

Achieving Inclusion and Showcasing the Work of Youth Delegates

Fifty-Seventh Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD57)

Side Event

Tuesday, 19 February 2019, from 1:15 to 2:30 pm

Room 12, UN Headquarters, New York

Context

Social Inclusion and Youth

Over the last few decades, there has been unprecedented social progress, with overall poverty declining and with people now healthier and more educated than in previous generations. Yet, social and economic inequalities have persisted worldwide, with some groups facing barriers preventing them from participating meaningfully in political, social and economic spheres.

Against the backdrop of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, social inclusion can be considered as the process by which various groups of people fully and equally participate in society, regardless of their age, gender, ethnic background, economic and migration status.¹

‘Youth’ is both a life stage and a group of individuals, often with specific characteristics and unique abilities. Based on their age, young people² can be at risk of social exclusion and reduced opportunities. However, since “youth” is a heterogeneous group and intersects with other elements of identity, it produces widely different experiences. This may result in, certain groups of youth facing intersectional discrimination (e.g. youth with disabilities, young people from minority groups, young women, indigenous youth, etc.).

Promoting inclusion is a challenging mission that requires removing multiple types of barriers to participation (such as laws and policies as well as behaviours, values and beliefs) and taking steps to ensure that various systems, institutions and socio-cultural practices do not allow these barriers to reappear. For the Sustainable Development Goals to become a reality for all, it is essential to progressively work towards the inclusion of different social groups into decision-making processes and ensure that measures undertaken reach all groups, especially those who are underserved and most at risk. Socially inclusive development benefits the society-as-a-whole; and working towards greater social inclusion is a crucial step towards shared prosperity and leaving no-one behind.

Youth as Agents of Inclusion

The current generation of youth is the most interconnected generation of youth in history and is creating a unique paradigm shift with regards to social inclusion. Young people have often been excluded from traditional avenues of civic engagement, are sometimes distrusting of current societal structures, and have disavowed conventional forums and paths. In turn, they are creating alternative avenues to affect change in society and express their views, while regularly advancing new ways to tackle societal problems.

¹ DESA, Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development, 2016 Report on the World Social Situation, available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/report-on-the-world-social-situation-rwss-social-policy-and-development-division/rwss2016.html>, p. 1.

² For statistical reasons, the UN considers youth as 15 to 24 years old. However, this age range varies significantly among UN entities and Member States.

Youth have the talent, energy and ideals to prevent conflicts, defend human rights, secure peace, and realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Youth themselves have first-hand knowledge of the challenges their generation faces with regards to economic, social and political inclusion. Similarly, they are best placed to develop tailored solutions to concretely address these issues. By excluding young people from the search for solutions, stereotypes about their generation are perpetuated and thus young people are further side-lined and robbed of their full role in fostering sustainable development.

While youth can face barriers to their own inclusion, they are best placed to help foster a community in which all persons – not only youth – share in opportunities, have dignity and are included. There are numerous examples across sectors where youth work towards the inclusion of other youth, from young social entrepreneurs hiring marginalized youth to work in their initiatives to young women being an agent of inclusion for other young women in varied peace processes. In sum, young people often possess the unique skills, contacts and empathy necessary to reach out to young people who are particularly marginalized and then help work toward their inclusion.

Youth need to have equal opportunity to contribute to and participate in their society's advancement. Young people's political, social and economic inclusion not only helps remove barriers to current inclusion, but also helps put in place systems, institutions and socio-cultural practices that reduce chances of future exclusion for multiple groups. Thus, the meaningful inclusion of young people in all aspects of development is a highly transformational instrument that reverberates across all social groups and generations.

Youth Delegates

Youth Delegates are young representatives selected by their Member States to participate as part of their delegation to international and regional meetings. National Youth Delegate Programmes allow for Member States to select youth delegates for a fixed time period, and enable Governments to engage, empower and include young people.

Youth delegates can serve as partners to communicate international agreements, like the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, to their communities at the local level. They can also link national structures with international processes to increase ownership at a national level and support implementation. Numerous Commission of Social Development and General Assembly resolutions encourage Member States to consider including youth in their delegations and to establish a national youth delegate programme, however, around 35 Member States regularly send youth delegates to the UN.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) coordinates the UN Youth Delegate Programme at the global level and supports Member States to establish and maintain their programmes. Many civil society partners also assist in the creation of UN Youth Delegate Programme, including the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), which helps UN associations in the start and run national programmes.

More information about the Youth Delegate Programme is available here:

- DESA UN Youth Delegate Programme Webpage (including the Guide to Youth Delegates to the United Nations) - <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/>
- WFUNA UN Youth Delegate Programme Webpage (including the Handbook on How to Establish National Youth Delegate Programme and WFUNA Youth Delegate Programme Multipliers) - <https://www.wfuna.org/>

Side Event Objectives

- Discussing barriers to inclusion of youth on the national and international level.
- Examining the possible impact of their inclusion in decision-making processes.
- Showcasing the work of youth delegates toward inclusion during their national mandates.

Provisional Programme

Welcome

Mr. Yavor Gochev, Youth Delegate of Bulgaria

Mr. Dilian Manolov, Youth Delegate of Bulgaria

Introduction

Ms. Marissa Storozum, Programme on Youth Unit, Division for Inclusive Social Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Introduction to the Youth Delegate Programme

Ms. Inga Christina Müller, Youth Participation Assistant, World Federation of United Nations Associations

Working Towards Inclusion and Showcasing National Examples of Youth Delegates

Discussants:

- **Mr. Mark Kamperhoff**, Head of EU and International Affairs Division at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany
- **Mr. Fernando de la Mora**, Delegate, Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations
- **Ms. Barbora Antonovičová**, Youth Delegate of the Czech Republic

Co-moderators:

- **Ms. Isabelle Tibi**, Global Citizenship Education Consultant, World Federation of United Nations Associations
- **Marissa Storozum**, Programme on Youth Unit, Division for Inclusive Social Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Q & A