



# GENERAL SDG STRATEGY FOR YOUTH NGOs

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## Introduction

Sustainable development – a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising those of the future – begins with respect for the future generation as an important stakeholder. The young people of today will mature right alongside SDGs. They are the people who will experience the success or failure of the 2030 Agenda. This is why it is particularly important to engage with youth and empower them in our endeavour for a more sustainable future.<sup>1</sup>

Youth are being referred to as the “torchbearers” of the 2030 Agenda and have a pivotal role to play both as beneficiaries of actions and policies under the Agenda and as partners and participants in its implementation.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is important to provide a wide range of opportunities for young people to strengthen their consciousness and empower them to action that contributes to the achievement of the SDG targets. For this reason, youth organisations and youth work play a critical role as they aim to empower young people, facilitate their experiential learning and personal growth, support the development of their active citizenship values and competencies.

This document provides a general strategy for youth NGOs on how they could mainstream Sustainable Development Goals in their daily activities. It aims to provide guidelines and ideas for youth NGOs on how they could strengthen their own role in the implementation of Agenda 2030. Please, note that this strategy is not dedicated to any specific youth NGO, therefore, while working on the concrete action plan for its implementation, a specific organisation should consider their local context and adapt the strategy based on the specific needs and behavioural paths of young people.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/UN%20and%20SDGs\\_A%20Handbook%20for%20Youth.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/UN%20and%20SDGs_A%20Handbook%20for%20Youth.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/WorldYouthReport-2030Agenda.pdf>

## The context

The present strategy focuses on the role of youth organisation in the implementation of the following Sustainable Development Goals:



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



Reduce inequality within and among countries



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

The following SDGs were chosen for this strategy after the consultation with young people and youth organisations involved in the project “Together for Sustainable Future” and also taking into consideration today’s most urgent issues that require immediate action from various stakeholders.



### **Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

Quality education is considered a driving force of sustainable development. And one of the key indicators for quality education is making sure “that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”<sup>3</sup> However, access to quality activities that help young people to understand the complexity of sustainable development goals is still limited, and this can be explained by the results of different research. E.g., according to the OECD PISA report “Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World?” (2018)<sup>4</sup>, the findings clearly show that young people in Europe and worldwide are interested in global issues, but they still lack the skills to critically assess information and understand different perspectives of specific global issues. Also, they usually lack of belief that their action affect people in other countries and continents as well as the belief that they personally can make a difference. Both, the present research and the Flash Eurobarometer “Youth and Democracy in the European Year of Youth”<sup>5</sup> show that young people are still not very active in organisations working in the fields of global development, human rights, environment and climate change. These findings clearly show the needs for more actions that raise awareness of young people of sustainable development goals and their local and global dimensions and

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/pisa-2018-results-volume-vi-d5f68679-en.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2282>

empower them to act. Youth organisations here play a crucial role as platforms where young people can practice their skills in a non-formal way.



### **Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

Gender bias is undermining our social fabric and devalues all of us. It is not just a human rights issue; it is a tremendous waste of the world's human potential. Many cases of bullying (including cyberbullying) among young people are still based on harmful gender stereotypes, and this prevents young people, especially women, to utilise their full potential in education, training, the labour market, social and civil life. Therefore, it is important that youth organisations implement measures that deconstruct persisting gender stereotypes and strengthen the respect for any human being regardless their gender.



### **Reduce inequality within and among countries**

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”<sup>6</sup> However, in many societies, people are still resistant to accepting different groups of people. Rising awareness of the diversity in our societies also requires better awareness of how discrimination based on specific characteristics (gender identity, culture, religious beliefs, race, able-bodiedness, social status, etc.) lead people to poverty, unemployment, exclusion from social and civil life. As a consequence, people face mental health issues that can even lead them to depression and suicide.

SDG #10 aims to ensure equal opportunities and end discrimination. But is not enough to do this only on a political level by changing laws. It is also very important to work on the values of respect and acceptance of diversity in our societies, especially among young people. The role of youth organisations is to provide opportunities for young people to strengthen their empathy towards different groups of people and help them understand the relation between diversity, discrimination and human rights.



### **Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

Young people need to feel ownership of their cities and communities and contribute to solving their problems. This is one of the preconditions for building socially, economically and environmentally sustainable local communities. Young people need skills and space to raise their voice towards the issues they care about, need to be involved in dialogue and policy development processes that lead to sustainable changes in their local communities. Youth organisations are the intermediaries between young people and other local stakeholders, therefore, their role is ensuring effective inclusion of the youth population in dialogue meant for building sustainable communities.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>









## **Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**



Young people are the ones who will suffer the most from the consequences of climate change in the nearest future. Therefore it is also their responsibility to take an informed and conscious action to combat it. By changing personal habits as well as taking collective action to solve wider issues contributing to climate change, young people become the critical agents in the fight with this global crisis. Youth organisations can be the hubs for young people to bring their own perspectives of how they can contribute to tackle climate change.

## General SDG strategy for youth NGOs

Overall/global objective: mainstream the concepts of sustainable development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals in youth organisations.

Strategic objectives	Performance measurement		Examples of activities/ initiatives/ projects	By when?	Potential risk factors	Related SDGs
	Indicator	Mean by 2027				
Increase young people's commitment to involving in actions related to SDGs on both local and international levels	No. of awareness raising activities (trainings, campaigns, etc.)	8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seminars, trainings, workshops, camps, treasure hunts, etc. for young people on SDGs;</li> <li>2. Online and offline awareness raising campaigns;</li> <li>3. International mobility projects, study visits.</li> </ol>	Continuously, by the end of 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of interest of young people in the topics related to SDGs;</li> <li>- Participants do not provide feedback, therefore, it is difficult to measure the impact of the activities/ actions/ initiatives/ projects;</li> <li>- The importance of SDGs is denied by local, national governments, the international community and other actors who have an influence on young people;</li> <li>- Limited funding opportunities.</li> </ul>	
	No. of young people involved in the awareness raising activities	2500				
	% of young people who report increased awareness and understanding about SDGs after the activities	75				
	% of young people who demonstrate commitment to take action on SDGs after 6 months after their involvement in the activity	30				
Reinforce respect for diversity, equality and	No. of long-term actions for promoting diversity, equality and	3	1. Long-term Human Rights Education (including the elements for prevention	2024-2027	- Lack of support for the actions from local schools and/or youth groups;	

Strategic objectives	Performance measurement		Examples of activities/ initiatives/ projects	By when?	Potential risk factors	Related SDGs
	Indicator	Mean by 2027				
inclusion among young people in local communities	inclusion among young people		<p>from bullying) programme for school students;</p> <p>2. Capacity building activities for local youth organisations, school and university student councils (local and international);</p> <p>3. International youth exchanges on diversity and equality topics.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Young people do not feel safe discussing the issues of diversity, equality and inclusion;</li> <li>- Local community is resistant to better inclusion of diverse groups of people;</li> <li>- Other actors oppose the actions of the youth organisation by promoting values based on stereotypes and prejudices;</li> <li>- Limited funding opportunities.</li> </ul>	 
	No. of young people involved in the actions	500				
	% of young people involved in actions that report the change in their values and behaviours related to equality, diversity and inclusion 6 months after their involvement in action	10				
	No. of youth organisations committed to promoting diversity, equality and inclusion in the local community	5				
Foster young people's personal and cooperative action towards climate change	No. of actions lead by the youth organisation addressing climate issues	3	<p>1. Street campaigns, competitions dedicated to the reduction of the personal environmental footprint;</p> <p>2. Local and international workshops/trainings for young people and youth groups empowering them to take action on climate;</p>	2023-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contradictions with other actors promoting consumerism and denying climate change;</li> <li>- Lack of support from the local community;</li> <li>- Limited funding opportunities.</li> </ul>	 
	% of young people from the local community involved in the actions	10				
	No. of follow-up actions of the ones mentioned above led by young people	6				

Strategic objectives	Performance measurement		Examples of activities/ initiatives/ projects	By when?	Potential risk factors	Related SDGs
	Indicator	Mean by 2027				
	% of young people that report their reduced environmental footprint	15	3. Support for youth groups for their own follow-up initiatives on climate.			
	No. of issues in the local community related to pollution, climate, waste reduction solved	2				
Strengthen dialogue between youth and other actors for building sustainable communities	The extent of sustainability issues discussed within the governing bodies involving youth in the local community	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raising questions related to sustainability in the local council of youth affairs;</li> <li>- Participation in policy development working groups;</li> <li>- Involving other actors (municipality, community centers, schools, etc.) in youth actions mentioned above;</li> <li>- Community building initiatives.</li> </ul>	Continuously, by the end of 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of trust between different actors;</li> <li>- Lack of involvement of youth in policy development processes;</li> <li>- Limited funding opportunities.</li> </ul>	
	The extent of young people's involvement in local policy development processes that address the SDGs	High				
	No. of joint actions of the youth organisation(s) and other actors (community centers, municipality, etc.) towards sustainability	2				
Mainstream SDGs in the organisational culture of youth organisations	No. of capacity building activities per year	4	1. Capacity building activities for the members, especially the new ones,		- Difficulties to keep the ongoing processes on sustainability in cases when	



Strategic objectives	Performance measurement		Examples of activities/ initiatives/ projects	By when?	Potential risk factors	Related SDGs
	Indicator	Mean by 2027				
	Completed self-assessment on equality and inclusion with the organisation	Yes/no	<p>of the organisation on the general and specific topics related to SDGs;</p> <p>2. Integration of the core principles of inclusive youth work in the organisation<sup>7</sup>: self-assessment, changes in internal policies and practices;</p> <p>3. Reducing the environmental footprint of the organisation resulting from its main activities;</p> <p>4. Following the roadmap for planning sustainable youth actions.<sup>8</sup></p>		<p>the staff/core team of the organisation changes;</p> <p>- Lack of commitment for systematic work on mainstreaming SDGs in the organisational culture.</p>	
	No. of actions (policy changes, practical measures) implemented towards inclusions	4				
	Reduced organisation's environmental footprint	25% reduced footprint				
	All youth actions follow the roadmap of planning a sustainable action	Yes/no				

<sup>7</sup> The guidelines for this activity can be found in the publication „Tools for Equality and Inclusion in Youth Work“, [https://www.inclusive-youth-work.eu/files/ugd/a7bcb4\\_7d3c6db8c8b14f9381fb5cb11d2db770.pdf](https://www.inclusive-youth-work.eu/files/ugd/a7bcb4_7d3c6db8c8b14f9381fb5cb11d2db770.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Check Annex 2

## Annexes

### **Annex 1. Guiding Principles for Supporting Young People as Critical Agents of Change in the 2030 Agenda<sup>9</sup>**

1. Approach youth participation and empowerment, in all actions, as an essential principle for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
2. Promote youth participation and empowerment in all phases and levels of 2030 Agenda actions, including planning, implementation and monitoring and accountability for the Goals, including through youth-led initiatives.
3. Ensure that the alignment of development priorities with the SDGs at all levels addresses young people's specific needs and is responsive to their voices, respects, upholds and promotes their rights, especially by strengthening avenues for youth participation and increasing investments in youth-led development. Applying a human rights-based approach and the application of international labour standards and other United Nations normative frameworks relevant to the development of young people is key.
4. Foster and support overall enabling environments for inclusive and meaningful youth participation in all phases of 2030 Agenda processes, including through structured, substantive and effective participation in official policy processes, the promotion of formal and informal spaces where young people can engage with each other and the community at large, volunteering schemes, multi-stakeholder SDG initiatives and partnerships and sustainable funding.
5. Strengthen youth agency by supporting capacity development for young people, youth organisations, networks and movements, and all other stakeholders, including authorities and duty-bearers, to enhance mutual responsiveness, trust and collaboration in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
6. Recognise and value the diversity of young people's experiences by finding ways to systematically, sustainably and responsibly engage young people and their organisations, networks and movements, typically left out of development projects and programmes, in line with the Agenda's principle of "leaving no one behind".
7. Promote gender equality and girls' and young women's empowerment as critical for achieving the 2030 Agenda.
8. Advocate for youth-sensitive national and local SDG indicators, in addition to age disaggregation, as a critical avenue for ensuring development progress, make data sources youth-friendly and foster young people's role in generating data on the Goals.
9. Find creative ways to engage young people throughout the entire SDG programme, project or initiative cycle, from consultation and design to monitoring and evaluation of initiatives, while ensuring that M&E frameworks are sensitive and relevant to them.
10. Ensure that young people's participation in SDG action is meaningful by setting clear and substantive objectives and establishing channels whereby youth participation can have a visible impact on outcomes.

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations (2018), *World Youth Report „Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development“* // <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/WorldYouthReport-2030Agenda.pdf>

Annex 2. The roadmap of a sustainable youth action

