PRESIDENCY OF ICELAND
Council of Europe
11/2022 - 05/2023

PRÉSIDENCE DE L'ISLANDE
Conseil de l'Europe
11/2022 - 05/2023

Youth – Jeunesse

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

20 February 2023

Standard setting

Consultative meeting

Climate crisis and young people

organised by the
Youth Policy Division, Youth Department
Directorate of Democratic Participation
DG Democracy and Human Dignity

under the aegis of the
Presidency of Iceland
of the Committee of Ministers

22 and 23 February 2023
Room 0.1
European Youth Centre Strasbourg

Concept paper
&
Programme

Introduction

The presidency of Iceland of the Committee of Ministers

Iceland's presidency of the Committee of Ministers is supporting this consultative meeting on young people and climate crisis as the environment and children/youth, as well as the interlinkages between them, are two of the four main themes on which the presidency will focus. The other two themes are the Council of Europe's core principles of human rights, democracy and rule of law, and equality.

Iceland is concerned about the increasing negative effects of environmental degradation and climate crisis on the enjoyment of human rights across the globe. All through Iceland's presidency there will be a green theme to promote the interrelationship between human rights and the environment. This will be done, for example, by looking at the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, that some states have already incorporated in their legislation, as well as by promoting the need for green public administration and green solutions.

Youth climate activism

Children and youth are the most impacted by today's global environmental crisis and the most threatened by our current trajectory, which explains why they are taking the lead on climate activism on every continent, the fight against climate crisis being a top priority of young people in Europe.[1] Their concern for the future was first brought to the attention of the world in 2019 – and has remained there ever since – when more than 46 million young people and children from over 150 countries gathered each week to protest for immediate and decisive action to fight the climate crisis. Worryingly, and despite escalating action, youth climate activism continues to have limited impact on decision and policymakers.

The Council of Europe 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, amongst the aims of the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 is to improve institutional responses to the effects the climate crisis and environmental degradation have on young people's rights and their transition to adulthood.

At its 42nd meeting (14-16 October 2019), considering it important to address the current and future effects of the climate crisis 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 crisis, the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) organised a thematic debate entitled "Climate crisis and global governance".

One of the outcomes of this debate was the setting up, by the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), of a task force to introduce a green perspective and young people's right to a healthy environment into the youth sector's work. One of the task force's recommendations was to draft a Committee of Ministers recommendation on the climate crisis and young people which would propose policy guidelines and measures to member states to address the issues raised by youth climate activists and other specialists.

The CMJ agreed to this proposal, stating member states should be encouraged – and guided – in creating means to ensure young people can play a meaningful role in policy and decision-making in climate-related issues. A CM recommendation would be important as recognition of young people's commitment to raising global awareness of the urgency of tackling the climate crisis. Even greater urgency to hearing and heeding young people's voice has been given to this issue in the light of the increased dependency of some countries on fossil fuel, following the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine which has resulted in a resumption of the arms race world-wide.

Committee of Ministers recommendations

Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe provides for the Committee of Ministers (CM), the Organisation's decision-making body, to make recommendations to the governments of member states on matters for which the Committee has agreed "a common policy". These recommendations are non-

[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.

binding, soft-law instruments, adopted by the CM. The Statute also permits the Committee of Ministers to ask member governments "to inform it of the action taken by them" in regard to recommendations (Article 15.b).

The Council of Europe and the environment

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation, promoting the values of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Its European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) does not mention the environment, it is not specifically designed to provide general protection of the environment as such. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), however, has interpreted the provisions of the ECHR in the context of environmental issues, in particular to protect individuals against the consequences of environmental harm. A healthy environment is intrinsically linked to human rights, it underpins peace and social cohesion, and the meaningful participation of citizens is at the core of democracy.

In 2020, the final declaration by the Georgian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, referring to environmental protection and human rights, stated that the Council of Europe has a key role to play in mainstreaming the environmental dimension into human rights and to pursue a rights-based approach to environmental protection. In 2021, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe recommended that the Committee of Ministers draw up an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights on the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. In 2022, the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)20 to member States on human rights and the protection of the environment. Also in 2022, the European Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) published an updated third edition of its Manual on Human Rights and the Environment and is currently examining the need for and feasibility of a further instrument or instruments on human rights and the environment.

Environmental issues in the Organisation fall under the banner of the sustainable and democratic management of Europe's cultural and natural heritage, and the protection of Europe's biodiversity for future generations. The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979), or Bern Convention, protects both species and habitats and brings countries together to decide how to act on nature conservation. The European Diploma for Protected Areas recognises natural and semi-natural areas and landscapes of exceptional European importance for the preservation of biological, geological and landscape diversity.

The aims and objectives of this consultative meeting

The aim of this consultative meeting is to bring together various stakeholders and experts, with different insights into the subject matter, to exchange experiences, practices and recommendations on youth participation in climate-related activities and the effects of the climate crisis on young people, while taking into account their diverse needs, circumstances and aspirations, as well as strengthening their participation in climate actions.

The specific objectives are to:

- examine and reflect on the state of play with regard to the climate crisis and its consequences on young people's lives;
- in this context, identify gaps in policy and/or legislative measures, for example as regards participation in decision-making processes, rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and the possible limitation of youth activists' rights in line with applicable European human rights standards, access to information and education, intergenerational equity, well-being, etc to inform the draft CM recommendation;
- get a better understanding of the goals and objectives of the CM recommendation from the perspectives of different groups;
- address the intersections between the climate crisis and other issues, including human rights, democracy, migration, well-being, gender, intergenerational equity, etc;
- discuss the needs of young people and youth civil society in addressing the challenges that the climate crisis poses.

Participants:

Twenty participants will be invited to participate in this two-day consultative meeting, who should be able to contribute relevant examples of good practice and illustrate barriers to their climate action. The participants will be:

- Members of the CMJ's drafting group;
- Climate activists, representatives of youth climate movements and environmental NGOs;
- Researchers/academics on the climate crisis, youth, democracy and human rights;
- Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- Representatives of international organisations;
- Other stakeholders who can usefully contribute to the reflections.

Travel, board and lodging

The Council of Europe will cover participants' travel, accommodation and meal costs according to its rules. Accommodation will be in individual rooms in the European Youth Centre Strasbourg, meals will be taken in the EYCS' dining room at the following times:

Breakfast	07.30-09.15
Lunch	12.30-14.00
Dinner	19.00-20.30

Special meals and allergies: all menus include vegetarian options. Any other particular dietary requirements should be notified at least one week before the consultative meeting to the secretariat. No pork is served in the dining room.

Travel expenses will be reimbursed according to the Council of Europe's rules.

1. Draft **Programme**

Tuesday, 21 February 2023

20:30 *WELCOME EVENING*

Playful get to know each other.

Wednesday, 22 February 2023

09:30 OPENING & INTRODUCTIONS

1. Opening and Introduction:

   - *Antje Rothemund*
     Head of the Youth Department
   - *Spyros Papadatos*
     Chair of the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) and the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ)

2. Getting to know each other, group agreement, expectations and experiences

11:00 Break

11:30 THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S CLIMATE-RELATED HARD AND SOFT LAW AND HOW TO MAKE A COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS RECOMMENDATION

1. The Council of Europe, human rights and the protection of the environment
   - David Milner, secretary to the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)
   - Natalia Kobylarz, senior lawyer and environmental co-ordinator, European Court of Human Rights
2. Exploring the process of drafting a Committee of Ministers recommendation and its adoption.

13:00 Lunch Break

14:30 EXPLORING THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

3. Reflecting on aspects that are contributing to the experience of young people when engaging with climate crisis issues
4. Defining thematic topics for deeper exploration

16:00 Break

16:30 GOING DEEPER INTO THE CHOSEN ASPECTS

5. Input on one of the thematic topics at the intersection of young people and the climate crisis with (*TBC,* xxx)
6. Small group conversation on selected thematic topics in an open-space format

18:00 Closing of the Day

19:00 Dinner at the invitation of the Head of the Youth Department (TBC)
20:30 STORYTELLING EVENING

7. Sharing stories of the participants' work at the intersection of young people and climate crisis and exchanging examples of good practice and similar in a cosy format.

Thursday, 23 February 2023

09:30 INTERSECTIONS WITH THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE YOUTH DEPARTMENT

1. Introduction to the CoE Youth Department's Strategy and Priorities with
   - *Clementina Barbaro*
     Head of the Youth Policy Division, Youth Department TBC
2. Relating thematic topics to the CoE Youth Department's priorities of
   a. youth participation
   b. access to rights
   c. peaceful and inclusive societies
   d. youth work
3. Reflecting on potential policy interventions and legislation to address the challenges for youth under the thematic topics
4. Drawing out gaps in what has been explored so far

11:00 Break

11:30 FINDING HEADLINES I

5. Sourcing headlines for the CM Recommendation from the explorations so far
6. Envisioning the future if the CM Recommendation is implemented

13:00 Lunch Break

14:30 PRIORITIES & NEXT STEPS

1. Finalising headlines and prioritising them to guide the Drafting Group of the CM Recommendation
2. Exploring the next steps for the CM Recommendation with *the Drafting Group members*
3. Evaluation

15:30 Break

16:00 FINDING HEADLINES II

4. Presentation of the findings of the consultative meeting with
   - *Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörd Gylfadótti*
     Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland
   - *Marija Pejčinović Burić*
     Secretary General of the Council of Europe
5. Refining headlines by exploring the most relevant aspects of the envisioned futures

18:00 Closing of the Meeting

19:00 Dinner