

Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

**“Youth shaping sustainable and innovative solutions:
Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in
times of crises”**

SIDE EVENT AT THE 2024 ECOSOC YOUTH FORUM

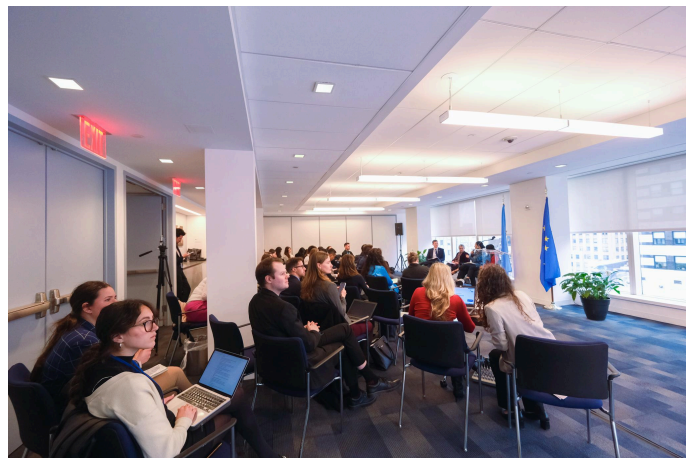
Event Report

***“Towards a Global Standard for Meaningful Youth Engagement
in the Pact for the Future”***

Organized by the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace & UN Youth Delegates and Youth Representatives of Austria, Czechia, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland, Kenya, Malta, Switzerland, and the United States of America; co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Ireland and the European Union to the UN

General information on the Event

The Side Event took place on 18 April at the European Union Mission to the UN with two primary objectives. First, to define and recommit to standards of meaningful youth engagement such as the ones outlined in the *Secretary Generals Policy Brief 3*¹ and secondly, develop actionable recommendations for meaningful youth engagement by outlining barriers, voicing best practices and facilitating action. We wanted to put a spotlight on a timely debate which works

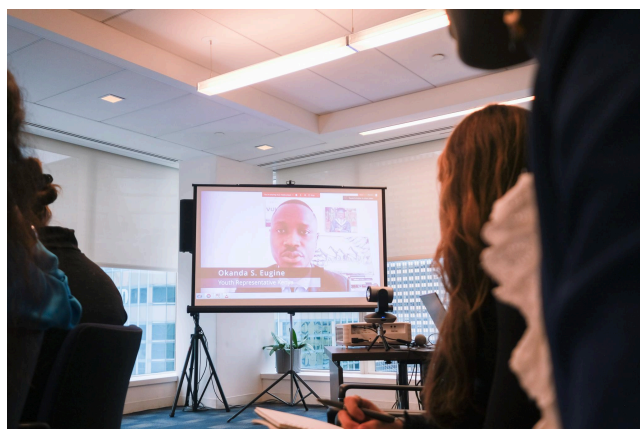


to fill the ongoing negotiations on the Pact of the Future with concrete ideas for implementation, and work towards the achievement of SDG 16.7, which aims to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels. We furthermore sought to foster

¹ [Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3 Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policy and Decision-making Processes](#)

substantive dialogue by facilitating intergenerational and interactive discussions exploring youth involvement in policy-making processes in line with SDG 17.

To realise these ambitious goals we were beyond thankful to build on trusted partnerships. With the event co-organised by youth delegates and representatives of 10 countries we again wanted to highlight the incredible potential youth participation has for global cooperation. Moderated by Marvin Huber, the UN Youth Delegate from Austria, the event began by emphasizing the need to move from discussing why youth participation is essential to how it can be effectively implemented. The focus being on the mechanisms through which all youth can be meaningfully involved in shaping policies and all initiatives. The session included opening remarks from selected youth representatives of the three co-sponsoring organizations, namely Giulia Tariello (*PM EU*), John Koester (*UN Advocacy Advisor for IAYSP*) and Mohammad Naeem (*PM IRL*).



The first keynote of the event was an intervention held by all youth who engaged with our “[Global Call for Video Statements](#)” and shared their perspectives on the matter from all over the globe. They highlighted not only the need for geographical need and including traditionally left voices but delivered strong messages towards decision makers such as “*Meaningful engagement can be enhanced only if we reach full inclusive participation of youth, meaning of course more speaking opportunity for the most*

vulnerable!” from Alexia Gaube and “*It is not just about being heard, it is about being actively involved in the decision making process!*” from Thomas Zenebe Woldemariam. Building on their strong call to action our second keynote was provided by Marija Vasileva-Blazev (*Special Adviser UN Youth Office*). She supported not focusing on the ‘why’ of youth involvement, given its undeniable importance, but the ‘how’ and showcased initiatives such as the [Youth 2030 Agenda](#), the [Let #YouthLead](#) campaign and how the UNYO is working to shape the outcomes of the Pact of the Future.

With the start of the discussion we had the honor to welcome three distinguished experts to our panel: Lopa Banerjee (*Executive Coordinator of the Generation Equality Forum and the Director of the Civil Society Division at UN-Women*), Nudhara Yusuf (*GGIN Executive Coordinator at Stimson Center and the Co-Chair of the UN Civil Society Conference in Support of the Summit of the Future*) and Shreyaa Venkat (*World Food Forum Youth Policy Board Member and Founder and CEO of NEST4US*).

An event on meaningful youth participation must hold up to its own calls to the best of its ability. Thus participants had the opportunity both in-person and virtually to engage the panelists in a

collective discussion around key questions such as sharing examples of successful youth-led initiatives that influenced policy or decision-making in their respective countries. Through the active fishbowl method, speakers from various backgrounds and regions shared their insights on the importance of establishing global standards for meaningful youth engagement. They also explored strategies for youth advocates to navigate power dynamics effectively within governmental structures and identified barriers preventing meaningful youth engagement in policy-making, discussing potential solutions to address these.



The event was closed by Emma de Gabrielle and Kristýna Bulvasová who summarised the most important outcomes which will be taken forward.

Main Outcomes

The shared global standard is crucial as it transcends regional and national frameworks, offering a unified approach that can be adapted to local contexts. The speakers emphasized recognizing and harnessing the potential, creativity, and resilience of young people to address both local and global challenges effectively. A significant focus was placed on the practical recommendations for fostering youth engagement at all levels, aiming to integrate these recommendations into ongoing dialogues on youth empowerment within and outside the United Nations framework.

Throughout the session, the importance of institutional support and resource allocation for youth programs was emphasized repeatedly. Effective youth engagement requires not just opportunities for participation but also the necessary tools and platforms that enable young people to influence change genuinely. This involves providing leadership training, skill development programs, and initiatives that promote peace and sustainable development.



The dialogue also underscored the need for inclusivity in youth participation. Speakers highlighted the importance of involving youth from diverse backgrounds and regions, not just

from Europe, to ensure a truly inclusive approach. This diversity enriches the discussions and outcomes, making the initiatives more globally representative and effective. Such inclusivity ensures that the unique perspectives and challenges of youth from underrepresented regions are considered and addressed in global policies and programs.

The session also explored the challenges associated with meaningful youth engagement, such as the need for sustained funding, overcoming bureaucratic hurdles, and the frequent undervaluation of young people's contributions to serious policy dialogues. Discussants called for a paradigm shift in how young people are perceived in the realms of policy and decision-making, advocating for a view of youth as equal partners capable of contributing substantively to discussions on their future.



Moreover, the discussions highlighted the role of technology and social media as tools that can enhance the reach and effectiveness of youth engagement strategies. By leveraging digital platforms, organizations can engage a broader audience of young people, facilitating their participation in global discussions and allowing them to contribute their views and ideas from anywhere in the world.

One key aspect of the discussions was the call for mechanisms that ensure young people's inputs are not only gathered but also genuinely considered and integrated into final decision-making processes. This involves creating feedback loops where youth can see the tangible outcomes of their contributions, thus fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards implemented policies and programs.

Another critical point discussed was the need for intergenerational cooperation, where experienced policymakers and older generations actively collaborate with youth, recognizing them as partners rather than merely beneficiaries. This approach not only enriches the policymaking process with fresh ideas and perspectives but also ensures that young people are learning from those with more experience, thereby building their capacity for future leadership roles.

In terms of policy recommendations, the session concluded with a strong advocacy for structured and consistent support for youth initiatives. This support should encompass financial backing, mentorship programs, and platforms where young people can engage with leaders and decision-makers on an ongoing basis. By institutionalizing youth participation, organizations and governments can ensure that the engagement of young people is not sporadic or symbolic but a regular and impactful feature of governance and policy development.

Furthermore, the discussions emphasized the importance of fostering a global network of youth delegates and representatives who can work across borders to share strategies, successes, and challenges. This network would serve as a powerful collective advocating for the rights and inclusion of young people in all spheres of global governance.

The session not only addressed the strategic aspects of youth engagement but also touched on successful examples of youth-led initiatives from diverse contexts. The event showcased how young people have effectively influenced policy formulation and implementation processes in their respective countries. Through these discussions and case studies, participants gained valuable insights into the potential of youth activism and advocacy in driving meaningful change.

As the session drew to a close, Marvin Huber reiterated the commitment of all participants to take the insights and strategies discussed forward. The participants agreed on the need for ongoing collaboration and communication to ensure that the momentum gained during the session and the Youth Forum leads to concrete actions and changes at both the local and international levels.

In conclusion, the session was not only a forum for discussing the theoretical aspects of youth engagement but also a launchpad for future actions and initiatives that will further the cause of meaningful youth participation worldwide. The collective determination to turn dialogue into action was palpable, with a clear focus on making youth a central part of the solution to global challenges. The delegates and representatives left the session equipped with new ideas, strategies, and a renewed sense of purpose to advocate for and implement policies that genuinely include and benefit the youth of today and tomorrow.



Further Resources

Please find the full recording of the event and the key-note video [here](#).

Thank you!

We thank you for your support and engagement and stay happily available as your partners!
~Emma, Morris, Giulia, John, Kristýna, Mohammad, Jana, Widad, Fidelis, Jaob, Lukas, Ose, Silke, and Marvin