



Strasbourg, 10 June 2020

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ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH (CCJ)

Online event
17 June 2020: 14:00-16:00 CEST
Address: to be confirmed

Climate crisis and global governance

Online informal thematic debate

Programme

The debate will be held in English language only

Informal thematic debate on “Climate crisis and global governance”

Introduction

2019 was a historical moment marked by thousands of students and young people who gathered each week to protest for immediate and decisive action to fight the climate crisis. The fight against climate change is a top priority of young people in Europe.¹ It is a question of human rights and it is a question of democracy. **Solving the climate crisis and playing a part in solving it are prerequisites for young people to access their rights and live a life in dignity.**

At its 42nd meeting (14-16 October 2019), considering it important to take the lead on action to address the current and future effects of climate change on young people's access to rights, participation, quality of life and to protect future generations of young people from the irreversible consequences of climate change, the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) decided to propose a thematic debate around climate change and its long-term consequences on young people's and future generations' rights, freedoms and participation. The CMJ agreed and proposed a debate on “Climate crisis and global governance”, which would include the matter of youth participation in global decision-making processes.

Context

There is scientific consensus that decisive and immediate action is necessary in order to contain the disastrous consequences of climate change and to avoid at least its most harmful and catastrophic implications.² The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emphasises that “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” are required and that “the next few years are probably the most important in our history”. According to estimations, without immediate and sufficient action, the critical threshold of an increase of the global temperature of 1.5C° might be reached as early as 2030.³ The Council of Europe should take an active role in this process since it brings together a group of the world's biggest emitters.

Today, 92% of all young people in the European Union aged 15-24 consider climate change to be a fairly serious problem and 73% as a very serious problem.⁴ Alarmingly, only 9% of youth are very confident the world will act quickly enough to address climate change, which shows a clear need for decisive and immediate action from the institutions that represent the interests of young Europeans.⁵

The Council of Europe, human rights and the environment

As early as 1961, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe proposed that the Committee of Ministers integrate the problems of the environment into its intergovernmental work programme. This proposal was accepted and for more than fifty-five years the Organisation has been active in this important field. A significant number of publications and policy proposals have been developed, such as the legally binding Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.⁶

In a declaration adopted on 15 May 2020, the outgoing (Georgia) and incoming (Greece and Germany) presidencies of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers called for the elaboration of a non-binding instrument on human rights and the environment for adoption at the latest by the end 2021. The declaration recalled the member States' obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights as well as the interconnection between the protection of the environment and human rights. It reminded us that life and well-being on our planet is contingent on humanity's collective capacity to guarantee both human rights and a healthy environment to future generations.

¹ Flash Eurobarometer 455 “European Youth”, p. 40, published in January 2018; It is interesting to note that the survey was conducted in September 2017, before the most recent climate strikes started.

² 5 Benestad, R.E., Nuccitelli, D., Lewandowsky, S. et al. *Theor Appl Climatol* (2016) 126: 699 (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00704-015-1597-5>); cf. also YFJ resolution “On European youth fighting against Climate Change”, May 2008.

³ <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-globalwarming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>.

⁴ 2 Special Eurobarometer 459 “Climate Change”, p. 22, published in September 2017, field work conducted in March 2017.

⁵ 4 UNEP, *GlobeScan Survey*, 2008; <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/environment-climatechange/>.

⁶ Overview of CoE's work on the environment until 2005:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805daae8.

The youth sector, access to rights and the climate crisis

Conscious of the importance the climate crisis has for young people today and of the youth sector's capacity to develop appropriate responses to new challenges, the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 undertakes to improve institutional responses to emerging issues affecting young people's rights and their transition to adulthood, and lists the effects of climate change and environmental degradation as two of these challenges that may be addressed.

Aim and objectives of the debate:

The aim of this informal thematic debate is to explore the effect of the climate crisis on young people's access to rights, and to reflect on the scope for the Council of Europe youth sector to respond to this challenge. Therefore, the debate aims to:

1. Introduce to the CMJ members the causes and consequences of climate change and their impact on young people's access to rights today as well as for future generations of young people;
2. Reflect on the demands for urgent climate action of European youth and over 1.4 million young climate strikers across Europe and the globe and reflect on why climate change is an issue of democracy and rights;
3. Examine the Council of Europe's existing work on the interconnection between the protection of the environment and human rights with a view to identifying areas of work (practice, policy, research) that could be developed by the youth sector to mitigate the consequences of climate change on young people's access to rights, pending a future discussion in the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ).

The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) will discuss the outcomes of the debate and draw up any recommendations for the future work of the Council of Europe youth sector in its 43rd meeting to be held in October 2020 (pending confirmation in view of the Covid-19 pandemic). The CMJ is invited to nominate two rapporteurs – one from the CDEJ and one from the CCJ – in order to note pertinent points of the proceedings to this end.

Agenda

14:00-14:10 – Introduction by the moderator – Pegah Moulana

Why this informal debate?

- Starting with a brief presentation on how the climate change regime was brought into being and acknowledging its successes and downfalls.
- Reflecting on how young people have been involved with this debate and how their demands have been ignored.
- The imminence of the problem, using a reflection on researchers' predictions from 30 years ago, and the latest extreme weather events that are consequences of climate change (Amazon forests, fires in Australia, etc.).
- Looking at the issue of climate crisis from the perspective of the Council of Europe youth sector.

14:10-14:20 – Opening of the informal debate: Matjaz Gruden, Director of Democratic Participation

14:20-14:30 The Council of Europe's perspective: Merete Bjerregaard, Human Rights Intergovernmental Co-operation, DG I, Human rights and rule of law, Council of Europe

- Human rights and the environment: the right to a healthy/clean environment in international human rights law, especially the European Convention on Human Rights
- Overview of the conclusions and recommendations of the [high-level conference on environmental protection and human rights](#)
- Perspectives for a non-binding instrument on human rights and the environment and co-operation with the Joint Council on Youth

14:30-14:35 Questions to the first two speakers

14:35-14:45 – European Youth Perspective: Katarina Pavlovic, Federation of Young European Greens

- What are the consequences of climate change on young people's rights?
- Why are human rights important for tackling climate change?
- What can the Youth Department do to ensure young people can access their rights?

14:45-14:55 Council of Europe youth sector's perspective: Ivan Hromada – Chairperson of the CMJ

- How could the youth sector address this challenge?
- Why is youth participation an important element in this debate?
- What role could the youth sector play in advancing the youth agenda when fighting climate change?
- What is the youth sector's vision for the future?

14:55-15:15 Role of youth organisations in this debate

- Advisory Council on Youth – Andrea Ugrinoska, Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth
- Rosalyn Old – European Youth Forum board member
- Becca Moore – British Youth Council Trustee

15:15: 15:30 Questions to the three previous speakers

15:30 – 16:00 – Impact of climate change on vulnerable groups – panel discussion

- Refugee rights – Carlotta Muston, CCJ
- Youth, peace and security – Rory Newbery, CCJ
- Minority rights – Pia Slogar, CCJ
- Human rights education, a useful approach? – Jorge Sanchez, CCJ
- Q&A

16:00 – Closure of the informal thematic debate