

# Youth Opinion

What young people in youth organisations think about...

## YOUTH ON THE CONSTITUTION!?



AND ALSO...

AN ANALYSIS  
OF THE OPEN  
METHOD OF  
CO-ORDINATION  
IN THE YOUTH  
FIELD

FEATURING AN INTERVIEW WITH ROMANO PRODI



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# Is Europe closer to young people?

The Convention on the Future of Europe, born of the challenge to bring Europe's citizens, and primarily the young, closer to the European design and the European institutions, ended on 13 June 2003 with the agreement on a Draft Constitutional Treaty of the European Union. This marked the culmination of many months of work by the 207 members of the Convention under the Presidency of Valerie Giscard d'Estaing and an unprecedented consultation of civil society at the European level. But did the Convention listen to the citizens and does the Draft Constitutional Treaty really represent a breakthrough in bringing Europe closer to its citizens?

At the beginning of its two-year period of deliberation, the Convention members could not have anticipated the political backdrop against which their deliberations were to take place. Political developments on the international stage led to the emergence of clear divisions between the current, as well as the future, member states of the European Union. Primary among these was of course the war in Iraq, with the participation of the United Kingdom in coalition with the United States. The French and German opposition to the war led the US Secretary of Defence to define the position of the



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latter as reflecting that of the 'old' Europe of France and Germany. Thus, while the Convention sought to build consensus on the direction for the future enlarged Union, other forces were at play undermining the sense of common purpose within the existing Union. Notwithstanding this, the war in Iraq also acted to mobilise public opinion, with protests against the war taking place all over Europe and the world. In Europe, this brought into question again the role that the European Union should take on the world stage with many, particularly the young, demanding that Europe act in a stronger and more unified way on foreign and security policy issues.

**From the perspective of the European Youth Forum, it was vital to urge for a genuine and meaningful consultation of civil society and youth.**

The Convention itself also contributed significantly to the creation of a debate on the Future of Europe both through the consultations and through the media attention it received. It

broadened the understanding of European issues and encouraged European citizens to look further than the national boundaries for responses to the problems they confront in their lives.

From the perspective of the European Youth Forum, it was vital to urge for a genuine and meaningful consultation of civil society and youth. Our

key demand was for the European Convention 'to strengthen the links between

the present and future generations and the EU by providing for a consolidated and clear





legal basis for action in favour of children and young people'. We, the Youth Convention and youth organisations lobbied hard to strengthen the legal basis for youth policy and youth participation at the European

young. Furthermore, it is now important that these advances are not lost in the discussions of the Intergovernmental Conference and that it takes on board the ambition of the Convention, especially the Chapter on the Democratic

**...the Convention has started to make the idea of bringing Europe closer to its citizens a reality, and the result reinforces the European Union's commitment to young people's participation in democratic life.**

Life of the Union' and turn it into reality in a new Treaty.

The involvement of young people in the Convention process was

level, and our hard work paid off with the inclusion of article III - 182. 2(g) which states that the Union shall be aimed at: 'encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.

an important step, and in conjunction with other consultation processes such as those linked to the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field it can be argued that significant steps have been taken in attempting to establish a constructive and valuable dialogue with the young. A further opportunity will be the European

The Draft Constitutional Treaty also redefined the values of the Union in terms which accorded with some of the demands made by the Youth Convention in relation to the respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy and human rights as fundamental values of the Union. Indeed article 46 breaks new ground in promoting and defining a framework for participatory democracy. Thus, the answer to the question posed at the beginning of this article is a reserved 'Yes', the Convention has started to make the idea of bringing Europe closer to its citizens a reality, and the result reinforces the European Union's commitment to young people's participation in democratic life.

**...it is also up to young people to make the most of their opportunity to vote and demand change from their MEPs.**



Parliament elections next May. But it is also up to young people to make the most of their opportunity to vote and demand change from their MEPs. In order to tackle the many social problems that young people face in Europe the dialogue with the young needs to be deepened and broadened in order to ensure that some of Europe's most vulnerable citizens are not forgotten.

However, this must be built upon to ensure that dialogue encompasses a broad spectrum of the

## What is the European Youth Forum?

The European Youth Forum is an international organisation established by national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations to represent the interests of young people from all over Europe at the European and International level. Its members, which are federations in themselves, bring together tens of millions of young people from all European countries. Being a recognised partner of the European Union, the Council of Europe and United Nations, the Youth Forum serves to channel the flow of information and opinions between young people and decision-makers.

The European Youth Forum works to empower young people to actively participate in the shaping of Europe and the society in which they live. Through our member organisations and our representative role we want to improve the living conditions of young people as European citizens in today's world.



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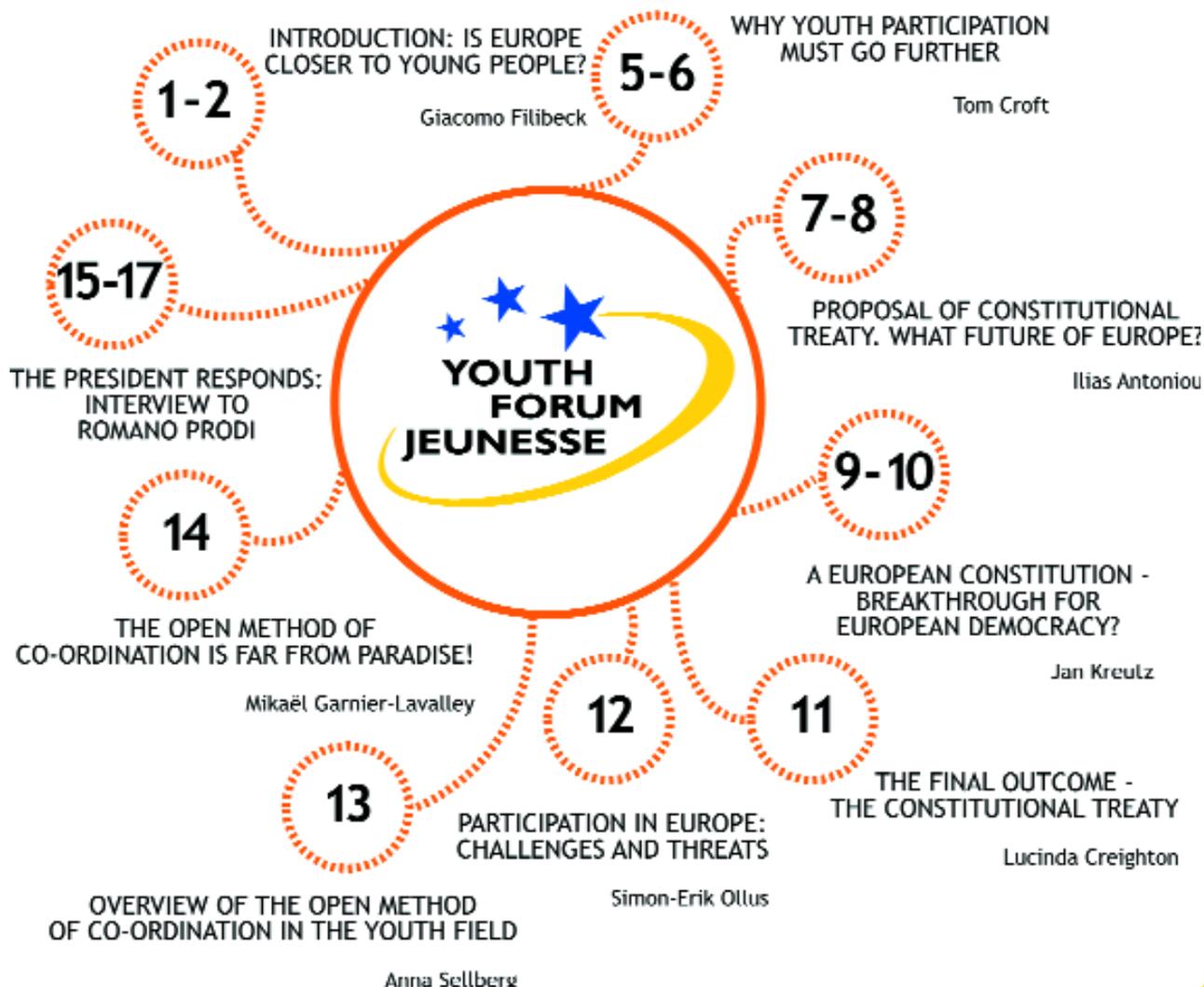
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# Why youth participation must go further



Recently, the idea that young people should have more opportunity to participate in the political processes shaping our continent seems to have taken root in the hearts and minds of Europe's institutions. Indeed, one could even go as far to say that it is a principle which has become firmly established: youth participation is the central plank of the European Commission's "New Impetus for Youth"; the Laeken Declaration highlight beyond all doubt the need to engage young people in the European project; and member states of the European Union currently considering common objectives and guidelines for the participation of young people at European, national and local levels.

What's more, over the last few years, in case you haven't noticed, there has been a whole host of youth events which have aimed to give Europe's young people a voice in the debate on Europe's future: the European Youth Convention, Youth 2002, Youth 2003... You see it is not only rhetoric, real European young people are getting together all over the place and having their say.

## What does building Europe, or fundamental human rights and freedoms mean to a young person desperately trying to find somewhere to sleep tonight?

Of course, everyone agrees that more can always be done, but who can deny that the show is definitely on the road, that the future appears rosy, not to say youthful? But amongst all the back slapping and general cheer, I for one just can't get excited. It all seems a little bit too easy, too straight forward to me. As a youth worker committed to working with young people facing the consequences of social exclusion, I am extremely worried by the lack of awareness and willingness to give these young people a chance to speak for themselves in this debate.

Anyone who has worked with very vulnerable young people will know that such a debate is miles away from the reality of their lives. What does building Europe, or fundamental human rights and freedoms mean to a young person desperately trying to find somewhere to sleep tonight? When you are concerned more with the daily battle to

keep going what possible sense can "youth participation" have for you. However, it can not be said that young people facing and trying to overcome such things do not have a political awareness.

ATD Fourth World, the organisation for which I volunteer my time, has a long history of reaching and engaging with young people in real difficulty, young people living in poverty and facing exclusion over the long-term, often growing up in such circumstances. We know that given the chance to get involved in youth work that is sensitive to their situation, where they can find acceptance and respect, many of these young people find it necessary to share their experiences and develop their view of what can be done to change things. And more than this, the very fact that someone is asking them what they really think, and then values and finds important what they have to say, is something that can affirm their own daily struggle. Some young people I have worked with have never even been asked their view on anything in any meaningful way before. What does this mean? It is especially shocking when you realise how many agencies and professionals are often involved at one time or another in their lives.

Many of the young people we work with have been failed by our education systems. Many do not even possess the most basic of formal educations, they sometimes have difficulty reading and writing. We do not have the time or space here to go into the reasons for this failure but the lack of formal educational achievement is another reason for people to be sceptical about the ability of young people with difficult lives to represent themselves in such debates. I do not mean to underestimate the size of this barrier, or the urgent need to tackle this problem but it is nonsense to suggest that it prevents someone from being able to speak for themselves and others.

What stops people, as our delegate in the Youth Convention has already said, is the failure to open up the terms of the debate, the seeming inability to allow people to use their own words and their own thinking. By this I mean that just because someone does not possess the technical language and theoretical knowledge to speak about the finer points of European integration, it doesn't follow

that they can not make any important contribution to the debate. With the right preparation, this is always possible as long as someone is given the time and space to talk about what they really know about.

I have heard university students staying up and talking about human rights and European identity till the early hours of the morning, and, having indulged in this sort of behaviour myself, I have nothing against it as far as it goes. Yet, young people I know who may as well live in another universe, have been the ones to really teach me why defending human rights is imperative and what is at stake if we do not. These young people speak in concrete terms about real situations and real people, and for them an idea is only worth something if there is a person behind

**...young people have a powerful statement to make because they truly want a Europe that does not forget about its most vulnerable citizens and that wants to work with them to find solutions to the problems they face.**

it, if it has a human face. Their way of looking at the world represents a valid and important perspective. Something that could enrich the sometimes very academic debate the goes on at important European youth events.

When some young people from one of our youth groups welcomed members of a Russian youth association to Bordeaux the other year, they felt extremely proud. Many of the young Russians had left institutional care and the group supports their efforts to overcome the legacy of this experience. Even across the language barrier, these two groups of young people recognised that they were engaged in the same battle, and they forged some kind of common identity. Later, a young man from Bordeaux, speaking at a session we organised, said how important this encounter was. For him, it was a concrete and important example of why the idea of "Europe" could and should have meaning for young people like him.

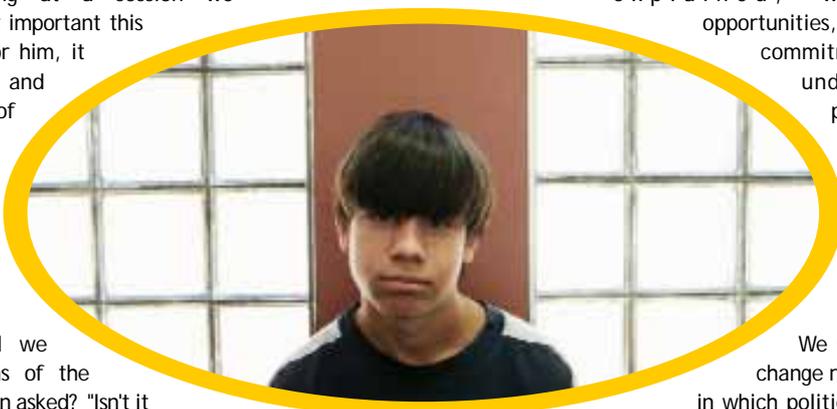
"But why should we change the terms of the debate", I am often asked? "Isn't it just a fact that these sort of real life examples and stories, and the conclusions which are drawn from them are only useful at the most local of levels?" "What have they to do with political arguments at the forefront of European integration?" Well I accept, such examples and stories do not translate easily into articles or neat little arguments at this level, but that for me is not the point. We need to understand and remind ourselves what we should be building Europe for. On this question, these young people have a powerful statement to make because they truly want a Europe that does not forget about its most

vulnerable citizens and that wants to work with them to find solutions to the problems they face. This is a view that needs to be heard because young people facing the worst that society has to offer do not see this happening at the moment.

And if it is concrete policy proposals that are important, then these young people can be as concrete and down to earth as anyone. They are usually hit the hardest by the biggest social problems. They are also on the receiving end of the services and policies designed to help them. Unfortunately, these initiatives often take away their autonomy and make them dependent on systems that were ironically originally designed to promote independence and security. Young people trying to access these services are often desperate and at their most vulnerable. They are least able to assert or defend themselves from the humiliation that this kind of dependence can bring. Their experience means that they are able to provide a deeper understanding of good and bad practice, of what works and what doesn't, because what works makes an improvement and what doesn't work usually makes things worse.

In the end, it simply comes down to a matter of will. When we talk about European youth participation are we talking about how we can enable the voices of all young people to be taken into account, or are we content to hear only the most educated or easiest to gather together? Do we really think there is something to be gained through the inclusion of young people with a much harder experience of life in these debates? If so, there will need to be much more support given to grass roots work involving them. As our Youth Convention delegate has explained, without such opportunities, built on long-term commitment, support and understanding, young people in difficulty can not have the basis to go on and speak out about their lives and their situations.

We will also need to change radically they way in which political youth events at this level are thought out and put together. There is a desperate need to apply in this area some of the vast experience youth workers have gained through working in multicultural contexts and in conflict resolution. Non-formal methodologies and a rejection of orthodox models of political dialogue are essential, in my opinion, if we are to create real diversity at these events and if young people from genuinely different backgrounds can find the security and the respect in which to speak with their own voice.



# Proposal of Constitutional Treaty

## What future for Europe?



ILIAS ANTONIOU

Secretary General  
ECOSY

ECOSY, the Young European Socialists, reaffirm, at the opening of the Intergovernmental Conference, their commitment in favour of a federal, political and social Europe that reinforces the rights of its citizens in the fields of education, health, social protection and public services and that gives itself the means of winning the fight for employment by using budgetary, fiscal and monetary instruments.

**...we, Young European Socialists, are hoping to rebuild a political capacity able to face the challenges of economic globalisation and promote internationally our political, economical and social vision of the world.**

The deepening of the European political integration is the necessary counterweight to the neoliberal trends of globalisation that act without any democratic control. By getting involved in the European construction we, Young European Socialists, are hoping to rebuild a political capacity able to face the challenges of economic globalisation and promote internationally our political, economical and social vision of the world.

The "Project of Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe" elaborated by the Convention on the future of Europe represents a new positive step in the building of the European Union. The Convention proves to be an excellent method to draft treaty reforms both in terms of the combined - national and European - legitimacy that it carries and in terms of efficiency. One unique text is proposed to the Intergovernmental Conference that opened on October 4th and for the Young European Socialists it must be the essential, mostly unchanged, basis of the constitutional treaty that the Intergovernmental Conference will adopt.

**The constitutional treaty will never be a socialist or a liberal or a conservative text.**

The Young European Socialists consider that the implementation of the "Project of Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe" would bring numerous improvements to the current treaties:

- The inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights with a legally binding status;
- The addition of the coordination of employment policies to the coordination of economic policies; the new possibility of coordination of social policies;
- The enshrinement in the Constitution of the principle of participatory democracy; the recognition and organisation of the participation of civil society, of youth; the introduction of a legal basis for the role of the social partners and social dialogue;
- The new possibility of popular initiative;
- The establishment of the Union's dual legitimacy as that of its citizens and its States;
- The inclusion of equality, solidarity and non-discrimination among the Union's values;
- The addition among the objectives of the Union of the promotion of a social market economy, of the objective of full employment, of the fight against social exclusion, of the promotion of justice and social protection, and of solidarity between generations;
- The addition among the objectives of the Union's foreign policy of sustainable development, of fair trade, of the protection of fundamental rights and the rights of children and of respect for international law;
- The addition of social policy and of economic, social and territorial cohesion to the list of competences shared between the Union and the Member States;
- The recognition of the euro group;
- The simplification and clarification of the various legislative instruments;
- The improvement in the number of fields for which qualified majority voting is used;
- The attribution of the legal personality to the European Union.

However, the Young European Socialists are very disappointed by the lack of federal aspect of the institutional reform. Even though we acknowledge the improvements of the powers of the European Commission and of the European Parliament, we want to raise our concern with regard to the

increase of the say of national interests in the running of the EU. Moreover, the creation of a long term President of the European Council will increase the confusion as to who leads the European Union.

The constitutional treaty will never be a socialist or a liberal or a conservative text. Nevertheless it must be a text that all Europeans can accept, creating a European Union in which all feel well to live, which gives hope to its youth as to the area in which they are going to grow. As far as the Young European Socialists are concerned, we feel too big a lack of improvements concerning the social and economic aspects of the European Union: as far as growth

### The current "Project" fails to represent the richness of the social model that has been developed in Europe.

and full employment, the economic government and social Europe are concerned.

The current "Project" fails to represent the richness of the social model that has been developed in Europe. The European Union still has no social policy, so that it is able to implement a comprehensive economic policy in the interests of its inhabitants.

Further, the Constitution of the European Union would only mention the importance of services of general interest in the European Welfare State through the already existing article of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The high level of services of general interest provided within the European Union should not only be protected in the Constitution of the EU, it should be promoted. The principles of guarantee of access of all inhabitants everywhere to public services for free or at an affordable equal cost should be enshrined in the Constitution.

Therefore there are a few points about which the Young European Socialists consider it essential to have improvements during the Intergovernmental Conference:

- To ensure the flexible possibility of reinforced cooperation between willing member States, opened to other Member States, keeping the aim of a single-pace European Union;
- To change the procedure of treaty reform and introduce flexibility so that unanimity is not required to change Part III of the Constitution on the policies;
- To introduce flexibility to change decision-making procedure so that unanimity is not required to switch to qualified majority voting;

- To improve the provisions on public services by creating a legal basis to enable regulatory and creative action by the Union in relation to services of general interest;
- To include secularism in the Preamble and exclude tendencies to mention religious roots of the European integration in the Preamble.

The future Constitution has to carry the possibility of future evolution of the European Union within itself, to keep the dream possible in Europe.

ECOSY already would like to condemn the attempts of some governments to nationalize the IGC for the benefits of their domestic politics.



Our possible support will be given in the light of our analysis of the final results of the Intergovernmental Conference.

ECOSY advocates the organisation of a European wide referendum on the day of the European elections to adopt the proposed Constitution. Should member States hold such referenda or ratify the draft Constitution in accordance with their constitutional provisions, they should do so on the same day so as to ensure the europeanisation of the debates in our countries.

Adopted by 2nd ECOSY Bureau Meeting  
Perugia, Italy  
9th - 12th October 2003

# A European Constitution - Breakthrough for European Democracy ?

The start of the Convention has launched a unique process: 210 representatives of governments, of national parliaments, the European Parliament and the European Commission came together to reform the Union substantially and prepare the first European Constitution. After the end of the Convention and before the start of the Intergovernmental Conference we have to ask ourselves whether the whole process was worth it after all. Were the Convention members able to achieve more democracy, transparency and effectiveness, as demanded from them, or did they merely consolidate the status quo of a Union which is far from the will of its citizens?

## A public, transparent and nearly democratic process

The process of the Convention was a breakthrough for transparency and participation of civil society in treaty changes. We have to keep in mind that previous treaty changes - prepared in the traditional intergovernmental conferences - included diplomatic bargaining behind closed doors, producing results on the basis of the least common denominator of fifteen participating heads of governments.

For the outcome, the opinion of Union citizens, civil society and European politicians did not matter. Unsurprisingly this led to a lot of criticism about method and result of these conferences.

Contrary to this model, the debates and negotiations of the Convention were carried out in transparency. All debates, contributions and speeches were openly accessible on the homepage of the Convention. Citizens as well as representatives of civil society had the chance to visit Convention meetings as well as working group sittings. This method did not only allow for the mass media to report about the political issues of the Convention and thus enable an open debate. More important is that the results in nearly all cases presented the opinion of the Convention majority, not of single governments. First of all Giscard d'Estaing did not allow for any vetoes, which made vetoes of national governments impossible. Secondly all Convention members were forced to support their positions with arguments, which they had to defend in the public sphere that surrounded the Convention. Single governments willing to stick to the

status quo to gain short term advantages for themselves while endangering the progress of the Union were neither able to convince other Convention members, nor the public.

Furthermore the Convention was keen to be involved in a structured dialogue with civil society. NGOs had the chance to participate in public hearings and were offered to make their contributions accessible to Convention members and the public in an online discussion forum. It is clear that most of these contributions did not find their way into the final outcome of the Convention, the draft European Constitution. Nevertheless several groups of NGOs did influence the Convention agenda by cooperating with Convention members and thus launching debates about issues such as Euratom, services of public interest and direct democracy. Since a clear majority of NGOs openly supported the position of the federalist, to reform the Union into a democratic structure, in which the citizens have a say over Union policy, civil society contributed to the success of the Convention.



JAN KREUTZ

Vice-President  
JEF

## A Constitution that enables for a more democratic Europe

More important than the transparent method of the Convention is its result. One can clearly say that the Constitution draft allows for a more transparent and more democratic Union. First of all it helped to simplify the Union. Although the Constitution is still extremely long (2 Preambles, 4 completely different Parts, 455 articles and several Protocols and Annexes) and especially in Part 3 extremely complicated and contradictory, it is more "citizen friendly" than the previous treaties. Thanks to the Constitution the Union will have a single legal personality, the pillar structure will be abandoned, procedures will be simplified and renamed and a clear division of competences will be established.

As important are the improvements in the democratic procedures of the Union. The European Parliament - representative of citizens' interests - will be strengthened by

extending the co-decision procedure from 16 to 32 fields of policy. The procedure will also be simplified and renamed into legislative procedure, which will make it easier for citizens to understand the Union's proceedings. At the same time the qualified majority rule was simplified and introduced as the rule for decisions making, unfortunately not without allowing for many exceptions from this rule. Both will lead to more effective decision making, preventing single heads of governments from blocking legislation in the different councils of ministers. Also important is the fact that the European Parliament in principle obtains full budgetary powers.

Also European Parties - functioning parties are a precondition for every established democracy - will be strengthened through the Convention result. The Constitution allows for future elections of the President of the European Commission through a simple majority

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vote of the European Parliament. In the future, European Parties will be forced to represent a single candidate for the European elections as well as a political programme. The result of the EP elections will therefore determine the political direction of the future commission as well as the political leadership of the Union. This would - for the first time in European history - give the citizens a real say in Union politics and should help to increase participation in the European elections. Furthermore the new citizens' initiative will give citizens the possibility to influence Unions legislation, independent of elections.

#### **Much more could have been achieved**

It would be blind to say that the Convention fulfilled all hopes concerning European Democracy, which many of us put in it. Most general rules of the Constitution for institutions and procedures, laid down in its first Part, are in line with those of a democracy in federal structures. Nevertheless there are many exceptions from these rules. Although the Constitution foresees qualified majority decisions and the legislative procedure, there are nearly more fields of politics where exceptions to this rule are applied than are foreseen for the normal legislative procedure. Not only in foreign and defence policy, but also concerning economic, social, asylum- and immigration policy and parts of the budget unanimity will remain. Endless rounds of negotiations and horse trading without any outcome threaten to further paralyse a Union with 25 and more member states.

Furthermore, the Constitution gives a lot of rights to the European Council. This is the second body representing the interests of member states - besides the Council of Ministers -

and the only body in the Union which is not subject to any control. Although the European Council is not allowed to enact legislation, it is the body deciding on the principles and guidelines of Union policy, thus limiting the freedom of legislation for the elected European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. Furthermore the European Council proposes the European Commission President. Despite the fact that it has to propose a candidate "in light of the elections to the European Parliament", the European Council is not forced to propose a candidate the European Parliament is likely to favour. Despite the fact that the European Parliament is allowed to reject such a candidate, it is likely that many parliamentarians will give in to pressure of their national governments to accept the European Councils proposal.

The constitution is further weakened by the fact that future constitutional changes will require unanimity from all member states, before they can enter into force. This means that a member state as small as Malta with its 380 000 inhabitants can block any change to the 455 articles of a Constitution which is valid for 450 million inhabitants.

#### **So what next?**

Despite the shortcomings of the Constitution it is a clear improvement of today's treaties. Further it is obvious that opening the Convention package through the heads of governments in the coming Intergovernmental Conference could only weaken these results. Therefore we, as representatives of civil society, should stand together in defending the Convention result and have to make clear that we do not accept any changes to the draft Constitution by the heads of states and governments.

Even if the governments respect the nearly democratic exercise of the Convention, a European Democracy requires more than 300 pages filled with legal terms. In the coming months, European citizens need to be convinced of the need for this Constitution and the content needs to be communicated to them. A constitutional spirit can only develop when the citizens accept the constitution. This exercise cannot be done by governments only, but must be supported by us, representatives of civil society.



# The Final Outcome - the Constitutional Treaty

There is no doubt but that the outcome of the Convention on the Future of Europe, the Constitutional Treaty, can be deemed an overall success. Naturally, it could not and does not represent a utopian solution to the ongoing Future of Europe question. However, it does embody a remarkably good compromise. While we remain concerned at the failure, for

example, to introduce qualified majority voting fully into the sphere of foreign policy, other changes can be warmly welcomed. The Charter of Fundamental Rights will be made legally binding and the election of the President of the Commission will rest with the European Parliament, (albeit at the behest of the Council) which gives greater power to individual citizens. The principle of subsidiarity now has much greater clarity as a result of the agreement.

From a youth perspective, however, we must ask whether we have really impacted on the outcome. Have our voices been heard? Would the outcome be any different if we had never bothered to come together and promote our views? The answer, of course, is not clear-cut. Rather than look at the concrete conclusions of the Convention and compare them with the recommendations from the Youth Convention, it is perhaps more valuable to assess the process involved and the interaction of the different generations.

**The Convention provided a good opportunity for us young people to co-ordinate positions and advance them in a type of forum which has never been available before.**

Through this novel process, young Europeans were afforded the opportunity to develop their skills with regard to lobbying. The Convention provided a good opportunity for us young people to co-ordinate positions and advance them in a type of forum which has never been available before. While young people could always exchange ideas through National, European and International organisations, these had the disadvantage of being internally focused - young people talking to young people. Through youth organisations, interaction and discussion between young Europeans have been developed to a high level. However, the



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YEPP

projection of ideas and priorities to key decision makers has always occurred via a more informal medium. Youth organisations have been forced in the past to privately lobby individual MPs, MEPs, Commissioners and civil servants in order to communicate their message.

The Convention offered a new and progressive way to include young people in a formal process. The signal sent out by older

**It would certainly be a disaster if the forthcoming IGC were to undo the good work and lengthy negotiations of the Convention, which resulted in a final draft that is unlikely to be surpassed.**

European politicians in this respect was significant. Young people were, for the first time, invited into the heart of the decision making process. They were provided with a crucial opportunity to play a formal constructive role in the process. No longer marginalized and relegated to a secondary position, the views of young Europeans were considered central to the deliberations on the future of Europe. This is a major leap forward from our point of view.

Thus, in summary, the Convention on the Future of Europe has been successful in so far as it has drawn upon the views of civil society, and in particular has opened up European thinking to the influence of young people. While we cannot embrace all of the elements of the new Constitutional Treaty, it does represent a fair compromise, which, though not as ambitious as we might have liked, is certainly a better deal than would have been hatched between national governments behind closed doors. It would certainly be a disaster if the forthcoming IGC were to

undo the good work and lengthy negotiations of the Convention, which resulted in a final draft that is unlikely to be surpassed. Such a move would not only result in the undermining of a deal that was struck with painstaking tenacity and persistence, it would also destroy the role of this new consultative process which has benefited young people so positively. As young European politicians it is in our own interests and in the interests of our peers to defend the conclusions of the Convention, so that we retain our central role in decision making and build on its foundations in the future.

# Participation in Europe: achievements and threats

The proposed youth article in the constitutional treaty is among the youth NGOs' greatest political successes in promoting participation among young people in Europe. However, we have an even greater challenge in front of us; we have to make sure that the youth article will actually be implemented.

For those of us who work with youth NGOs, participation is natural, and we also see more and more of it in the official EU languages. The article in the proposed treaty is not there because of good will from our politicians. It is there because of intense lobbying from our

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side, particularly from the members of the Youth Convention Presidium (Ellen Trane Norby, Giacomo Filibeck and Roberta Tedesco Triccas) but above all it is there because our promoted democratic and participatory society is suffering from a growing lack of interest in participating among people and especially young people.

Bearing this in mind, it is quite natural that after lobbying from our side, the EU published the White Paper for youth policy that is primarily focusing on the topic of participation. A natural follow-up is also the Laeken Declaration, which especially highlighted young people's participation in the convention process. But the implementation of the Laeken Declaration also

showed that our European political arena is still focusing on protecting national political interests and underdeveloped in showing real interest and courage for promoting real participation and influence for young people in decision-making. In "European language" we talk much about consultation, and the



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youth convention can be seen as a part of this. However, there were no young people in the convention itself. In fact, the average age was 54 years!

There is growing awareness and understanding of why the participation of young people is important. However, our European political arena promotes participation on local and national levels (White Paper & Council Resolution in the field of youth) and passes the bucket on to the member states.

I believe that the European Union needs more young people in visible places, from civil servants to Commissioners, to show that the EU is not only a project for middle-aged males, and above all, to provide an example of how we promote real influence and participation for our young European citizens.

I also see the coming EP elections in the summer of 2004 as an opportunity to promote young people's participation in Europe and to increase the number of young decision makers in the European

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Union. It is the European institutions' mission to support this and provide the required resources, but

it is also our task as activists in European youth NGOs to show that we want to have our say and are ready to accept the responsibilities that go with this. We have to unite ourselves in order to be able to encourage young people to vote and take responsibility in the European Union.



# Overview of the Open Method of Co- ordination in the youth field



**ANNA SELBERG**

Youth Policy in Europe Policy Officer  
European Youth Forum

As a follow-up to the Commission's White Paper "a new impetus for youth" adopted in November 2001, the Council adopted a resolution in June 2002. The resolution outlines the procedures for how the EU will co-ordinate its activities in the youth field.

The Council confirmed the proposal of the White Paper to implement youth policy on the EU level by the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC), previously used for other policy areas, such as employment and education.

This method is a form of "soft legislation" used for areas for which the EU does not have competencies to legislate, but where there is a wish to co-ordinate national policies. This takes place through the setting up of common goals and regular reporting on the performances on these.

Comparison and benchmarking between the Members States is expected to make them eager to perform well and reach the goals.

The OMC will be implemented thematically starting with four of the priority areas from the White Paper: Participation, Information, Voluntary Activities and Youth Research. This will be done in two cycles starting with the first two priorities in July 2002 and ending with the last two in November 2004. If the method proves successful, the other priorities of the White Paper will be implemented accordingly.

So far, the Commission has sent questionnaires for the priority areas Participation and Information to the Member States and the candidate countries. The answers have been summarised in a report by the Commission and for the areas where they find room for improvement, they have proposed Common Objectives for the Member States

to reach. These proposals are currently being discussed in the Council and are expected for adoption in November. In parallel,

the Commission just sent out questionnaires for the two other priority areas, voluntary activities and youth research.

The deadline for submitting answers is 31 October.

Participation  
Information  
- Voluntary activities  
- Youth research

The European Youth Forum is a formal partner in the process, and is consulted by the Commission at two different stages: first, on the proposal for Common Objectives and then on the evaluation of the method as such. We are also consulted on

the drafting of the questionnaires. Furthermore, the resolution states that governments should consult young people and youth organisations when answering the questionnaires.

## MIKAËL GARNIER-LAVALLEY

Delegate in the Youth Forum  
CNAJEP



*"Be careful Youth Ministers: participative democracy is like a boomerang. It always comes back to the person who threw it."*

# The Open method of co-ordination is far from paradise!

No matter what the good intentions are, the implementation of citizen participation and what is generally called 'participative democracy', when it has no consequence or influence, may turn out to be a wonderful double-edged weapon. What we are experiencing at the European level following the publication of the White Paper 'A new impetus for European youth' in November 2001 is a perfect illustration of this.

Indeed, while revealing the hope of young people for the European idea and the need to develop a European youth policy, the document also created an expectation. Thanks to an exemplary consultation method, this expectation was nurtured during the two-year period leading up to the publication of the White Paper. In a series of meetings, the Commission consulted Member State representatives, hundreds of young people and their organisations, and experts. Because of this, everybody eagerly awaited the follow-up.

However, to consult, engage in dialogue, develop a method, etc. is not a policy, and if there are no results, this serves absolutely no purpose. Therein lies the problem of participative democracy: either there is an outcome to the dialogue between public decision-makers, citizens and their organisations and public policies change or nothing happens. In the first case, the dialogue will have been useful for the people elected and for the citizens who will not have lost their time. It will also benefit everybody because the final decision will have been made better thanks to the remarks formulated by the different people. In this way, trust is possible among the citizens, the NGOs and the public decision-makers. In the second case, the dialogue has been useless, because it has no effect or consequence. Even worse, it creates even more mistrust between the various talking partners and in particular between the citizens and the people that they elected.

What we are experiencing with the White Paper tends to fall into the second category. Indeed, four years after the consultation process was launched, two years after the publication of the White Paper and the expectations that it created, nothing tangible has been achieved. Of course we have had tonnes of documents, dozens of meetings and thousands of euros have been spent. But what is left of all that is only a method. The famous Open Method of Co-ordination that has been absolutely useless and that

might as well be called 'Ok but More Consultation'...

Can you imagine, after so much work, our States still have not been able to reach an agreement on common objectives, even binding ones, on youth information and participation. Even worse, they have put us back into a dialogue and consultation process. Be reassured, though, with a little luck, when the objectives are decided (they should be by the end of November), the Commission, just like the Parliament, will only have a few months to go before the States quickly forget the objectives. Indeed, the documents of the process and experience have shown us that the aim is not to determine ambitious objectives for all so that the States' policies converge in one common direction but rather to determine minimum objectives according to the existing States' policies. With this programme, they are out of touch with young people. They are talking about hope, and we are nodding, thinking at the same time 'but have a look at how good what we are already doing is'...

**..how does one keep hoping in this Europe and in our States (the masters of the game) which spend so much time doing nothing on a question like youth?**

It is often said in France that in order to shelve a problem, a commission is set

up. In light of this experience, I have the impression that in Europe creating a method is all that is needed.

Of course, public action takes time, even more so at the European level. But how does one keep hoping in this Europe and in our States (the masters of the game) which spend so much time doing nothing on a question like youth? It is not as sensitive as taxation, agriculture, defence, employment or health, and young people are more European than the average person and represent both the present and future of our societies? So yes, the participation of young and older people is interesting, passionate and useful when our voices serve a cause. When this is not the case, it only causes anger and mistrust, backfiring on its instigators. In this way, it is a boomerang that can hurt a lot.

There is no reason therefore to get enthusiastic about the idea of participation. Like love, it is to be appreciated through actions! Only one question arises today in view of the forthcoming European elections: how do you mobilise young people to vote and have them understand, have us understand, that playing the game of the institutions is worth the effort?

# The President responds: interview to Romano Prodi

**ROMANO PRODI**

President  
EU Commission



*The Convention was an open, participative democratic process in which young people's organisations could contribute to decision-making. Do you believe that the work it accomplished -- in general and specifically as regards youth -- was satisfactory?*

The European Union is going through a period of extraordinary progress. The draft Constitution put forward by the Convention has great symbolic value as this is the first time the Union's foundations have been debated in an open, democratic forum by representatives of the peoples and States of Europe. Moreover, this innovative endeavour to build a new political reality is unprecedented and unparalleled in our history and it was certainly not a straightforward task. It brought much encouraging progress as well as some deadlock and some bitter defeats. We must draw the lessons from both the victories and the battles lost if we are to move ahead.

**The quality of the input of youth organisations in the Youth Convention ensured that these consultations were not just window-dressing.**

The Laeken Declaration marked the beginning of a new period and set the Convention its main challenges of bringing the EU institutions closer to the people, particularly young people, and of making the EU more efficient, democratic and transparent. Any analysis of the Convention, which offers a new model as a constitution-building process, should take these goals into consideration. What is important is whether this

process has managed to narrow the gap between the institutions and the people. The Union will face the challenge of proving this true in the future.

On the question of young people, I welcome the fact that efforts by youth organisations to have stronger references to the role of young people in EU political life included in the draft Constitution were successful. This was achieved thanks in particular to the work of the Youth Convention. The quality of the input of youth organisations in the Youth Convention ensured that these consultations were not just window-dressing. I am convinced that politicians should encourage young people to get involved. That is why we are drawing up a special strategy within the scope of our responsibility. Our White Paper on Youth aims to foster participation, information, voluntary service and mutual understanding. I am convinced that voluntary service in particular could be a big factor in promoting the active involvement of EU citizens.

That is why it is a great step forward for the draft Constitution to have proposed setting up a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps for joint contributions from young EU citizens. I also believe that within the Union, the various agencies and the voluntary sector should set up networks and structures to make coordination and exchanges possible.

*What do you think of the way the IGC is dealing with the results of the political negotiation process at the Convention?*

Clearly this Intergovernmental Conference cannot be compared with any previous IGC since it has the excellent work of the Convention to base itself on. But it still has its primary function, which is to allow the heads of State and government to exercise their political responsibility and present the final text for approval to the institutions and the people in their Member

States. There are aspects of the draft Constitution that bear clear witness to the fact that the compromise reached is incomplete or does not go far enough and the result achieved to date is not the end of the line, as we had originally hoped. So the Member States, in whom sovereignty is ultimately vested, should be able to discuss it once more and see whether areas for improvement do not exist.

convinced of the opportunities the EU offers in new Member States are the young people. Europe is becoming a common area of opportunities for education, for finding a career and for developing a new sense of citizenship beyond the borders of one's own country.

As the Draft Constitution states, peace and solidarity are founding values of the EU. So I believe in the idea included

**The goal is to equip the Union for a larger number of members and at the same time to make it more efficient and more transparent and strengthen its democratic legitimacy.**

Over the past few months, the Commission has expressed its views on the future of Europe on a number of occasions. We have consistently pushed for an ambitious, high-quality text that can meet the challenges that lie ahead. The draft Constitutional Treaty prepared by the Convention provides an excellent basis for the final negotiations. This is good for Europe, it is good for our nations and peoples and it is good for the EU institutions. But it is now time to concentrate on the points where it still needs improving.

*As we speak, a new Europe is in the process of construction. Millions of young people will become part of an expanded European Union. How can these young people with their different cultural, economical and social backgrounds identify with the Union?*

You are all as aware as I am of the scale of the challenges facing us over the next few months. The European Union will embark on its biggest adventure ever when it prepares to welcome in ten new members and to reshape its institutions and decision-making procedures. The goal is to equip the Union for a larger number of members and at the same time to make it more efficient and more transparent and strengthen its democratic legitimacy. The Union's values should inspire the process of integration and should help citizens identify with the Union, regardless of their cultural and social backgrounds.

Over the years we have noticed that those most

in the draft Constitution of establishing a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps for joint action by young

Europeans as it fulfils the aspirations of many young people who wish to contribute to peaceful development in Europe and beyond. This may seem ambitious at the moment, but we believe this positive idea deserves to be explored further, and it could also bring further development of voluntary civilian services in a European framework. Young people need to be

given the opportunity to offer their help and to learn through experience in Europe and abroad, thereby encouraging a sense of a shared active EU citizenship.

*Statistically, young people are those who vote least. With the European Parliament elections due in 2004, how can the Union be brought closer to them and how can they be encouraged to vote?*

The Convention's success has brought a



**Your commitment, I am sure, will encourage young people to take part in the democratic system and cast their votes.**

lasting change in democratic life in the European Union. It was a great job well done and an un hoped-for result. The EU is in the midst of a new phase of constitutional development and is taking a fundamentally important step towards creating a political union. It will soon be the citizens' turn to speak their minds, and all the effects and political implications of the process need to be explained properly, including the enlarged EU and the "wider Europe", the new arrangements for running the EU and the Union's role in the world. This process of discussion will have to be taken further than within the

Convention,

which opened a debate that must now be thrown open to all citizens so the foundations for a genuine European political area can be laid.

In the light of these developments, I believe that you can play a very important role in the election process as organisations representing young people. You work directly with young people and the Union needs you to spread the message that each individual must take part actively so his or her opinion counts. Your commitment, I am sure, will encourage young people to take part in the democratic system and cast their votes.

*How do you see the EU in 20 years' time, when today's young EU citizens will be running and leading the Union?*

To say that European integration is dedicated first and foremost to young people is not just an empty claim. The process of European integration is designed to benefit our youth, and its success depends above all on their involvement.

As I said a couple of months ago when I addressed the European Parliament, what we need is a Constitution that lays the foundations for the Europe of many years to come while preserving what we have achieved so far for future generations. This is the Europe we have built and are in the process of consolidating.

**Young people should not be mere spectators or addressees of decisions handed down by the Union, but protagonists.**

One of the challenges facing Europe and the world in general is to accept differences, which cause so much fear and mistrust. Young people need to make it possible for people with different cultural backgrounds, different ethnic origins and different economic circumstances to live together. It is a question of public responsibility and human commitment. This is why I am convinced that politicians should encourage our young people to get involved and why our White Paper on Youth aims to encourage participation, information, voluntary service and mutual understanding.

Young people should not be mere spectators or addressees of decisions handed down by the Union, but protagonists. We should think of the European Union as our own concern. It is not an area to explore as tourists, but to be lived in as citizens. Learn the languages and history of the other countries. Take advantage of the opportunities the Union offers, starting with the Erasmus programme, which we recently proposed extending worldwide (Erasmus Mundus). The European Union is our -- and your -- chance for fulfilment. Its future depends on us and on you.





## MEMBER ORGANISATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

### Full members

#### National Youth Councils (NYCs)

Aeskulyðssamband Islands - AESI (Iceland); Suomen Nuorisoyhteistyö Allianssi ry - Allianssi (Finland); British Youth Council - BYC (Great Britain); Conférence Générale de la Jeunesse Luxembourgeoise - CGJL (Luxembourg); Consejo de la Juventud de España - CJE (Spain); Comité pour les Relations Nationales et Internationales des Associations de Jeunesse et d'Education Populaire - CNAJEP (France); Conselho Nacional de Juventude - CNJ (Portugal); Consell Nacional de la Joventut de Catalunya - CNJC (Spain-Catalonia); Comité pour les Relations Internationales de Jeunesse - CRIJ (Belgium, French-speaking Community); National Youth Council of Switzerland - SAJV/CSAJ (Switzerland); Cyprus Youth Council for International Co-operation - CYCIC (Cyprus); Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Internationale Jugendarbeit - DNK (Germany); Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd - DUF (Denmark); National Council of Hellenic Youth Organisations - ESYN (Greece); Nationale Jeugdraad - JEUGDRAAD (Netherlands); Kunsilli Nazzjonali Taz-Zghazagh - KNZ-Malta (Malta); Lietuvos Jaunimo Organizacijų Taryba - LIJOT (Lithuania); Latvijas Jaunatnes Padome - LJP (Latvia); Landsrådet for Norges barne- og ungdomsorganisasjoner - LNU (Norway); Landsrådet för Sveriges ungdomsorganisationer - LSU (Sweden); Mladinski Svet Slovenije - MSS (Slovenia); National Assembly of Youth Organisations of the Republic of Azerbaijan - NAYORA (Azerbaijan); National Council of Youth Organisations of Georgia - NCOYG (Georgia); Nemzetközi Ifjúsági Koordinációs Iroda - NIKI (Hungary); National Youth Council of Ireland - NYCI (Ireland); National Youth Council of Russia - NYCR (Russia); Österreichisches Nationalkomitee für International Jugendarbeit - ONK (Austria); Belarusian Union of Youth and Children's Public Associations - RADA (Belarus); Rada Mláde e Slovenska - RMS (Slovakia); Vlaamse Jeugd Raad - VJR (Belgium, Flemish-speaking Community).

#### International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs)

Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe - AEGEE Europe; Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations - ALLIANCE; International ATD Fourth World Movement - ATD-Quart Monde; Democrat Youth Community of Europe - DEMYC; European Bureau of Conscientious Objection - EBCCO/BECCO; EC Organisation of Socialist Youth - ECOSY; European Confederation of Youth Clubs - ECYC; European Committee for Young Farmers and 4H Clubs - ECFY4HC; European Democrat Students - EDS; European Educational Exchanges - Youth for Understanding - EEE-YFU; European Federation for Intercultural Learning - EFIL; European Federation of Youth Service Organisations - EFYSO; European Good Templars Youth Federation - EGTYF; The National Unions of Students in Europe - ESIB; European Trade Union Confederation - ETUC Youth; EU Federation of Youth Hostel Associations - EUFED; European Union of Jewish Students - EUJS/UEEJ; Experiment in Europe - EXPERIMENT; Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe - EYCE; International Federation of Catholic Parochial Youth Movements - FIMCAP; Federation of the Young European Greens - FYEG; International Cultural Youth Exchange in Europe - ICYE; International Federation of Liberal Youth - IFLRY; International Falcon Movement - Socialist Educational International - IFM/SEI; International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth and Student Organisation - IGLYO; International Union of Socialist Youth - IUSY; International Young Naturefriends - IYNF; International Young Catholic Students - International Movement of Catholic Students - JECI-MIEC; Young European Federalists - JEF; Union of Jeunesses Musicales of Europe - Jeunesses Musicales; European Young Christian Workers - JOC-Europe; Liberal and Radical Youth Movement of the European Union - LYMEC; International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth - MIJARC-Europe; Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions - OBESSU; Service Civil International - SCI; World Organisation of Young Esperantists - TEJO; World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts - WAGGGS; World Organisation of the Scout Movement (European office) - WOSM; European Region of the World Student Christian Federation - WSCF-Europe Region; Youth Action for Peace - YAP; Youth for Development and Co-operation - YDC; Youth and Environment Europe - YEE; Youth of the European People's Party - YEPP; Youth for Exchange and Understanding - YEU; European Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations - YMCA; Young Women's Christian Association - YWCA.

### Candidate members

#### National Youth Councils

Consiliul National Al Tineretului Din Moldova - CNTM (Moldova); National Youth Council of Bulgaria - NMS (Bulgaria); National Youth Council of Armenia - NYCA (Armenia).

#### International Non Governmental Youth Organisations

International Federation of Medical Students' Association - IFMSA.

### Observer members

#### National Youth Councils

Consiliul Tineretului Din Romania - CTR (Romania); Kruh sdruzeni deti a mládeze - KSDM (Czech Republic); Rat der Deutschsprachigen Jugend - RDJ (Belgium, German-speaking Community).

#### International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations

European Council of Young Farmers - CEJA; European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions - CESI-Youth; European Council of Conscript Organisations - ECCO; International Federation of Training Centres for the Promotion of Progressive Education - FICEMEA; International Federation for Educational Exchanges of Children and Adolescents - FIEEA; Mobility International - Mobility; Nordic Centre Youth - NCY; Pax Christi International - Pax Christi; Red Cross Youth - RCY; Youth of European Nationalities - YEN.



# Youth Opinion

What young people in youth organisations think about...



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...AND ALSO...  
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