

8th UNESCO Youth Forum (29-31 October 2013, UNESCO, Paris)

Outline

The UNESCO Youth Forum is an integral part of UNESCO's General Conference. It was initiated in 1999 to create synergies between UNESCO's work on youth, youth organizations and public institutions working on youth. More than an event, the Forum is a process that enables young women and men to submit strategic recommendations to representatives of 195 Member States and to engage in their implementation.

The preparation of the 8th UNESCO Youth Forum builds on i) the results of the assessment of the 7th UNESCO Youth Forum¹; ii) the results of two online consultations involving 2,500 young women and men (February and April 2013); and iii) the exchanges with all UNESCO programme sectors.

The 8th UNESCO Youth Forum presents two main innovative features:

- In addition to strategic recommendations, the Forum will identify a series of action projects to be implemented *by* and *for* young people and relating to the Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021.² Following a call for proposals launched in July 2013, an independent jury composed principally of youth and of representatives of youth organizations will shortlist 45 action projects (in September 2013), which will then be submitted to the Forum. During the Forum, the youth participants will select 15 action projects (three by region), which will receive the label "8th UNESCO Youth Forum". The label will be a guarantee of quality and excellence of the projects, which will have to be in line with UNESCO's priorities. It will provide their initiators with opportunities to mobilize funds, partnerships and international visibility and will also be a recognition of grass-roots action and engagement by young women and men across the world. While UNESCO will not fund the projects, opportunities to exchange with UNESCO's Secretariat and partners present at the Forum will be provided to support the young project initiators in fund-raising efforts. Thus, a "marketplace" will be organized during the Forum, where different partners will be invited to express their interest in the selected action projects.
- Another innovation consists in providing the youth participants with multiple and varied tools to reinforce their capacities, thus allowing them to be more operational upon their return to their countries. During the Forum more time will therefore be dedicated to coaching and mentoring sessions by diversifying approaches and modalities, in particular on developing and setting up projects. Thus, face-to-face exchanges will be proposed to the youth participants by UNESCO staff, private sector partners and civil society actors, as well as by UN agencies.

Theme

On the basis of the first online consultation with the contribution of 1,895 young women and men, the theme of the 8th UNESCO Youth Forum is "**Youth and Social Inclusion: Civic Engagement, Dialogue and Skills Development**". This global theme will be articulated around the three axes of the Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021, namely: i) Policy formulation and review with the participation of youth; ii) Capacity development for the transition to adulthood; and iii) Civic engagement, democratic participation and social innovation.

¹ Available on the UNESCO youth website at <http://bit.ly/Z2KWOr>

² Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002202/220254e.pdf> (pp.31-39)

Participants

- Youth delegates
National authorities have the responsibility for the nomination of the youth delegates to the Forum. Upon receipt of the invitation letter by the UNESCO Director-General, each National Commission will nominate one youth delegate, to be selected through a participatory and transparent process. Specific selection criteria are annexed to the letter of the Director-General to guide Member States in their choice. The participation of young women is highly recommended. UNESCO strongly encourages Member States to enhance the participation of disadvantaged and vulnerable youth as well as of youth with disabilities. Following the nomination, National Commissions should facilitate consultations between the designated youth delegate and the most representative youth associations in their respective countries.
- Observers
Representatives of national governments, NGOs maintaining official relations with UNESCO, United Nations agencies and major IGOs, youth-related NGOs, youth diaspora associations in France, UNESCO Chairs, clubs, category 1 and 2 institutes and centres, as well as the private sector and media partners, will be invited to participate in the Forum as observers. The observers are expected to bear their participation expenses (travel and subsistence expenses). In this framework, gender balance should be ensured by all.
- Volunteers
UNESCO will associate motivated young women and men to contribute to the work of the Secretariat, on a voluntary basis, before and during the Youth Forum.

Format

The 8th Forum will last three days (instead of four). It is conceived in a way to have less plenaries and more time dedicated to break-out sessions, namely:

- Working group sessions will be organized around the three axes of the UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021 to debate and finalize the strategic recommendations of the Forum. Focus groups led by young social scientists will also be invited to analyse the Strategy and the modalities of its implementation by region and/or axis.
- Regional working group sessions will be dedicated to the selection of the 15 action projects mentioned previously that will receive the label of the “8th UNESCO Youth Forum”.
- Capacity-building workshops will aim at reinforcing the capacities of the young participants of the Forum. In addition, one-to-one coaching and/or mentoring opportunities will be provided by the relevant actors.
- Parallel side events will also be organized, such as “15 minutes of fame”, a space intended for the young leaders to present their struggles, paths and innovative initiatives in order to inspire the young participants in their trajectories. An exhibition of young innovators (including photos, videos, etc.) will complete this space dedicated to the success of the young leaders.

Media, online tools and visibility

The Forum will use the social media to allow youth to voice their ideas, and also to create and provide content relating to its theme and topics. UNESCO will also mobilize social networks and partners from the media sector to increase visibility and spread the different messages of the Forum. Videos, press releases and media advisories will be the key components of communication strategy around the Forum.

Resource mobilization

Given the current financial constraints of the Organization, efforts will be made to mobilize extra-budgetary funds, including in-kind contributions, from a variety of concerned stakeholders, from the public to the private sector. UNESCO Member States will be encouraged to sponsor the participation of one or more delegates from one or more developing countries, particularly from LDCs and SIDS, to ensure the Forum's plurality and universal character.

Follow-up

The outcomes of the 8th UNESCO Youth Forum, which will be composed of strategic recommendations and action projects carrying the "8th UNESCO Youth Forum" label, will be presented to the 37th session of the UNESCO General Conference (November 2013). Leading up to the next Youth Forum, the Organization will identify, in consultation with the young participants, a follow-up strategy to be implemented in cooperation with the National Commissions, the youth delegates and key partners.