



Action Plan on Equality

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Working for the benefit of all young people in Europe, the European Youth Forum (YFJ) is strongly committed to fighting against discrimination on the grounds of age as well as discrimination on any other grounds or combination of them that affects young people, as outlined in its existing policy documents and resolutions.¹

Apart from focusing on young people and discrimination on the grounds of age, the YFJ commitment draws upon the universally recognised principle of freedom from any kind of discrimination for all and believes that a comprehensive approach aiming at tackling discrimination and promoting equality is crucial. This stems out primarily from the principles of indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, according to which human rights and fundamental freedoms should be considered as a whole set of principles². Secondly, the basic condition to achieve equality consists in providing the same level of legal protection for all grounds of discrimination and in all areas of life. This need is strengthened considering the complexity of current discriminatory phenomena, including multiple, combined and intersected discrimination and the fact that different levels of protection would create an unacceptable hierarchy of rights. Furthermore, the YFJ acknowledges that the legal fight against discrimination, although a necessary condition, is not sufficient, and represents only one of the measures to achieve equality and to manage diversity and that many other initiatives are necessary to ensure them. With respect to youth the YFJ therefore also strives to promote equality of opportunities for all young people in Europe³.

This action plan aims specifically at:

- Putting the different perspectives of the YFJ work in the field on equality into a comprehensive strategy; this will enhance the YFJ efforts to promote equality for young people and for all in Europe
- Providing a reference for future YFJ specific initiatives in the field of equality and non-discrimination as well as for mainstreaming non-discrimination and equality in all its policies;
- Improving the work of YFJ on increasing the diversity in the membership , giving value to all forms of diversity and communicating it better in institutional contexts.

PERSPECTIVES TO BE TACKLED WHEN PROMOTING EQUALITY

Following the considerations mentioned earlier, the YFJ believes that different perspectives should be set out and applied to its work on equality and non-discrimination.

These perspectives correspond to a broader reflection on the role of a civil society organisation aiming at promoting equality, which implies also questioning and improving

¹ Opinion Paper on Multiple Discrimination as it affects young people, European Youth Forum policy paper on achieving equality between women and men (0685-07), Policy Paper on Equality and Diversity (0183-06), Manifesto " From Diversity to Equality, the missing link" (0600-06), European Youth Forum Policy on Gender Equality Policy (0068-2k), Resolution on the freedom of expression, association and assembly (0375-07), Resolution on an integrated approach to combat homophobia (0907-06)

² See the Vienna Declaration adopted in the Framework of the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993.

³ Indeed, the Strategic Priorities for the European Youth Forum's work between 2007 and 2012 include promoting greater equality and tackling discrimination for all young people in Europe.

its own internal structures, its reaching-out strategies, its campaigns and advocacy work as well as its policies in the light of the human rights-based approach⁴ and the equality mainstreaming⁵.

1) INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

This perspective includes on one hand the internal diversity of the European Youth Forum and on the other the diversity of young people that the YFJ reaches out to represent. The YFJ being the platform representing young people at the European Level, the question on the extent to which it is the voice of all young people, including those with fewer opportunities, is often put on the table. This perspective is based on the idea that promoting a higher degree of diversity, developing strategies aiming at genuinely managing diversity and increasing the awareness of both young people and other groups on diversity are key steps towards achieving equality.

Internal

The YFJ is committed to encourage the inclusiveness of its Member Organisations, guaranteeing the inclusiveness of its statutory bodies and working structures. The YFJ aims at ensuring that all groups of young people are represented in these structures, including young people with fewer opportunities. The actions outlined below will be implemented in order to strengthen the profile of the YFJ as an organisation reaching out to all young people. Thoughtful investment of resources and continuous monitoring will represent an integral part of the constant efforts in this regard. This perspective involves also efforts aiming at increasing the YFJ and its Member Organisations' expertise in fighting against racism, intolerance, discrimination and inequality.

Actions:

- ➔ Implementing effectively the Recommendations for Ensuring the Inclusiveness of Youth Organisations (0219-07)
- ➔ Ensuring that the YFJ is an equal opportunities employer as outlined in the staffing policy and ensuring diversity;
- ➔ Organising training on equality and diversity for the Secretariat and the Bureau;
- ➔ Providing the PoT with opportunities to further improve its expertise on inclusion and diversity issues and ensuring the support from the PoT to Member Organisations when designing and/or implementing training activities aimed at raising the awareness on equality, diversity and non-discrimination;
- ➔ Ensuring regular information flow and coordination when necessary between the YFJ and its Member Organisations and among Member Organisations themselves on policies and initiatives in the field of equality and non-discrimination and

⁴ The human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework according to which any given policy should take into consideration international human rights standards, promoting the rights of rights-holders, empowering them and strengthening the capabilities of duty-bearers to meet their obligations. For further information see also the definition of the human rights-based approach provided by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FAQen.pdf>

⁵ "The Principle that equality be seen as an integral part of all public policy-making and implementation, rather than something separated off in a policy or institutional ghetto", C. McCrudden, Equality in C.J. Harvey, Human Rights, Equality and Democratic Renewal in Northern Ireland, Oxford, Hart Publishing, 2001.

providing Member Organisations with support aiming at building their capacity to work in the field of equality and non-discrimination.

External

The YFJ aims at reaching out to as many young people as possible when developing its policies and organising its activities. To this aim, the YFJ believes that it is extremely valuable to foster the participation of young people from all groups and from all societal environments as a way to promote social inclusion.

Actions:

- ➔ Developing strategies to build partnerships with youth organisations, not members of the YFJ, representing young people with fewer opportunities, such as Roma youth organisations, organisations of young people with disabilities, organisations representing or working with young migrants, organisations representing or working with young people with fewer socio-economic opportunities; this partnerships apart from improvement of the content based work of YFJ in those fields will strive to extend to support for such networks to becoming YFJ members
- ➔ Supporting the participation of Member Organisations in campaigns aiming at promoting equality or in lobbying initiatives on equality/fight against discrimination;
- ➔ Ensuring that the YFJ marks UN international Days by press work, attending celebrations or through other channels and highlights how are those relevant to anti-discrimination and equality work;

2) NEGATIVE/POSITIVE

This perspective takes into account that the fight against discrimination is a crucial step in achieving equality. On the one hand, it requires negative action which aims at protecting young people from the obstacles to the enjoyment of fundamental rights that discrimination entails. On the other hand, it requires positive action that is needed for compensating particular disadvantages and fulfilling equality along with anti-discrimination policies and legislation.

Negative

Negative actions and policies focus on the fight against discrimination; although the YFJ is particularly concerned with discrimination on the ground of age, it believes in a holistic approach, taking into consideration discrimination on all grounds.

This perspective aims on one hand at enhancing anti-discrimination legislation and policies at the European level and on the other hand at building the capacity of Member Organisations to undertake lobbying efforts in this field at the national level.

Actions:

- ➔ Following closely the process on the EU legislative initiative to fight discrimination outside the field of employment, advocating for the adoption by the Council of the European Union of the Proposal for a Directive implementing the principle of equal opportunities outside the field of employment and monitoring similar future legislative initiatives as well as their implementation at the national level;

- ➔ Supporting MOs, especially National Youth Councils, to monitor the national implementation of the EU anti-discrimination legislation, to liaise with National Equality Bodies or to advocate for strengthening the national anti-discrimination legislation;
- ➔ Cooperating with Equinet⁶, legal experts and other relevant bodies in order to collect information about complaints on discrimination on the ground of age at the national level and cases on discrimination on the ground of age brought before the European Court of Justice;

Positive

Positive actions include all initiatives aiming at promoting de facto equality besides de jure equality, such as efforts aiming at raising the awareness on equality and non-discrimination issues, fighting against stereotypes and prejudices and promoting respect for diversity.

Actions:

- ➔ Following and taking part in non-legislative initiatives established at the European level to fight against discrimination⁷;
- ➔ Taking active part and promoting Member Organisations' participation in campaigns and initiatives aiming at promoting intercultural and inter-religious dialogue;
- ➔ Lobbying for the inclusion into formal education curricula of themes on anti-discrimination, equality, diversity, social inclusion, human rights;
- ➔ Developing a strategy to cooperate effectively and continuously with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency;
- ➔ Cooperating effectively with the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance;
- ➔ Advocating for a more systematic monitoring of cases involving young people before the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Justice, and reporting on them;
- ➔ Cooperating effectively with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE);
- ➔ Involving further in processes linked with the YFJ consultative status at the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) such as the Human Rights Council's Social Forum and establishing contacts with UN human rights bodies working on non-discrimination and equality, in particular the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the UN Special Rapporteurs.⁸

⁶ "Equinet" is the recently established European network for specialised Equality Bodies across EU Member States to promote equality and combat discrimination in the areas covered by the EU Equal Treatment Directives. Cooperating with Equinet at the European level is a complementary to the YFJ effort to facilitate contacts and cooperation between National Youth Councils and Equality Bodies at the national level.

⁷ See the European Commission Communication (2008)420 on "Non discrimination and equal opportunities: a renewed commitment"

⁸ Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children and the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

3) GENERAL/SPECIFIC

Human rights and equality for all should be mainstreamed in all local, national, regional and European policies and the YFJ is committed to do so in its own policies. At the same time, the YFJ supports actions aiming at empowering specifically and achieving equality for some groups of young people with fewer opportunities.

General

- ➔ Ensuring that all YFJ policies on equality include a human rights based approach and that the policies' impact is assessed;
- ➔ Ensuring that European policies, especially those more relevant for the youth, mainstream equality and human rights;
- ➔ Ensuring the mainstreaming of relevant European instruments such as the European Roadmap for Equality between women and men 2006-2010 and the Disability Action Plan 2003-2010 as well as future instruments adopted in the EU framework;
- ➔ Advocating for the mainstreaming of human rights and equality in the EU external policies;
- ➔ Developing strategic partnerships with civil society organisations working on equality and promoting the recognition of multiple discrimination.

Specific

- ➔ Supporting specific actions to empower young migrants, as identified in the Policy Paper on Youth and Migration (1069-07);
- ➔ Monitoring the EU actions on the rights of the Child and continuing the YFJ work based on its Approach to Child policy (0051-08);
- ➔ Defining a strategy aiming at promoting equality of young people in the field of education;
- ➔ Developing a strategy aiming at empowering young people from other vulnerable groups such young LGBT, young people with disabilities, young HIV-positive people, juvenile (ex-)offenders, young people with fewer financial opportunities, and others.
- ➔ Supporting specific actions to promote equal access to employment and equality at work for all young people, including those with fewer opportunities, as outlined in the Policy Paper on Youth Employment (0813-07).