims of today's challenges, they represent a tremendous asset to drive sustainable change as catalysts as it has been demonstrated by the recent study led by the European Youth Forum (European youth organisations' contributions to the 2030 Agenda, EYF, 2019). Often confronted with a lack of representation in political decisions shaping their current situations and future, this document, supported by the Advisory Council on Youth, targets Congress members to advocate for giving youth a real say and power in promoting the CoE's values in the advancement of the Agenda 2030. Offering the opportunity to the members to engage more youth in their work, this document shows the importance of giving youth responsibilities and opportunities to achieve sustainable development. Seven main recommendations by the 42 European youth delegates of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities are presented in addition to their testimonies showcasing their motivation and dedication to lead, in cooperation with the members, a sustainable change in Council of Europe member states. Leaders of today, young Europeans represent a tremendous asset in order to obtain the opportunities to build the path to tomorrow's society.

Niels de Fraguier

French Youth Delegate at the Congress of Local and regional Authorities.



FOREWORD

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH

The Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe welcomes the invitation made by Niels Fraguier, Youth Delegate of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, to participate in the project "Congress Youth delegates perspectives towards the achievement of the Agenda 2030".

The Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe consists of 30 youth representatives from youth organisations from all over Europe, working together with governmental representatives from all 47 Member States, and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. Together, we actively work towards creating better conditions for youth in Europe and engaging young people in the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which embodies the Council of Europe.

In line with the Council of Europe values and Agenda 2030, the meaningful inclusion and participation of young people are essential in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The world is currently home to the largest generation of young people ever with 1.8 billion between 10-24 years old. This is a unique opportunity to empower a generation to take action and create positive change in society. But in order to succeed, National, Regional and Local authorities, stakeholders and civil society have to invest in young people's opportunities and work with them to create sustainable development. If we fail to give youth a voice in decision-making processes, it jeopardizes economic and social development, leading to i.e. increasing poverty, forced/unwilling migration or social unrest. This can and should be countered so that this generation can act as an engine for progress instead.

In the experience of the AC, we know that young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but also the change makers of today. Young people are crucial partners in sustainable development, in protecting human rights, revitalizing democracy and promoting the rule of law. From an AC perspective, it is particularly important to highlight two recommendations with regards to supporting, engaging and empowering young people in creating sustainable development:

- Co-management: The ground-breaking co-management system of the Joint Council of Youth is a living example of participatory democracy. This structure combines the voice of young Europeans and that of public authorities responsible for youth issues leading to inclusive and equal decision-making on issues of young people's concern. When it comes to Agenda 2030 we need to ensure that young people are not only heard but understood - and a co-management approach to decision-making can ensure just that. It is the responsibility of each government to provide space for meaningful participation and ensure youth-friendly and inclusive structures for youth in decision-making.

- Funding: The co-managed European Youth Foundation, within the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, supports local, national and international youth organisations with funding annually. In order to drive sustainable change on all levels of society, it is important to support those actors who create change and act as multipliers, which in this case is young people. A clear recommendation would be to ensure funding for a youth organisation, so they can create sustainable development from the bottom up.

It is essential to reiterate that engaging young people meaningfully is not only the right thing to do. It is also the only way to reinforce the legitimacy and effectiveness of policies and implementation of Agenda 2030. Whether it is about policy development, human rights, decision-making, democracy or sustainable development - it should happen by and with youth, not only for youth.

Anja Olin-Pape

Chair of the Joint Council on Youth



THE AGENDA 2030 OVERVIEW



United Nations, 2015, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets which we are announcing today demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda. They seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what these did not achieve. They seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.

The Goals and targets will stimulate action over the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet.

“CHILDREN AND YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN ARE CRITICAL AGENTS OF CHANGE AND WILL FIND IN THE NEW GOALS A PLATFORM TO CHANNEL THEIR INFINITE CAPACITIES FOR ACTIVISM INTO THE CREATION OF A BETTER WORLD.”

UN, 2030 Agenda

7 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONGRESS AND IN COLLABORATION WITH THE MEMBER STATES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



**CREATE A YOUTH CONTEST ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND
YOUTH PARTICIPATION**



**ENCOURAGE SPOKESPERSONS TO INSIST
ON THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO
ACHIEVE THE AGENDA 2030**



**INCREASE ATTENTION GIVEN TO
THE 17 SDGS IN ALL WORKING
GROUPS**



**LAUNCH OF A YEARLY
AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



**PROMOTE THE HAVE YOUR SAY MANUAL
TO FOSTER THE CREATION OF YOUTH
COUNCILS IN EACH MEMBER STATE**



**FORMALLY RECOGNISE THE
IMPORTANCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE
IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**



**USE SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR
ALL ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE
CONGRESS**

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONGRESS AND ITS MEMBERS BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



1. **Create a youth contest on sustainable development** for universities and Non-Governmental Organizations. Following an open call, elect the best ideas and invite the youth teams to present their project during the Congress session in line with the 2030 Agenda. This could lead to the creation of a "Congress award on Sustainability" promoting the Congress in the sustainability sector. It could also lead to the involvement of external youth individuals to participate in meetings of the committees. The Current Affairs Committee could be in charge of implementing this recommendation with the support of all Youth Delegates.



2. **Encourage all spokespersons of the Congress to insist and act to highlight the role of youth to drive sustainable change.** This recommendation is addressed to all members but could be particularly addressed to the two youth spokespersons, Mr. Andersson as well as Ms. Bero. Engaging them more closely with the Youth Delegates to implement concrete actions within the program could benefit all the youth delegates. Youth spokespersons could be in charge of advocating for the benefits of members states youth population through special awareness campaigns at local and regional level and in collaboration with Congress colleagues.



3. **Increase the attention given to Sustainable Development in each working group and focus on the 17 goals of the Agenda 2030.** Focusing on all 17 SDGs, instead of 12 currently, could show Congress' commitment for the Agenda 2030 and show its commitment for Sustainable Development. Moreover, each working group of the Congress could increase its focus on SDGs by committing the public, private sector, and civil society organisations to allow a fair representation of the society. Being inclusive by involving minorities and youth could permit the promotion of the projects and policies of the Congress in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.



4. **Launch of an awareness campaign on SDGs** with all member states during the Sustainable Development week with events, seminars, webinars for the civil society. Supported by the Youth Delegates, the activities will take place in each country.



5. **Promote the "Have your say" toolkit to all member states representatives to support the creation of youth councils and committees** at local and regional level, developing sustainable projects using the Congress' frameworks, raising awareness on key issues, and proposing concrete solutions in the field.



6. **Formally recognize the importance of young people in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030** in line with the UN Youth Strategy, as well as maintaining the future of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, and reflect this in the priorities, activities, and budget of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.



7. **Use of sustainable solutions for all the activities carried out by the Congress** in order to reduce harmful practices for the environment. Using resources more carefully could permit to reduce food waste and plastic consumption.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



AMANDA HALA, 20 YEARS OLD. ALBANIA, TIRANA

During my participation as a youth activist I have been focusing on more on 3 different topics such as: gender equality, violence, and education. In association with different youth organizations such as CRCA and Balkan Youth Link Albania I have provided different and helpful activities that engage youth to participate and contribute more giving their ideas about topics related to violence, gender equality, education and also politics participation. "The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination" has also been one of the main supporters for adapting my projects. In regarding to gender equality, one of the main projects I have been working on was taking part in a "painting exposit" held by the "Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination", where every participant had to share his own idea in a colored canvas. Furthermore, I have also participated in volunteering projects against violence which focus was related more to "violence against women". Such activities and so more to come have on focus youth participation and their impact on the future of all of us.



CLÀUDIA BORRÀS CAPDEVILA, 20 YEARS OLD. ANDORRA

I have raised the awareness of pursuing a sustainable life. As a volunteer in a summer camp, I have taught to the kids to reduce plastic usage. On the other hand, to take advantage of the natural resources of which we have.



SAMVEL GRIGORYAN, 28 YEARS OLD. ARMENIA, YEREVAN

Due to my professional career and volunteer initiatives, I made my contribution to get closer to the GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being. I organized several events covering Agenda 2030 and SDGs with a particular focus on health issues. Also, due to successful cooperation with local authorities, I provided some education sessions to rural schoolchildren, covering the health and environmental issues in Armenia and worldwide. Besides that, I am currently working with policy-makers at the Ministry of Health of Armenia and support them with designing relevant strategies and policies that carry the main values of Agenda 2030 in them. Despite my young age, I have the opportunity of cooperating with the Minister and two Deputy Ministers and present my views on health issues from the youth perspective which to a certain extent changes the main policy direction



SOPHIA KIRCHER, 25 YEARS OLD. AUSTRIA, INNSBRUCK

As a young elected member of parliament, I try to bring in the young perspective into politics and the decision-making process. My generation grew up in a European Union without borders, without war and we often take this for granted. It is our responsibility to maintain peace and develop Europe further. We can only develop Europe further if we know people from other countries and our common history. I am convinced that it needs young people that work for the peace project.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



PASHA BABAYEV, 21 YEARS OLD. AZERBAIJAN, BAKU

Youth participation is vastly important in a country's life. In less than two years timespan, I co-founded an environmental initiative, became a Young European Ambassador and a Youth Delegate, got involved in international workshops and trainings, interned for the United Nations. In short, I became an active young person. Projects we as young people organize within the framework of such activities have significant impact in our communities, even if we often do not think of it that way. And all it takes is just a little push from major organizations like the CoE to empower young people and include them in their work.



BAUDOUIN DEVOS, 19 YEARS OLD. BELGIUM, BRUSSELS

I work with the NGO Families of the World in the area of Migration & Mental Health. Since 2017, I have been a trainer in this association youth group where, through non-formal education, we aim at sensitizing and raising awareness of people (specially youth) on the mental process in migration. We already organised the VII International Congress on Migration and Mental Health in Brussels as well as a working day at the European Parliament with a meeting with the MEP Philippe Lamberts. Active since 2006 in this NGO, I have also had to sensitise on the well eating based on food produced in the home gardens, promote multiculturalism through dance, music and plastic arts.



BAKIR TIRIĆ, 20 YEARS OLD. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, SARAJEVO

I always organized seminars for the youth. At those seminars, we talked about the prosperity of our country (B&H), and the European spirit in it. We are a multi – national, post socialist, post war country, so we need to work together in order to develop. I am really sure that my contribution will make a change. I would just like to add that, besides from books, learning is also from experience. So, meeting each other and arguing together, because we, the youth, make the future - today. One example is this Congress at the Council of Europe - delegates from European countries are shoulder to shoulder and together working on Europeans youth prosperity.



BOZHIDAR ALEKSANDROV, 22 YEARS OLD. BULGARIA, SOFIA

As part of the United Nations Association of Bulgaria, we conduct various day-to-day information campaigns on the Sustainable Development Goals. Through them we show young people in Bulgaria what simple steps they can take every day to contribute to the fulfillment of all 17 goals. Being a youth trainer on non-formal education methods, I sincerely believe that I contribute to Goal 4 Quality Education by working with young people in the country on topics that are not affected by school but are vital to their personal and social development. As an organizer of a football tournament for diplomats, which unites diplomatic representations in Bulgaria, institutions and NGOs, I work for the achievement of Goal 3 Good Health and Welfare, Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, Objective 17 Global Partnership.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



ALEN ŠUKURICA, 22 YEARS OLD. CROATIA, ZAGREB

I think that with my work in the European Law Students' Association – ELSA Zagreb, as president, we managed to raise awareness about current human rights topic and relevant issues within at least law students at my University, but hopefully even more since our work does not remain unnoticed. Our best project is our Summer Law School which is focused on Human Rights & Globalization, this year on subtopic of Migrations and the challenges it brings.



ATHANASIA KONSTANTINOU, 25 YEARS OLD. CYPRUS, LARNACA

As one of the young organizers of the Cyprus Youth Parliament I volunteer in order to help the implementation of the new Agenda by providing new spaces of interaction between the national parliament and young people for concrete actions.



MATĚJ RÖSNER, 19 YEARS OLD. CZECH REPUBLIC, OSTRAVA

I've been trying to spread more knowledge about current affairs among students at my school via having various presentations and inviting interesting people to arrange a discussion with them. Also with a few teachers we established a Duke of Edinburgh centre at our school and started organising thematic days that aimed to make students time at school more pleasant. Although young people cannot end poverty on their own, they can start with some partial steps to point out what is important for them and to express their opinion. But most importantly when young people do something above their usual curriculum, they are both learning and realizing that issues they are dealing with are crucial topics and cannot be overlooked. They widen their horizons and develop certain mindset they will need for an implementation of SDG's in the future when they can make a real difference.



PETER TRUNG DUONG TRUONG, 23 YEARS OLD. DENMARK, NØRRESUNDBY

I have previously volunteered at a local foodbank, where I collected food close to or exceeding the 'best-before-use' date. Each day, collecting only from about 7 different destinations, we could regularly give out enough food for a week to at least 20 families each day. Witnessing this kind of excess thrown out made me aware of some of the issues regarding sustainable consumption. It is possible to create a society with more effective distribution of resource, less time spent on transportation, and fewer hungry mouths.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



KARL MATTIAS SEPP, 22 YEARS OLD. ESTONIA, TALLINN

I have made with different organisations and ministries easier for young people to be engaged with local and state governments. Young people have had many ideas how to recycle better, how to avoid usage of plastics, how to further education, how to talk about mental health etc. I also created an activity for the Youth Council of Tallinn where, at first, we ran an event where young people could discuss mental health issues and the services that are provided to them. After the event we gathered the ideas and proposals and connected youth and the people that are either running these services or funding them. Third step was to design these services and funding so they would cater to the people's needs that are using them.



JUULI ESKELINEN, 19 YEARS OLD. FINLAND, TURKU

Being vegetarian I have been able to show others an example. Talking about the impact our diet has on the climate and give tips and recipes to others. Taking actions against climate change is important to young people and should be more encouraged for example by having vegetarian meal in schools at least once a week. As a young LGBT+ person I'm open about my own story and promoting equal rights. I hope that others find the courage to say what they think and make a change.



NIELS DE FRAGUIER, 23 YEARS OLD. FRANCE, RENNES

Enthusiastic about the power of youth to drive sustainable change and pave the way for a better future for all, I decided to commit myself to youth work for more than three years being involved in diverse initiatives leading to social inclusion, better health, gender equality, reduced inequalities, and climate action. Involved as employee and volunteer in multiple EU and international projects, I had the chance to contribute to events and projects supporting European values, Human rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. Believing in the power of collaboration through partnerships in a local, regional, and European level, I do think that civil society participation including youth represent a key opportunity to foster change towards sustainable development. More than providing a community with tools for raising awareness, the youth generation has the energy, commitment, and willingness to actively participate in decision-making processes with all influential stakeholders. Youth that I met are expecting more power to act and pave the way towards essential achievements such as climate action. Giving them the chance to be involved from the start to the implementation of policies is necessary to ensure appropriate understanding of the new generation's needs.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



KOKA KAPANADZE, 23 YEARS OLD. GEORGIA, TBILISI

I deeply believe that the young people are standing at the cornerstone of the sustainable development. Besides the fact that young people have many fresh and innovative ideas towards existing problems, we are also the ones who are most vulnerable to modern-day challenges. The sustainable development should be achieved through the cooperation of several generations. We should be teaching next generation from the very young age about the principles and values that would contribute to create a better world.



ROBIN BALZEREIT, 18 YEARS OLD. GERMANY, STATE CAPITAL WIESBADEN

As part of the Union of hessian youth parliaments, I am involved in the democratic process which is necessary for a political organization. Due to the fact that especially youth-related topics are discussed predominantly, the Union often develops drafts concerning SDG-Goals 4, 11 and 13, which are Quality Education, Sustainable Cities and Communities and Climate Action. These three general goals all three aim for economic improvement, as even education plays a vital role in ensuring climate sensibility. By urging political leaders of our region to take our decrees into account, we are using the democratic framework to get our voices heard and to safeguard the democratic participation of young people.



ZAFEIRIS DIROPOULOS, 22 YEARS OLD. GREECE, KATERINI

I come from a provincial town in Greece which faces strong social problems like very high youth unemployment. At the same time, my local community cannot be characterized a sustainable city at all, since there isn't any concrete municipal or national plan to create an added value to the local economies and also deal with the local challenges (climate change, refugees inclusion etc). Since 2015, we have founded a youth NGO that tries to empower the young people of the region and to provide them with tools and opportunities in order to achieve a stronger participation in the local context. So far, we could be proud of organizing a local youth strategy consultation event (in the framework of the National Youth Strategy) and also a "City Branding Strategy" that has include topics like tourism, environment, participation and inclusive growth. I think that my work, as well as the work of the organization that I come from, has contributed towards the sustainable development of my town, since it has created the base for building a more resilient community.



CSANÁD KANDIKÓ, 25 YEARS OLD. HUNGARY, BUDAPEST

As a leader of a little local football (soccer) team, I foster my fellows to the separate collection, in addition, we installed trash-bins in the area around the football field. We strongly hope that this will help the local community keep the environment clean.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



LILJA LUDVIKSDOTTIR, 20 YEARS OLD. ICELAND, REYKJAVÍK

In my work at UNICEF in Iceland we have been very focused on educating children and young adults on how they can use their rights to influence society. By implementing the global goals in elementary schools in Reykjavik and its suburbs, we are actively involving children and young adult from an early age to make a difference on their society. As a part of the implementation we have for example started recycling plastic, paper, and natural waste in many of these schools and that has had a great effect on the broader society. Kids come home from school where they have been learning about the effect plastic has on our society and pass that knowledge on to an older generation who will not be affected by climate change in the same way as the youth today will. My little brother for example goes to one of the schools we have been working on and came home one day and asked for reusable straws and a metal lunch box instead of a plastic one. Children and young adults are often more open minded than adults and when we educate children from an early age about sustainability, it is bound to pay off when they grow up and become fully active participants in society. A key in this development is sending the message to this specific group that their opinion and actions and mindful living matters and has a broader effect on society than young adult have been lead to believe in the past generations.



AOIFE MOLLOY, 20 YEARS OLD. IRELAND, NEW ROSS

As a young volunteer, through involvement in youth organizations, I have managed to participate in many projects that contribute towards the sustainable development goals.

For example, number 3 cites good health and wellbeing as a goal – I was highly involved with Amber Flag and in implementing an extremely successful anti-cyberbullying policy in my secondary school in order to combat the negative effects that bullying online can have on the mental health of young people. Cyberbullying has seen a huge surge in recent years due to the increased presence of social media and technology in our lives, and through working with CNN I was able to assist in drawing up and implementing a campaign to educate young people on the effects of engaging in this behavior online, and how it can be prevented. This programme was piloted in my secondary school and worked brilliantly – so much so that my Amber Flag Committee was invited to the Irish Children's Ombudsman for a discussion regarding the topics of mental health. I also served as a representative of my school to present on the success of the initiative to my local authority, Wexford County Council, and in speaking on the issue to the Council members, the topic was opened up for further debate, such as how the councilors could both get involved in cyber-activism and protect themselves online. Without the youth resources at my disposal, it would have been impossible for me to be involved in and assist in such a successful project. It is also important to consider how youth participation can impact certain issues in ways that the participation of older politicians cannot; in this particular case, as a young person, I have grown up with these fast-paced technological developments and have seen social media impact my personal growth in a way that is unprecedented and alien to many of the adults I worked with on this project.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



SOFIA MOSCHIN, 23 YEARS OLD. ITALY, PADOVA

Developing the project "Awareness Raising" under the aegis of the Congress, I am giving media interviews and I am taking part in school meetings and public conferences as a speaker all over Italy. As student of Physics and Youth Delegate, I am proving that active citizenship is a responsibility, regardless of personal educational and working background. Drawing the first conclusions about the project, I can say that I am successfully promoting the concept of democracy and inspiring an involved local, national and European citizenship among youth. Making every young person aware about his makings and stimulating his go-getting were the personal targets I set as the Italian Youth Delegate. That is the reason why I am pushing people to trust themselves and to search for chances of success.



JELIZAVETA KLIMANOVA, 18 YEARS OLD. LATVIA, VILANI

As a youth activist, usually, the thing I do is sending information about new projects to others. It is like - I see one new coming and I forward it to the person I think would be interested in it. Also, in my school, I have gone to classes and talked about the projects that I already participated in (shared experience) and told them how to apply and so on. Also, now I am one of the organizers in discussion festival, where that event will be a discussion about youngsters motivation and how to rise it. From the feedbacks I got, I see that I have made changes in many people thinking about our environment. They started to take more care about our planet. Also, I see that by my participation older generation see that youth can and do have the ideas about better future.



AGNE VICKACKAITE, 26 YEARS OLD. LITHUANIA, VILNIUS

Couple of years ago I was working as an office administrator in one of Insurance companies in Lithuania. Our team was big, around 400 people at that time. I remember when I noticed how much paper and plastic waste we have. Also how many batteries we use. We had only few recycle bins and they were not enough for such big office. So I encouraged my manager to order and put them in every printing room and staff kitchen. I personally taught some of my colleagues how to recycle and why it's important and within few weeks a lot of them started to do this.



NAMI ISAKI, 26 YEARS OLD. NORTH MACEDONIA, KUMANOVO

Being a young active person in my society in the past years it was difficult. Facing different changes of the political circumstances and taking in consideration the previous government I can say that it had huge impact in the society. Organizing different activities in small communities but with big impact it was one of the key of a success activism. One of the examples was when I did an event in s village where lived around 3000 habitants but the event reached more than 12.000 people from different parts of the society with the only aim to promote youth activism and civic engagement of the young people. It was a really good view for the society when the event was organized by a young person with that significant impact.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



JASMINE FARRUGIA, 21 YEARS OLD. MALTA, BIRZEBBUGIA

From my experience with youth work, I have seen that a lot of youths I met in the process, once they are active in society they become more conscious about the issues affecting society. Once there is more youth participation, there is more engagement and dedication to have a better society- this includes working towards having a healthier society through sustainable development. Also thanks to several youth projects done towards to past years, youths had the opportunity to contribute policies and ideas for a better society and they come up with fresh and genuine ideas. Most of the time youths work genuinely and because they want to see a real change for the better. Having coordinated several youth projects, I believe that the greatest change towards sustainable development that I have brought is more opportunities for youths to think outside the box and to voice ideas to decision makers so that they can actually implement them.



CONSTANTIN VLAS, 28 YEARS OLD. REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, CHISINAU

For me, sustainable development was an important part of the education received within the family but also at school. One of the turning points, which triggered more curiosity on the topic, was the moment when I started, together with other young people, the sanitation of the river in my village and the plantation of the riverbed with trees as the leader of the "Young people change the world", at the age of 16. This action has sensitized local people to water pollution and has changed their attitude towards the problem. This, gradually encouraged me to improve my knowledge about sustainable development and develop projects designed to promote its principles. Thanks to all these and other activities, I gained the necessary skills for obtaining the position of Vice President of a district in Moldova, Hincesti District. My main responsibilities as a Vice president of Hincesti District implied working with teams on topics as community development, clusterization, entrepreneurship development, international cooperation and regional development strategies in the area which lead most of the time to formulating various policies regarding the hard core problems that need to be solved on a higher level, in a sustainable way, by the executives and the legal authorities. Besides the initiatives promoted as a civil servant, as President of the Association for Intercommunity Development in the Republic of Moldova, I have set up an important mechanism to support non-governmental organizations in the country by initiating the project "8 Hours' Overtime for a Good Cause – Moldova". An international concept, adapted to the realities of my country, through which professionals from different fields can help non-governmental organizations to solve the problems they face and to develop the projects and the initiatives of change that they have. All the activities carried out so far are based on a very important principle for me - to contribute to the development so that the generations that come to find a better world than we have at present.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



MARIJA MARKOVIC, 21 YEARS OLD. MONTENEGRO, CETINJE

As a youth activist I have managed to participate in some important projects in my local community and in my country as well that are related to sustainable development goals. I have a lot experience when it comes to area number four (Peace) by participating in many trainings where I've learned a lot about how to fight with hate speech (through NO HATE speech movement) and I considered this as a really useful thing for my non formal education and not just for mine, but I also got the chance to talk with my colleagues from school and other NGO's. I think that we all need to live in safe world where we don't have to justify who do we love, what kind of music do we listen, what are our hobbies etc. I'm coming from a small country and we all know each other which makes it easier to spread hate speech. Nowadays with internet and social networks it became not so heard to bully other people. Learning about different tools and mechanism about this topic made it easier for me to spread the knowledge.



DAVID WEEKENSTROO, 25 YEARS OLD. THE NETHERLANDS, ZOETERMEER

My participation and impact that I've made is directly related to my role in the city council. Making sure that the policies are achievable but also progressive. To make sure you maintain significant impact, keep the policies implemented and get society behind your choices. This my go-to measurement, otherwise the policies will differentiate between the governing parties and will get polarization in the society with the 'haves' and the 'have nots'.



LISA SHOSHI, 19 YEARS OLD. NORWAY, BERGEN

I participate in European Youth Parliament where we have often had discussions concerning this theme. It hasn't made any significant impact, except for maybe making young people more aware of sustainable development and such.



WERONIKA SZYSZKA, 24 YEARS OLD. POLAND, WARSAW

Once I used to serve as a volunteer in a children's day care centre. It was not something very unique, I was just spending time with the kids whose parents were not able or willing to do this. Mainly we were doing the homework and catching up in English and Maths. After some time I realized that thanks to some good marks received at school, the children became more confident and noticed that they are capable of things that seemed for them impossible. That helped me to realize that time devoted to younger generations constitutes unvaluable and irreplaceable contribution towards sustainable development, because if we help children and youths to realise the full potential of their skills – we will see our world and society thriving.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



CATARINA NEVES, 23 YEARS OLD. PORTUGAL, PORTO

As a HeForShe Portugal ambassador for 3 years now, I have been able to experience first-hand people's eagerness to learn more about Gender Equality (SDG 5). Every time I had the opportunity to conduct a workshop in a company or a lecture to university students, I could feel the excitement, the curiosity and all the questions in the air — for some, it was the first time hearing about such a thing! The amount of people who always came to talk to me afterwards, sharing experiences or asking questions, was definitely humbling. It taught me a lot about the importance of being vocal about what we are passionate about.



CARMEN MURGU, 23 YEARS OLD. ROMANIA, BRASOV

As a young person, the main resources needed to get involved in improving our world are not lacking. For instance, being part in different projects, me together with other young people tried to make a change in different fields bringing a new perspective towards different problems, such as the lack of civic participation, pollution, the lack of youth empowerment, poverty, inequality of changes, discrimination, hate speech, and so on. Also, I tried to emphasize the importance of volunteering work as one of the main tools of solving the aforementioned issues. For example, I was a volunteer for one month in Cyprus doing different activities, from cleaning the roads to organising various activities for the local people. From this kind of experience, we realise the impact of our actions and how vital is to take these actions. Last but not least, I tried to motivate other young people to involve more and create initiatives together.



ALEKSANDR ERIN, 26 YEARS OLD. RUSSIA, NOVOSIBIRSK

Across my projects, activities include strengthening youth advocacy groups, providing quality research to interact with public authorities, and fostering the creation of national youth councils and plans. Several projects place a strong emphasis on social media and information technology. Innovative strategies range from social partnerships for service delivery to provincial youth parliaments to a digital game on youth and local governance. This group of projects which is unique in themselves, has also helped me to develop organizational lesson learning for other stakeholders in terms of the design and implementation of youth centered initiatives, taking into particular consideration the development of appropriate and realistic youth indicators; institutional and contextual analyses (political analyses) during the programme design phase; and partnership building. In addition, I would like to say that I also focus on creating a comfortable ecosystem for youth participation. I design "platforms" where young people can take part and be involved in the development of the region. For example, several years ago, in order to involve young people in making decisions related to youth policy issues, the Youth Policy Council was established under the Governor of the Novosibirsk Region.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



CARLOTTA SERRA CIOTTI, 26 YEARS OLD. SAN MARINO

I have always been keen on getting involved in volunteer activities in various domains, because I think they really shape one's interests and passions, and hence contribute to shaping the whole of society. Volunteering with kids has taught me a lot about what has now become a profession for me (teaching), whilst engaging in the organization of cultural events (TEDx Città di San Marino) showed me the power of connecting with people with different stories and backgrounds. I also value volunteering in sport, as I believe it to be a way of bringing people closer together and creating cooperation.



OLGA DEVIC, 18 YEARS OLD. SERBIA, BELGRADE

As a very active young girl and a peer educator, I found out that a peer education and peer-based approach is the best way throughout youth can reach the most valuable education beyond the formal school curriculum on very important topics in the world, such as SDG. I regularly organize the peer educations in order to activate youth to take actions on the very important world issues. Addition to that, I have organized the series of workshops on SDG goals focusing on the goals which are the most dedicated to their communities. The final goal of the workshop was to create a project on how youth can act to reach the SDG goals in their communities. They take step by step to achieve the SDG and I'm very proud of them.



JAKUB DANČO, 21 YEARS OLD. SLOVAKIA, POPRAD

I participate in Student Council for Higher Education. There we lobbied to improve social infrastructure for students. I am also a member of our faculty senate, where we try to implement new standards to make our educational process better. For example, new money have been allocated from the government on social infrastructure. New policies have been adopted in the field of quality education. Students can therefore enjoy better services and learn effectively. And thanks to this all, it helped to the goal of providing quality education for all.



NAXHIE REXHEPI, 23 YEARS OLD. SLOVENIA, LJUBLJANA

As a volunteer, besides many activities for the promotion of 17 sustainable development goals, one activity that I would like to mention and that had significant impact was regarding youth employment. Where the main goal was the voice of young people to be heard, especially for those whom face discrimination and disadvantage in labor market integration.

TESTIMONIES BY THE 42 YOUTH DELEGATES



JULIA FERNÁNDEZ ARRIBAS, 20 YEARS OLD. MADRID, SPAIN

My main areas of interest as a youth activist are gender equality, youth empowerment and connecting EU to the youth. These can be related to SDGs 5, 10 and 16. Through the development of several campaigns about these issues, I have managed to raise awareness amongst the youth about them, and helped them develop their critical thinking. In my opinion, investing in the youth's capability to understand, reflect and react is investing in the future. And that is what I am determined to do.



SALIH TUNA, 24 YEARS OLD. TURKEY, ISTANBUL

All the different things I managed to participate so far had one common outcome: Breaking down people's perceptions. Whether it is about a country in general or race, ethnicity, religion etc. and this leads to peace, cooperation and sustainable relationship for everyone involved.



KARINA RADCHENKO, 22 YEARS OLD. UKRAINE, KIEV

As a result of my active youth participation, the two draft bills on education and sustainable development were adopted by the Parliament of Ukraine. I have successfully implemented numerous initiatives in the field of gender equality and IDPs integration. In my daily activities, I am constantly dealing with youth-related and gender-stereotypes, as a young woman politician. But through personal experience and achievements, me and thousands of other young leaders all over the world prove their enormous power of taking actions. Youth participation always provides multiple synergy effects. I have initiated trainings aimed at facilitating youth participation at local and regional life, which was followed by numerous projects realization upon the initiative of the training's participants. Young people can be very flexible and efficient in peace-making, and I see this positive aspect of youth participation in context of the armed conflict in my home region.



HUW SHERRARD, 18 YEARS OLD. UNITED KINGDOM, ALLOA

Over the past four years I've had the opportunity to work with some of the most passionate, skilled, and enthusiastic individuals in making positive change in their communities: young people. As a generation we've inherited an array of issues, from the environment to the economy that our politicians and decision-makers have ignored or abandoned us with. Alongside others involved in youth participation and advocacy, I've brought young people's voices into legislation and decisions at a local, regional, and national level, ensuring that young people's needs and interests are represented in the decisions that affect them. Empowering young people is the key to creating a better future for each of our individual countries, as well as Europe as a whole.

"ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS ARE OF PRIMARY CONCERN TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WILL BE OBLIGED IN THE FUTURE TO COPE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF PAST MISTAKES, LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES SHOULD SUPPORT ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS WHICH PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND WHICH INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR ORGANISATIONS."

Council of Europe Charter on Youth Participation, 2013.

