

DEVELOPING GLOBAL IDENTITIES

Joint theme 2017

Network of Universities on Youth and Global Citizenship

Concept Note

BACKGROUND

*Kosmopolitês, citizens of the world*¹
#YOUTH2030

Young people today live in a world of globalization and lack of opportunities, taking part in a development process that is simultaneously bringing people together and widening the divisions between them. Youth is at the forefront of this phenomenon. Young people experience the consequences of globalisation on an everyday basis through new and precarious employment patterns, access to different levels of education, online connections or the absence of them, and cultural diversity or mainstreaming, among other factors. This global exposure provides them with a unique scenario full of opportunities or constraints that induce them to re-think and revise their sense of identity and place within society.

At the same time, youth is a unique moment in the process of identity construction and a key period for political awareness and participation: the period when we work out the connections between 'status and identities as individuals' with the 'lives and concerns of others with whom we share a sense of community'. In other words, youth is the period when we acquire the values and capacities for civic engagement. Self-esteem, connection to peers and communities and positive self-identity contribute to define individuals as fully fledged citizens².

In this context, the complexity relies today on defining one's community. Our interconnected societies transcend geographic or political borders challenging traditional understandings of identity and citizenship. Countries are no longer hermetic constructions and people should be aware of their position as individuals in a world where the consequences of their actions have an impact on other people's lives at the local, regional, national or international levels. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to inform and educate young people about the notion of belonging not only to their in-group, community or country, but also to broader global entities, contributing to defining them not only as citizens but as global citizens, ready to participate in society beyond self-interest³.

Before our interdependent futures, new generations are coming together as agents for change so that *no one is left behind*. It is in this context that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was conceived with 17 goals that target more sustainable social, economic, and environmental developments for all countries around the globe⁴. Young people and youth organisations, as recognised in the global agenda, are key drivers in advancing inclusive and sustainable global development since youth-led action can help governments fill gaps in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On one hand, youth organizations play a crucial role in connecting identities, developing more inclusive societies and promoting diversity. Youth organizations accompany young people in the sensitive and

¹ Diogenes of Sinope (c.412 – 323 B.C.), *Greek philosopher that, when asked where he came from, answered: "I am a citizen of the world (kosmopolitês)"*.

² Bourn Douglas (2008), *Young people, identity and living in a global society*, Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review No. 7, pp. 48-61.

³ James H. Fowler and Cindy D. Kam (2007), *Beyond the Self: Social Identity, Altruism, and Political Participation*, Journal of Politics, Vol. 69, No. 3, pp. 811-825.

⁴ Dejan Bojanić, (2006), *The Role of Youth in the Implementation of the SDGs*, The Huffington Post, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/the-youth-assembly-at-the-united-nations/the-role-of-youth-in-the_b_9237714.html, accessed 15 February 2017

meaningful processes of identity construction fostering critical thinking, building intercultural sensitivity, and developing methodologies for self-awareness. Youth organisations support young individuals to explore their power as a change maker. By promoting human rights and constantly challenging racism, discrimination and xenophobia every day and anywhere. Youth organizations support a better understanding of multiple identities, beliefs, cultures, traditions and histories of people. They support the development of young people's self-esteem and sense of belonging regardless their differences, consequently shaping their identities and contributing to educate open and respectful citizens for the future.

On the other hand, youth organisations have models to integrate people's capacities for participation to implement the global agenda at different levels. Youth work is proving that young people are energetic and willing to engage in international, national and local developments. Youth organisations contribute to *localizing the global agenda*⁵, they foster civic engagement at the grassroots level by mobilizing more young people in developing a sense of ownership and awareness about the challenges they face. They help amplifying their voices through decision-making and in political processes, ensuring young people's full access to their rights.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

In this context, the Network of the Universities on Youth and Global Citizenship agreed on **Developing Global Identities** as the joint theme that will connect all different Universities in 2017.

The Network, created in 2011, currently includes the University on Youth and Development (UYD, Spain) and the Mediterranean University on Youth and Global Citizenship (MedUni, Tunisia)⁶.

For 16 years now, based on the idea of global citizenship and identity, the different Universities have provided a space where young people and youth workers come together as part of a global youth movement that works for more sustainable and inclusive societies. The educational model developed in these Universities is largely inspired by the Global Education Guidelines⁷, systematized by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, and by Council of Europe's Recommendation on Education for Global Interdependence and Solidarity⁸.

The Network provides an exceptional space for young people and youth organisations to meet, debate, build their capacities and co-operate on youth policy related issues. The Universities are committed to further strengthening youth cooperation through a permanent dialogue between youth organisations and youth-related institutions at regional, multilateral and global level, contributing to the Global Youth Partnership for Development.

This year's theme would allow participants and political representatives to reflect on how youth organisations and youth work can empower young people as global citizens to celebrate their diverse identities, face their vulnerabilities and unleash their potential to contribute to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Global Agenda 2030.

Targeted outcomes:

- International youth work is encouraged and non-formal education methodologies are identified as complement to formal education to promote youth civic engagement;
- Educators, young people and youth multipliers are equipped with knowledge, skills and tools to promote principles and practices of global/development education;
- Awareness is raised about the Global Agenda 2030 and the role that young people and youth organisations have in implementing, monitoring and evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals in their communities;
- The impact that self-esteem, connection to peers and communities and positive self-identity is explored in active youth participation;

⁵ UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), *Localizing the SDGs: From a Global Agenda to City Action*, available at <http://unsdsn.org/news/2016/07/25/localizing-the-sdgs-from-a-global-agenda-to-city-action/>, accessed 25 January 2017

⁶ The Network also included the African University on Youth and Development (AUJD, Cape Verde and Kenya) and the University of Participation and Citizenship (UPC, Uruguay) not active at the moment.

⁷ North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (2012). *Global Education Guidelines*, available at: <https://www.coe.int/t/dq4/nscentre/GE/GE/GE-Guidelines/GEguidelines-web.pdf>, accessed 25 January 2017.

⁸ Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)4, Committee of Ministers to member states Council of Europe, *On education for global interdependence and solidarity*, available at: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1784485&Site=CM>, accessed 25 January 2017.

- Issues around personal identity and its multiple dimensions (gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, etc.) as well as around collective/political identities (new political movements, civic activism in 21st century, etc.) are discussed;
- Exchanges on identity affirmation approaches contribute to the construction of inclusive identities to prevent the marginalization of youth while tackling the growing issues of xenophobia, racism and intolerance;
- By advocating with decision-makers, youth issues are prioritised and an open dialogue between young people and government officials is encouraged to facilitate joint action in policy development.

Targeted group(s):

Representatives from national governments, parliaments and local and regional authorities responsible for youth policy; international, national, regional and local youth-led and youth-serving organisations; youth workers; educators; students; young activists.

In 2017 emphasis will be put on an increased involvement of relevant authorities and youth organisations from Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, and Algeria.

Partners of the Network of Youth and Global Citizenship: European Youth Forum (YFJ), African Diaspora Network in Europe (ADYNE), Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF), League of Arab States (LAS), Pan-African Youth Union (PYU), Network of International Youth Organisations in Africa (NIYOA), Observatoire National de la Jeunesse (ONJ, Tunisia), Instituto de la Juventud (INJUVE, España), Consejo de la Juventud (CJE, España), Consell Nacional de la Joventut de Catalunya (CNJC, Cataluña, España), Forum Nazionale dei Giovani (FNG, Italy), Conselho Nacional de Juventude (CNJ, Portugal), Foro Latino-Americano y Caribeño de la Juventud (FLACJ)

CoE Youth Department, CoE-EU youth partnership, Advisory Council on Youth;
 UNAOC, UN Habitat, UN Major Group Children and Youth;
 Wergeland Centre, Wilton Park