

Concept Note

NETWORK ON YOUTH AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP three year cycle - 2018-2020 Focus 2019

- 20th UNIVERSITY ON YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT (UYD)
- 7th MEDITERRANEAN UNIVERSITY ON YOUTH AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP (MedUni)

Background: The Network on Youth and Global Citizenship

The Network on Youth and Global Citizenship is a partnership facilitated and coordinated by the [North-South Centre of the Council of Europe](#) that gathers youth-led organizations, youth platforms, governmental and intergovernmental institutions from Europe, the Southern Mediterranean and beyond¹.

The Network was set up in 2011 as an informal platform aiming at promoting dialogue and cooperation between youth and relevant institutions on youth policies related issues at regional, multilateral and global level.

The Network advocates for youth participation and encourage their meaningful inclusion in decision and policy-making processes.

The organisations part of the network joined their effort for the definition of a common agenda and the implementation of activities aiming to:

- foster democratic participation and global citizenship among young people;
- uphold the universal principles, values and standards of the Council of Europe;
- implement the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Network also provides space for youth empowerment, offers non-formal education capacity building activities and endorses policies, mechanisms and tools for youth development, in order to increase the recognition of youth as agents for positive change.

Activity Description: the Universities and the annual theme

The Universities

Every year the Network promotes international youth events called “Universities” where different youth-led and youth-oriented organisations have the possibility to run their own activities within a multilateral cooperation context, which encourages networking, peer-to-peer education, design of common advocacy strategies and sharing of knowledge and opportunities.

Each University is an international hub for meeting, training and action planning, gathering for one week hundreds of young people, youth workers, experts from the field and decision makers responsible for youth-related policies.

¹ Members of the Network: 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); Consejo de la Juventud (CJE, Spain); Consell Nacional de la Joventut de Catalunya (CNJC, Spain); Forum Nazionale dei Giovani (FNG, Italy); Conselho Nacional de Juventude (CNJ, Portugal).

The Universities are spaces 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.

The synergies and the common framework which the Universities provide, bring different dimensions of the issues affecting the youth globally into the daily work of grassroots organisations and contribute in building the confidence between young people and all actors of the *quadrilogue*².

In the year 2019 the Network on Youth and Global Citizenship organises two Universities:

- 7th MEDITERRANEAN UNIVERSITY ON YOUTH AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP (MedUni)

Hammamet (Tunisia), 9-16 June 2019.

- 20th UNIVERSITY ON YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT (UYD)

Mollina (Spain), 15-22 September 2019.

The overarching theme and the annual focus

For the period 2018-2020 the Network agreed on a three-year cycle under the umbrella theme of “the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16: peace, justice and strong institutions”. The umbrella theme is the overarching topic of the Network for the cycle 2018-2020 and represents the thread that connects all the activities, advocacy efforts and awareness raising initiatives taking place in the framework of the universities, ensuring coherence and greater impact in the medium term.

Every year, the umbrella theme is broken down into specific annual focuses with the aim to unfold different but complementary elements. The annual focus represents the priority of the universities happening in the same year. The Joint programme of the Universities explores and develops the annual focus, connecting all the activities implemented in the framework of the same university and inspiring the reflection of all the participants involved in them.

The annual focus for 2019 is “Youth and Justice”.

2018-2020 theme: United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Peace, justice and effective and inclusive institutions are on the top of the global youth agenda and they are largely recognised as core elements for sustainable development. However, progress in these areas remains uneven across and within regions.

A fundamental shift in the way those global challenges are faced needs to be grounded in a new rights-based approach. [The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) represents the major contribution for such a shift, being a transformative agenda and a universal call for action to ensure democracy, security and prosperity.

The Agenda 2030 acknowledges the centrality of youth: over a third of the 169 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets, highlight the role of young people and the importance of their empowerment and participation. Albeit the official recognition of their role and of their main concerns and 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.

Within this context, the SDG 16 is particularly relevant: accountable and transparent institutions, fair and accessible juridical systems and a society free from violence and discrimination are among the main elements that could guarantee a greater contribution from youth in translating policies into action towards the achievement of the UN SDGs.

² Representatives of the governments, national parliaments, regional and local authorities and civil society.

The strategic importance of the UN SDG 16 also comes from the fact that it is closely 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 develops critical thinking, helps to reduce inequalities and to enhance gender equality, fosters tolerance between people thus contributing 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.

To that end, it is important that governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities work together with youth organisations and with other sectors of civil society, ensuring more efficient mechanisms of youth participation and more inclusive decision making processes, following a bottom-up approach. Those demands are in line with the [Council of Europe Recommendation on youth work](#), the renewed [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#) and the [UN Resolution on “Youth, Peace and Security”](#).

Considering this rationale, peace, justice and strong institutions represent the core elements of the Network for the years 2018-2020, in line with the [priorities of the North-South Centre](#) and of the [youth sector of the Council of Europe](#). The Universities within this cycle will be spaces to empower young people, build synergies among policy makers, nurture civic engagement and promote respect for Human Rights - in Europe and beyond - towards a more peaceful society where everyone could benefit from freedom and protection and “no one is left behind”.

Focus 2019: Youth and Justice

The Sustainable Development Goal 16.3: “Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all” recognizes the intrinsic links between access to justice, poverty reduction and inclusive growth.

In many countries, unequal access to justice and discrimination in the judicial sector create barriers to civic and political participation, especially for traditionally marginalised populations such as young people, women and migrants. Therefore, the annual focus on “Youth and Justice” provides a unique opportunity to reflect on young people’s access to justice as an integral element for more fair and sustainable development. In fact, to provide youth with legal empowerment (the ability to understand and use the law and navigate across multiple judicial pathways) is fundamental, not only to meet their basic needs, but also an essential step for inclusive growth, enabling young people to tackle social inequalities and hold authorities accountable.

On the other hand, arbitrary detention, torture of political activists and human rights defenders, abuse of power, corruption, bribery, segregation and gender discrimination are undermining the trust young people have towards the judicial system and related governmental institutions. Additionally, such mistrust has become reciprocal in light of the phenomenon of “criminalization of youth”, which contributes to portray children and young persons as major threats to society. This is also in light of the juvenile justice systems held by many countries, which urge to be reviewed against the requirements of the [UN Convention of the Rights of the Child](#) and of the many European human rights instruments.

In this context, to ensure public access to information, to enforce the rule of law, to strengthen institutions and ensure that they are compliant with the relevant Council of Europe Conventions - such as the Istanbul³ and Lanzarote⁴ Conventions, among others - should be concerns on the top of the agenda of all the governments, in which young people’s worries and contributions should be taken into account.

³ [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#)

⁴ [Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#)

In this regard, meaningful consultation with young people and youth organisations were held at different levels: the new global UN Youth Strategy and the Council of Europe Recommendation on young people's access to rights⁵ are the first results of a youth consultation process that has just started.

Nevertheless, the vulnerable situations in which young people often find themselves, which undermines their capacity to enjoy their rights and to make their appeal for protection heard, especially in their transition from childhood and adulthood, is still an issue that has to be taken forward.

The Key-questions to be addressed to move forward on this path are:

- How to promote more effectively awareness of the rights that young people should be able to enjoy and about what they can do if their rights are violated?
- How can access to justice and legal empowerment be fully integrated into a global youth agenda and into inclusive growth strategies?
- How can young people target policy constraints and systemic factors that shape the circumstances in which injustice, poverty and discrimination arise?
- How can young people advocate for and work with governments towards an effective implementation of the SDG 16.3 to "ensure equal access to justice for all"?
- How could international solidarity and the growing interconnectivity of social media bring new forms of activism to promote social justice?
- What good practices exist in providing people-focused and human rights-based social and legal services?
- How can youth organisations monitor the implementation of Human rights frameworks?

To jointly engage young people, youth work, youth-led organisations and youth related institutions and decision makers in looking for new answers to those questions is a fundamental exercise towards the achievement of a higher level of social justice.

Social justice remains the major driving force for youth participation since young people have an inherent understanding of fairness and equity and recognize the access to rights as a fundamental element for their personal and social development.

Therefore, in order to create broad societal changes that address the root causes of the injustices that most of the groups in vulnerable situations - especially young people - face, it is essential to explore the link between Democratic Participation, Youth Rights, Sustainable Development and Social Justice.

Targeted outputs and outcomes of the cycle 2018-2020

Targeted outputs:

1. 40 capacity building, advocacy or networking activities are organised in the framework of the Universities within the cycle 2018-2020 increasing the regional and interregional cooperation in the youth field.
2. 1 200 young people, youth workers and youth leaders are equipped with knowledge, skills and tools on democratic participation, human rights and global education.
3. 800 youth-led and youth-related organisations become more aware 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 on SDG 16 - in their communities.
4. 25 sessions having an active participation of governments, parliaments and local and regional authorities' representatives enhanced structured and effective dialogue between youth representatives and decision makers.

⁵ [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2016\)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people's access to rights](#)

5. 300 Lessons learned, good practices, and resources on youth policies and youth strategies are collected and shared among the different international players active in the youth field.
6. Council of Europe tools and recommendations as well as other international standards and mechanisms related to youth participation, human rights and global education are disseminated among more than 2 000 young people.

Targeted outcomes:

1. Bottom-up multilateral cooperation among youth stakeholders on issues related to peace, democratic participation and sustainable development are enhanced through peer-learning, networking and the exchange of good practices.
2. Civil society and youth organisations improved their capacity to contribute to the global agenda and are able to address challenges regarding Youth, Peace and Security.
3. Multilevel governance structures and mechanisms are promoted and understood and the awareness of decision makers and youth representatives about each other's' role and relevance is increased.
4. Youth participation, active citizenship and partnership are fostered at different levels to address the major challenges faced by young people worldwide, contributing to guarantee young people's access to rights.
5. Global education, youth work and non-formal education methodologies are broadly promoted and recognized as crucial elements to tackle marginalization, radicalization, discrimination and social injustice.
6. The Council of Europe's youth strategic priorities for 2018-2019 and the Action Plan "Building Inclusive Societies", the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international guiding documents are mainstreamed and broadly used to promote human rights, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship.