Recommendations for ensuring inclusiveness in Youth Organisations

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If we define culture as a set of values, norms, institutions and artefacts – we must be aware that there are many youth cultures. All of them ideological, sociological and technological subsystems of our societies that govern interactions between people. Culture therefore refers to consumption of goods, productions of goods, construction of meanings and social relationships. Addressing intercultural learning within an organisation and beyond therefore implies a complex set of measures. All recommendations that you can find below are based on the principle "nothing about us without us" which is essential for sustainable change management.

Assessing the needs

How inclusive are we as a youth organization, umbrella, network, etc and how inclusive do we want to become?

To start an inclusiveness assessment within your organization, it is essential to ask oneself and the organization as a whole.

The following questions may help analyse the situation in depth:

- Why is it important for us to be inclusive?
- How do we reach under-represented youth?
- What are the steps for us to become a more inclusive n organization?
- Do we have a non-discriminating language in our statutory papers?
- How do our statutes, our mission statement and our priorities care about inclusiveness?
- Are we reaching our target group with the language, communication channels and organisational structure we use?
- How do we measure if our outreach activities are opened for everybody and are encouraging young people to get involved?
- What do we need to change in order to become more diverse, for example in the executive committee/board of our organization?
- Democracy is the rule when it comes to electing the leadership of an organisation, are there any provisions made in order to ensure that we have people from "disadvantaged" backgrounds reaching that level?

Other ways of doing needs-analysis and inclusiveness assessment is monitoring of the gender balance in a youth activity, or the number of "disadvantaged" youth participating in a campaign for example.

A purely quantity based research or analysis has very obvious limits but it is an indicator, which can guide the organisation in finding measures to ensure inclusiveness.

Once such quantitative and qualitative analyses are made the next steps will be clear. Knowing the values and the needs coming from them and understanding why exclusion happens or what prevents certain groups of

young people to actively take part in the work of your organisation, gives the possibility to provide measures for improvement.

BRINGING DIVERSITY INTO THE SYSTEMS

REFLECTING DIVERSITY IN OUR ACTIVITIES

Ensuring the outreach

When trying to reach a new target group, the participation of that target group within the organisation's activities should be ensured! This participation of this target group is the "nothing about us without us" principle put in practice. Who else will know better if there are any special reasons for children and youth from a certain group not to participate in the activities of certain organisation? Who would know better how to bring the information to them and, if special needs have to be taken care of? Moreover finding multipliers among the group is one of the main actions in ensuring accessibility for a certain group.

In terms of fostering the outreach:

- **Youth organisations should organise their activities where young people are and not expect young people to come and join their activities**. If you want to reach young people from rural areas, or from disadvantaged backgrounds, go to their living areas and act first.

- **Create a network of multipliers (people who can pass on the information, youth leaders within the group). This** is a way to include more people in the organisation. Multipliers themselves are very important to ensure that the organisation reaches out to a wider public.

- **Establish** a common understanding within the organisation that diversity makes the organisation more sustainable, more trustworthy and more legitimate.

- **Build** relations to new members and target groups based **on trust and understanding**. For younger groups, involving parents can be a first step. Communication with the parents can be useful to reach children and youth with parents from origin countries where NGOs are forbidden or connected to dangerous political activism. If children and youth do not get their parents' approval, they will not be participating and even more seldom become members of an organisation.

- **Promote** diversity, when developing projects for/with certain youth communities. Youth organisations should **point out the similarities and not focus on the differences.**

- **Involve** different youth communities as counterbalance to the tendency of creating ghettos. Activities that target a certain group of young people shouldn't take place only in the community where they live but also in other places/part of the local community and should ultimately

lead to communication and co-operation with other communities and youth groups.

- **Develop** projects targeting young people from certain communities, while **involving the members of these communities in other issues that concern young people as group and not only the issues that are specific to the targeted group.** For example, an organisation setting up activities for young Turkish migrants should not only focus on integration policies, but tackle issues such as for example access to education, international politics, employment, health care etc.

In order to evaluate the level of outreach, organisations use the following check list:

- How are we welcoming newcomers?
- How often do new members come to us?
- What keeps them from coming?
- What are the channels that we usually use to recruit our newcomers?
- Did we do something to encourage diverse groups of young people to take part in the activities?
- Are we willing to give up some of our "traditions" to become friendlier to potential new members?

Another possibility is to make a reasonable use of statistics: How many new members took the floor in the activity? What is the turn-over of the participants? How many women and how many men took the floor during a session? How many men and women chaired a session? Who is asking questions? Who is adding new issues and arguments to a debate? Who is only agreeing with others? Who is never speaking? Do newcomers dare to take the floor?

Best practice example:

When developing a project with Roma people, YAP has started the project by involving the leaders of the Roma community in their activities. The leaders have been part of the process and they have had the chance to see how the organisation works and what the benefit of certain projects can be. Once these things were clear, starting projects in the Roma community with young people was more than easy. This is one very important aspect that we have to have in mind when planning to develop projects with young people from the Roma or any other community.

- **Adequacy of application forms and calls for participants**
  Assess the current application forms your organisation is using for activities and positions. Work on creating a call format that is non-discriminatory, is written in clear and simple language and offers an easy way to state special needs.

- **Special needs and special assistance**

Youth organisations should be ready to cover extra costs for disability requirements and assistance. Assistance should include the option for childcare facilities and interpreters.

REFLECTING DIVERSITY IN THE STAFFING POLICY

If we unconsciously look for people who are very similar to ourselves we tend to recruit people who "are" like us. This can be dangerous for the development of the organisation – it can create a lack of new ideas and perspectives- and is often a barrier for inclusiveness. There are different ways of raising the awareness of hidden discrimination in organisations.

Youth organisations should aim to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the ground of race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, gender role, marital status, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation, disability or chronic illness[1].

- **An opened, respectful and transparent way of dealing with applications**
  The people applying for the job do it because they are fully interested in the organisation and in the position that they apply for. The process of further consideration and of turning down the applications should be clear in the call, so that people know if they can expect an answer.

- **Anonymous application form**
  In order to ensure transparent and fair selection procedure, the possibility to introduce "anonymous resumes" (where you can cut the part with the name, origin, special needs) and application forms should be considered.

- **Assess the job applications you receive**
  This can be done through additional questionnaire requested to be submitted with the job application which helps to understand the background of the applicants, while providing your organisation with clear picture weather there is diversity which could be considered an indicator for the openness and inclusiveness of the structure

MAKING USE OF THE EXISTING EXPERTISE TO BRING DIVERSITY INTO OUR SYSTEMS

- *Make use of the experts*
  Trainers and/or facilitators are responsible for the success and the learning outcome of a workshop or an event. They don't need to be experts on the differing needs of the participants but should be informed and should learn some about them in order to adopt the methods to the capacity of the participants. Experts can be used to introduce the trainers and/or facilitators to the special needs of the participants. It is

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[1] Based on the staffing policy of the European Youth Forum 0471-06

essential to have this knowledge on the target group and to use it when preparing an agenda and plan for the pedagogical methods.

- *Partnership with social workers*
Youth organisations and social workers have sometimes the same target groups. Whereas they pursue different policies, have different objectives, better partnership and increased links between youth organisations and social workers could benefit to both. The partnership gives the advantage to cooperate with other organizations and learn from how they do things. These partnerships should be well planned with preparatory meetings and based on a common interest to develop and share.

It is always an asset to learn from other groups' approaches, people and institutions that implemented similar activities for a longer time and who have experience on the issue.

AN ADEQUATE COMMUNICATION IN PROMOTING AND REFLECTING DIVERSITY

Every organisation needs to make the necessary efforts to **make sure that the information does reach its target groups.** Just passing on information is not self-sufficient to reach people. Organisations have to develop a system that enables them to monitor if the information reaches its target group, is understood and useful.

One other important aspect when passing on information is the aspect of **quantity and quality**. Organisations should make sure that the information that is passed is needed and useful. All elements mentioned above should be included in **a communication strategy** of the organisation. The existence of such a strategy should make communication flows clear within an organisation and between organisations. Moreover the communication strategy should include language strategy or strategy for distribution of the information in as many different languages spoken in the country or countries in question in order to state the openness of the organisation and give welcoming notion to all.

Internal and External Communication

Internal and **external communication**: youth organisations should be accurate in the design of information, try to provide tailor-made information and choose texts and pictures attractive to its target groups. When making these choices they should keep in mind that they can very often be normative and not reflecting the reality, and thereby not giving an impression of inclusive spirit.

Information can flow quickly as long as background information has already been disseminated. Therefore, to ensure clear communication, it is important to **link information with existing knowledge**, projects, and conditions. This becomes even more important when one is communicating externally. The adaptation to different levels of knowledge and understanding is essential. Otherwise communication does not lead to a common understanding and good exchange of information.
Internally and externally, information needs to be clear, structured, adapted to the target group and in an understandable language, avoiding technical jargon wherever possible.

Best practice example

LNU's communication strategy is based on the "push – pull principles". Our website is identified as our main communication tool, and all written communication is a "push" from LNU, aiming to get attention and interest and "pull" the receiver into our website.

LNU is targeting the member organisations, the decision makers and the media – it is the member organisations duty to provide their members with information from LNU – but all calls and articles in our newsletters are clearly marked with target groups so that the organisations easily can see what they should spread in the organisation and what is more for internal use.

Visual Communication reflecting diversity

- **Images** and **pictures** should reflect diversity. Does the used image or picture reflect the reality in my youth organisation? Often, pictures of internet presentations or in print material are taken from own resources. And therefore it's already a good possibility to see how inclusive and diverse our own organisations are. Diversity does not only show up visibly on a picture, but it's a first indicator. For example: how about the gender balance on pictures? How many different shades of skin colour? Any people with disabilities? (this is valid as well for webpage, publications…any media)

Language:

At the international level, it can be difficult to find a common language to communicate. Even though English is mostly used it doesn't mean that everybody has the same level of understanding

In order to ensure better communication, the following guidelines will be helpful:
- It needs to be **clear who the information is for**. It's important to adapt the vocabulary and the use of language accordingly.
- When communicating with young people, the use of '**local' language and vocabulary is required**. The same content needs to be adapted. It makes an essential difference how you speak with young people about human right education and it's meaning for them, than how you lobby about this issue in front of member organisation, for example.
- To establish an explicit **language policy in the organisation.**
- Use **non-discriminatory language** (for example: be careful with the gender Mrs, Ms, other abbreviations, he/she). Besides all this known and obvious discrimination in language, it is needed to check and update one's repertoire of good/bad examples.
- Explain **abbreviations** at the beginning of the document, speech, seminar or what ever presentation. It becomes very exclusive to use abbreviations even though it seems that everybody knows them. A simple list with explanations and descriptions of the most common used abbreviations can already prevent exclusive language in the very beginning.
- Be more **descriptive** of the **processes**/structures, aims (in meetings, in documents) and give a clear frame. Communication itself is already very complex, even more when it comes to European or global issues.

Before a topic of such complexity will be discussed, the objectives and the aim of it need to be clearly outlined.

- Take care of **easy** and **understandable communication**. For example, work with summaries and highlights in order to make sure that the content which needs to be transferred reaches the audience.
- **Involve** the **target group** in the design of the information that should reach them. If a text or presentation is addressed to young people, young people know how to reach their peers, which vocabularies to use, how to tackle the issue. Peer communication is to be prioritised instead of "top down" communication, which will loose important content on its way. Young people can be involved in the preparation of all kind of written documents, promotion material, but also in the preparation of presentations, such as PowerPoint slides, Videos, clips, radio shows…
- When there is a special need among the participants **for interpretation**, make sure to provide interpreters or to ask the participant to bring an assistant (deaf). Organizing events with blind people, we should remember to translate the materials to brail system (quite high cost so needs to be foreseen in budget planning or use of other computer based reading and translation systems).

A checklist for the respect of diversity and cultural/religious background

Food:
The cultural traditions people keep during their daily life have to be taken into account in any event with participants of different backgrounds.
- The application form should comprise a section asking about the special needs.
- explicitly ask for dietary needs to be aware of the existing differences.
- be aware of religious calendars, especially fasting periods.

Time:
When planning the time of the project, conference, meeting we should keep in mind:
1. Religious background. Religious holidays can be celebrated on different dates even though they sometimes belong to the same religion.
2. Week-ends, week-days decision…think carefully of the participants and if they for example work, have children or are students. Try to balance the event regarding weekdays and weekends. If the target group for example mainly consists of university students, don't organize the event during the university exam period, if they are single parents organise it during the opening hours of day care facilities or provide baby sitting.
3. Don't place meetings and activities so that all of them require the participants to stay over for the night.
4. Keep time for breaks that can be used for personal time (or spiritual time such as prayers) or any disability needs when preparing the agenda.

Meetings

- Make decisions in meetings with an established process that is explained to everyone participating and available in writing. This way, even newcomers and people outside of the 'clique' are included and feel ownership of the group and its projects. Explain the process before you start.

- Make sure social events are inclusive. Not all people interested in the campaign will share your recreational interests. By organizing multiple social events around activities that everyone would feel comfortable participating in, you work toward building personal relationships with people who will be crucial to the work and include everyone in the opportunity to build that network.

- Go easy on the activist-speak! Make sure that all acronyms, activist jargon and references to past campaigns or group members are explained so that nobody feels stupid or left out.

- Avoid inside jokes. This is especially important at the beginning of the year when you are recruiting new members. As hilarious as they may seem to you, nobody likes an inside joke when they're on the outside. The last thing you want to do is scare off potential new members by giving them the impression that your group is some kind of exclusive social club that they're not a part of.

Gender issues:

- **Division of Labor**. In many groups, work gets divided in a gendered way, with women doing a lot of the grunt work (photocopying, flyering, etc.) and men taking on leadership roles, making decisions and being the ones who represent the organization in meetings and negotiations. A way to avoid this problem is to make sure that all tasks (the fun ones *and* the boring ones) are assigned through a process agreed upon by the group. Don't leave anything to be done without knowing exactly who is responsible for the task. Appreciate all the hard work that goes into campaigns, not just the high profile work.

- **Airtime.** Another major problem is the fact that male members of many groups end up talking the most in meetings. Female and trans members may find themselves either silenced, or simply agreeing with one side of a debate between two men. This can be really destructive since they have really important information or insights that they may not get to share. Make it a habit to keep track of how often people are speaking during conversations, especially in arguments where overly aggressive tones often shut people out of the discussion. Find tools and activities that bring out everyone's voices.

- **Decision-making.** If men play a dominant role in the campaign and your group lacks a formal process for decision-making, choices may be made by 'the group' without the input of many of its members. If your group just assumes a decision has been reached when most people seem to agree, it is more likely that women (in general- not all women) will be hesitant to voice objections. A formal process will ensure that decisions are truly made by the group and not just by its most vocal (often male) members.

Working with oppressed groups:

- **Avoid tokenism.** Members of oppressed groups do not represent their entire group. If your group's membership is majority white, for instance, people of color may have reservations about being the spokesperson or acting as a face for the campaign. Seek people out to do tasks based on their skills and interests, not because "it would be good to have a person of color speak at the event tomorrow." Rather than recruiting more people from oppressed groups into the organization and campaign you've organized, ask how you may support the initiatives of people directly affected by racial justice issues and how you can act as an ally in those struggles.

- **Defining 'radical' and "activist".** Be careful with your definitions of 'radicalism.' Often white activists create a hierarchy of tactics and assume that the only way to be a powerful activist is to be at barricades or in confrontation. Be respectful of the fact that people have different relationships with authority and stay conscious of the different challenges that working class, queer, women, and people of color have and the risks we take when organizing.

- **Examine the issues** you're focused on. Who is most affected by the issues now? Who would most benefit from the results of your campaign? What input do they have on leading the campaign? How does this fit in the context of your campus and area organizing? What issues are people of color already organizing around on campus and in the community? Do you ever work on those issues and respect the leadership of groups led by people of color?

Increasing the level of awareness in your organisation

- Don't expect anyone to be a spokesperson for their community. This just singles people out and makes them feel isolated, not included. If you think there are members of your group who have ideas to contribute that they are not comfortable raising their hand to share, find exercises that to give everyone the opportunity to speak (or not) as they see fit.

- Make formal organizational commitments to non-discrimination. Put it in your charter or your by-laws. Make it clear in every way possible that your group does not tolerate discrimination in any form and that no discriminatory actions will be considered acceptable in your group. Model the behavior you want to see and create a culture where oppressive behavior can be challenged and changed in positive ways.

- Caucuses where people meet separately (people of color caucus/white folk's allies group, gender oppressed caucus/gender privileged allies group, queer caucus/heterosexual allies group) according to how they self identify may be helpful in creating the space to discuss internal dynamics.

- Seek out and support campaigns being led by oppressed people. Taking leadership from oppressed people often means asking, "How can we be of use?" not judging tactics or telling them how to fight for their own self-determination.

- Find effective ways to confront oppressive behavior. Avoid defensiveness. Recognize that as someone who does not live as a target of a specific form of oppression, you will not always be able to identify the ways it is acted out and may perpetuate it unconsciously. Listen intently and take criticism as a serious opportunity to learn not a character attack. Creating a culture of respectful cultural exchange and constructive criticism will lead to these internal

challenges strengthening a group rather than tearing them apart. Prioritize the internal work as highly as the external campaign.

• Don't place the responsibility for fighting oppression on the oppressed. People in positions of privilege need to recognize destructive group dynamics and initiate work to address them.

• Use "I" statements when you speak. People of privileged groups often universalize their experience, not realizing that other people don't share their feelings about situations.

• Interrupt oppressive behavior while it's happening. If a few white males are dominating an argument, point that out to the group and suggest a go-around to get more people talking.

• Think about how much you talk, how easily you take on leadership roles and how much space you take up. Consider what role privilege or oppression related to your gender, sexual orientation, race and class might play in your tendency to take/avoid leadership.

• Learn the histories of resistance of people against their own oppression as well as the history of coalition, alliance, and support work involved in these movements.

Disabilities

When choosing the location of the venue organisations should keep in mind the special needs of the participants. It is the best to check out the venue in person before the event:

- Regarding accessibility for disabled participants (wheelchair, blind, etc), Ensuring there are no obstacles (check rooms if it is an event overnight, conference room, restaurant entrance).
- Disadvantaged people (to be disadvantaged can also mean for example to be economically disadvantaged so don't have the venue in an expensive location where snacks and drinks are not affordable for everyone).
- If accompanying assistance is needed, it should be made clear if the sharing of rooms is inevitable or not wanted.
- Make sure that there are elevators, and if not at the same place the distance between the conference venue and restaurant should not be long.
- Be aware that places where you can smoke or where alcohol is served might be problematic for young people or religious people.

Rural outreach

Very often the events take place in capitals or big cities. But would youth organisations reach a wider diversity of young people if they would take the events to their own location?

Be careful of the existing prejudices such as 'a quality wise good event can only be held in big city'. As it also gives a chance to involve young people from rural areas, being on the country side usually forces the group to stay together even for the informal moments of a seminar and thus impacts the group dynamics positively.

Guidelines: on the way to affirmative actions

Representation
The guidelines for external representation should consider perspectives of diversity. When being able to send 2 or more people it should be an aim to send a gender balanced delegation.

Challenge the "But this is the way we always did it"
Allow newcomers to ask questions. Are there good reasons to keep working procedures as always done? Give new members a chance to question the structure and processes within the organisation at an early stage – it may give useful input and take your time to explain working methods.

Underrepresented groups
When inviting underrepresented groups to your organisation, make sure that they do get to work on "real" work for the organisation – not only working on tackling the under representation of their "group". Be aware of the tendency to give certain portfolio or responsibilities to people, just taking into account their background/ethnic or social origin.

Give someone the responsibility
Equal opportunities for all are a leadership responsibility. Board members and staff members are all responsible for the diversity work in an organisation – but someone should co-ordinate it. Youth Organisations should have in their board (and in their staff, if any) someone identified to take care of the issue. This can also be safeguarded through monitoring mechanisms.

Mentoring systems
Creating mentoring systems is a way to promote the accession of underrepresented groups to leadership positions.

Best practices
For 2005 and 2006 one of LNU's two main priorities is "Open and inclusive organisations". Therefore it has been important to show the diversity within the member organisations. Victoria Uwonkunda came to Norway as a refugee from Rwanda when she was 13. In 2005 she was one of Norway's two youth delegates to the United Nations General Assembly, addressing the world leaders on children's rights in conflict. Her knowledge and background gave a lot to LNU – content while working on the statement and attention in the media related to this high rank representation.

The role of "Intercultural Learning" (ICL) and "Human Rights Education"(HRE) within "Inclusiveness" and "Diversity"

Training is a tool to change the management in Youth Organisations, and in that regard enhancing the training provisions in terms of ICL and HRE is a **starting point** for the development of inclusive policies in youth organizations. This means that intercultural learning can promote inclusiveness and raise awareness of diversity in society. It is important to mention that this learning process has to work with a wide definition and understanding of culture, which does not stop at cultural nor national minorities. To respect and to be aware of diverse identity positively supports the respect and the acceptance of different lifestyles, gender identity, etc.

Including **good practice** examples and methods of ICL and HRE would be a second step which could be done easily. Especially simulation activities, which are often used in ICL training courses, are useful to adapt to the issue of "inclusiveness" and "diversity". Furthermore, activities of "theatre of the oppressed" are suitable here as well. For more information have a look to **Agosto Boal** and his "Theatre of the oppressed".