

Background note

The UNESCO Youth Forum is an integral part of the General Conference (32 C/Resolution 82). It was initiated in 1999 to create synergies between the Organization's work on youth, youth organizations and public institutions in this field.

The preparation of the 9th UNESCO Youth Forum builds on the results of i) the evaluation of the Forum's 8th edition¹; ii) online consultations involving young women and men on the Forum's thematic focus²; and iii) exchanges with all UNESCO Programme Sectors at Headquarters and in the Field, as well as with international partners working in the field of youth.

Thematic agenda

The 9th UNESCO Youth Forum will take place only a few weeks after the UN General Assembly will have debated and adopted the new Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs (September 2015) and one month before the 21st Conference of Parties (COP 21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC (30 November – 11 December 2015). This unique moment provides a strategic opportunity for UNESCO to offer a visible platform through which young women and men can voice their opinions that could also feed into the discussion around UNESCO's future role, in the context of the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Organization.

The Forum will take place under the general theme “**Young Global Citizens for a Sustainable Planet**”, focusing on how young women and men, as global citizens, can contribute to building sustainability, from the global to the local level. This theme, in line with the Operational Strategy on Youth for 2014-2021³, will allow a discussion of sustainable development challenges and their integration into UNESCO's next Programme and Budget (2018-2021), while also maintaining a focus on climate change and the related global debates around COP 21. Online youth consultations were held between March and April 2015 to ensure that youth participate in shaping the Forum's sub-themes within UNESCO's mandate and around two main thematic areas: 1) Young global citizens in a post-2015 world; and 2) Young global citizens addressing climate change. Education and skills for sustainable development and employability, diversity and culture of peace, and rights and freedoms were selected as the top sub-themes relevant to the post-2015. In the area of climate, the priorities of youth are awareness-raising through media, mobilizing traditional knowledge and local environmental management practice, and youth solutions to address climate change.

Participants

Each National Commission are invited to identify at least one young woman or man, selected through a participatory and transparent process, according to specific criteria set by the Secretariat. Following the experience of the 8th Youth Forum, dynamic young people will be selected on the basis of gender equality and social inclusion. As such, the involvement of young women, but also vulnerable, disadvantaged and disabled youth is encouraged. After nomination, National Commissions should facilitate consultations between the designated youth participant and representative youth associations in their countries. Associated costs (travel, daily subsistence allowance, etc.) will be borne by their Member States. As in the past, the Secretariat will seek to mobilize extra-budgetary and bilateral support to fund the participation of youth from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island developing States (SIDS).

¹ Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002291/229162e.pdf>

² Report available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232767E.pdf>.

³ Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002271/227150E.pdf>

In parallel, youth-related partners and civil society entities will be invited to nominate an institutional representative, as well as youth participants along the same criteria. Associated costs will be borne by the nominating entities.

Finally, following an online open call, the Secretariat will select an additional cohort of youth participants based on the specific set criteria, who will need to cover their participation expenses.

UNESCO will also involve motivated young women and men to contribute as volunteers to the work of the Secretariat, before and during the Youth Forum.

Outputs

The Forum's outputs will be composed of strategic recommendations and action projects with the Label of the 9th UNESCO Youth Forum, and will be presented at the 38th session of the General Conference.

- i) Strategic recommendations: They will align with the UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021) and include youth opinions on the future of UNESCO on the occasion of the Organization's 70th anniversary. Special emphasis will be put on recommendations youth would like to see the Director-General put forward to the COP 21. The recommendations will result from youth-led online discussions initiated prior to the Forum and finalized during the event.
- ii) Youth-led action projects with the Forum's Label: The 9th Forum will identify a series of action projects in the framework of the Forum's theme, to be implemented by and for young people. The Label, recognition of grass-roots action and engagement by young women and men across the world, will provide their initiators with opportunities to mobilize funds, partnerships and international visibility. The Secretariat will seek to identify extra-budgetary resources and direct contributions by partners to support the selected action projects (through capacity building, technical backstopping, etc.).

Leading up to the 10th edition of the Forum, UNESCO will identify, in consultation with the young participants, a follow-up strategy to be implemented in cooperation with National Commissions, the youth delegates and key partners.

Format

The 3-day Forum will be designed to provide young women and men sufficient time to interact, seeking a balance between discussions on outputs, thematic debates, networking opportunities, capacity building and cultural events. Based on the evaluation of the 8th edition, the number of parallel sessions will be reduced to ensure that participants do not miss out on activities. Following previous success, a "marketplace" will be organized where one-to-one coaching and mentoring opportunities will be provided by relevant youth stakeholders. In addition, spaces will be organized for young leaders to present their innovative initiatives and good practices.

Media and online tools will be leveraged at the different stages of the Forum to allow broader outreach and engagement by youth across the world.

Resource mobilization

Given the 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 and private sector. Contributions, expressions of interest and engagements to support the Forum have already been made by some Member States and private sector partners. Member States are encouraged to sponsor the participation of one or more young women and men from one or more LDCs and/or SIDS, to ensure the Forum's plurality and universal character.