



ESDN **REPORT**

ESDN YOUTH 2022

Workshop Report

ESDN Office



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ESDN YOUTH WORKSHOP, 2-3 SEPTEMBER 2022

DAY 1

21 Youth Delegates from 13 different European countries attended the physical ESDN Youth Workshop in Berlin on 2-3 September 2022 (25 from 15 countries had registered). The ESDN sponsored participants' sustainable travel and their stay at a youth hostel with high sustainability standards in Berlin and it provided regional and sustainable catering and dinner. The workshop was moderated by **Tanja Busse**, who is also an SD journalist and had moderated the previous youth workshops.

 **European Sustainable Development Network**
@ESDN_network

After two years of online meetings, we are happy to welcome UN youth delegates at the #ESDN Youth Workshop in Berlin, hosted by the German Ministry of the Environment @BMUV!



12:03 PM · Sep 3, 2022

Tanja Busse welcomed the participants. She emphasised that this was the first

offline ESDN Youth workshop, since the project started in pandemic times.

Katrin Kowalczyk from the BMUV thanked the participants for making it to Berlin, especially for travelling as sustainably as possible. She acknowledged that this was not always the easy way to travel.

Daniel Dubas, Swiss Federal Department for Spatial Planning and President of the ESDN

Daniel Dubas welcomed all participants virtually and presented the ESDN. He specifically highlighted its activities in networking, being a platform for knowledge and advocacy. In general, he said, sustainable development is about long-term processes, but we also need action now.

 **European Sustainable Development Network** ... @ESDN_ne... · Sep 3, 2022 ...
Welcoming words from the ESDN President @DanielDubas to the UN Youth Delegates: "You are the future!"



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Daniel gave an outlook over the events in the ESDN for the rest of the year, specifically the conference and the workshop. One important feature of the ESDN is the fact that members can talk openly and freely to each other, since they do not have to abide by the official government line and represent their countries. It is important that everyone can also be open about the challenges they face. The ESDN is looking for new ideas, and this is why the input from the youth is so important and welcome. Daniel emphasised that the members of the ESDN want to learn from the youth. The ESDN does not just want to include young people because it is fashionable nowadays, but also because the ESDN thinks it can learn from the young people.

Discussion with State Secretary for Consumer Protection Dr. Christiane Rohleder

State Secretary **Dr. Christiane Rohleder** started by giving a short speech. She explained that as a politician she is always very busy, but it is important to her to make space for discussion with Youth, as Youth participation is also important for her personally. She acknowledged that the young

generation is most affected by the decisions that her generation makes. That is why the ministry tries to engage more with young people. After her short introduction, she answered questions and discussed with the participants about the necessary speed of the transformation, the role of activist movements, social justice in the transition and the effects of the war in Ukraine. This conversation happened under the umbrella of confidentiality.



European Sustainable Development Network
@ESDN_network

A big thank you to Dr. Christiane Rohleder, State Secretary at the @BMUV, for a very open and honest discussion with the UN Youth Delegates.

12:07 PM · Sep 3, 2022

Getting to know each other

Led by moderator Tanja Busse, the participants engaged in several exercises to learn more about each other and to break the ice. For example an imaginary map of Europe was created on the floor, where everybody stood in their hometown, and they lined up according to the distance travelled to Berlin, the time spent to get to Berlin, or the years of engagement in SD.

DISCUSSION ON THE YOUTH NETWORK

Ursula Kopp, Constanze Fetting (who left the WU after the Youth WS) and **Mariia Kostetckaia** (who started to work for this project summer 2022) from the ESDN Youth office at WU Vienna, presented the ESDN's ideas for the ESDN Youth Network. The details can be found in Fetting, Constanze; Kopp, Ursula (2021). "ESDN Youth Network - Concept". The main message was that the network is supposed to be a tool and a support for Youth Delegates and therefore activities need to be helpful for and of interest to the youth. Afterwards, the participants were invited to provide their feedback.

Regarding webinars, they said that they were tired of online events, so the proposed webinars should really be about newest developments and the most interesting topics, making the attendance worthwhile. For example, in summer 2022 it would have been helpful to have an overview over the situation with forest fires in Europe and the measures taken in different countries and at the European level to prevent them. It could also be interesting to have webinars right before big conferences, to learn how to best advocate to policymakers and how to connect with other networks. The participants said

they did not need webinars on general topics.

Participants liked the idea of mentoring. Some suggested that it could even be helpful to have alumni as mentors. Others said it would be good to have both, policymakers and senior/former Youth Delegates, depending on individual needs.

The participant mentioned that the European Youth Forum is taking up activities involving Youth Delegates again, as they did before the pandemic.



Therefore, it is important to make sure there are no double efforts.

WORKING GROUPS

During the kick-off webinar in June, participants had mentioned many topics that they are passionate about and that they would like to work on. Before the workshop, the ESDN Youth office clustered these topics into three groups. Ursula Kopp presented the three topics and how they would relate to the ESDN events during the remainder of the year 2022.

Cluster A: Climate Justice, biodiversity, energy transition, and ecological economics: These topics were closely related to the topic of the 2022 ESDN Annual Conference that would be happening on October 4 and 5 in Bucharest. The topic of the conference is: "Europe's Position as a Leading Change Agent against the Triple Planetary Crisis – Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss & Pollution". The Youth Delegates would have the chance to present their ideas and participate in a panel discussion. There was budget for several Youth Delegates to travel to Bucharest in October 2022.

Cluster B: Youth involvement, education and digitalisation: Youth Delegates working on this topic were invited to further develop the ideas for an ESDN Youth Network. They would be invited to

a working lunch with the ESDN Executive Committee after the Conference in Bucharest.

 **European Sustainable Development ...** @ESDN_ne... · Sep 3, 2022 ...
UN Youth Delegates working on the topic of youth involvement, digitalisation and education and enjoying sunny weather in Berlin.



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Cluster C: Human rights, forced migration and climate justice: The online ESDN Workshop on November 23, hosted by Luxembourg, would revolve around the topic of human rights and the SDGs. Youth Delegates would be given a presenter's slot as well as the opportunity to participate in a panel discussion at the workshop.

For the remainder of the evening, the Youth Delegates got to know each other in their groups and started discussing the focus of the work they wanted to do the next day. The evening concluded with socialising at the ministry, including catering and drinks.

ESDN YOUTH WORKSHOP, 2–3 SEPTEMBER 2022

DAY 2

Expert Inputs & Discussion

Day 2 started with impulse input and discussion by experts on the three topics of the working groups.

- **Alexandra Goossens-Ishii, Programme Coordinator, Environment & Climate Change at Soka Gakkai International** was invited for the topic of human rights and forced migration.
- **Liam Bremer, Secretary General of the Luxembourgish Youth Council** spoke on the topic of Youth Involvement.
- Unfortunately, the scheduled speaker on climate justice, energy transition and biodiversity, **Ioana Dospinescu, Department for Sustainable Development, Romanian Prime Minister's Office** had to cancel on very short notice due to illness and no replacement could be found in time.

Alexandra Goossens-Ishii outlined three important developments in **human rights**:

1. Displacement in the context of climate change would be a big topic in the coming years. Those in the field were currently assessing the issue from a legal perspective, examining where we stand and looking into some practices. There is a new special rapporteur at the UN for human rights in the context of climate change. The priority areas for the next three years are loss and damage, finance and just transition, and displacement.
2. How do humanitarian, human rights law and migration law interact? Systemic approach. State sovereignty becomes relative when it comes to migration. Duty and responsibility of states vs human rights law.
3. Securitization of migration against human rights framework. Push backs from states against migration, human rights violations at the state borders.

The Global Compact on Migration and the negotiations around it show the tension between sending and receiving states. There is a lot of discourse around securitization and a narrative that you can choose to protect people or not. Alexandra said that there is potential in human rights law to change that, but a lot of work still needs to be done. The Council of Europe recommends to work with parliamentarians on this. According to Alexandra, the narrative is key to protect more people, so it is important to work with media, civil society and NGOs.

One participant asked if human rights are a sustainable instrument in countries where far right parties are in power. Alexandra answered that the key here is taxation and generally working on mechanisms for just transition and making sure that people do not feel left out. This will make the far right narrative seem less fitting.

Liam Bremer started his contribution by stating that currently there are frustrations of big parts of society with other big parts of society. Today's youth involvement and participation efforts are the result of a long time of advocacy, so we should first work within the system that has already been established.

According to Liam, there is a strong link between financial capacities of certain mechanisms and organisations and their impact. Often UNYD programmes do not exist because national Youth Councils do not have the necessary funding. Cooperation on the international level is difficult and Liam advocates for more coordination and exchange of best practices.

As an economist, Liam looks at youth involvement through an input-output model. On the input side of youth participation there needs to be legitimacy, diversity (especially including people from rural areas), and people speaking different languages. There are many local organisations and it is important to connect those to national bodies.

While the amount of programmes for youth involvement has increased, they do not often have an impact and their results are not being used. There has to be a clear leverage, for example by National Youth Councils or from the side of national governments. This can be achieved through international cooperation, for example the European Youth Forum has lobbied for this.

Liam argued that youth should be more included on the EU-level. There have to be more young people because they represent a great share of the European population.

Answering the question on how to reach more people, and especially more people that are usually hard to reach (for example, socio- and economically disadvantaged people), **Liam** stated that schools are the best way to reach certain populations. This also needs to happen in places other than the national capital.

In order to address the hopelessness of Youth, it is important that programmes have visible results. Participation in certain youth programmes can be crushing because you know that there will not be any results. When designing participation programmes it is important to ensure that results are being valued.

Alexandra added that when we develop participation mechanisms, we have to keep in mind what the result of the participation should be. In addition, with regards to developments in the world, we should not focus on stopping what is going wrong, but rather spin the

narrative in a way that we focus on the opportunities. Youth has shown new perspectives to human rights movements, for example the emphasis of giving a voice to the most affected people and areas (MAPA). She finds it inspiring to see how young people implement what is often advocated for.

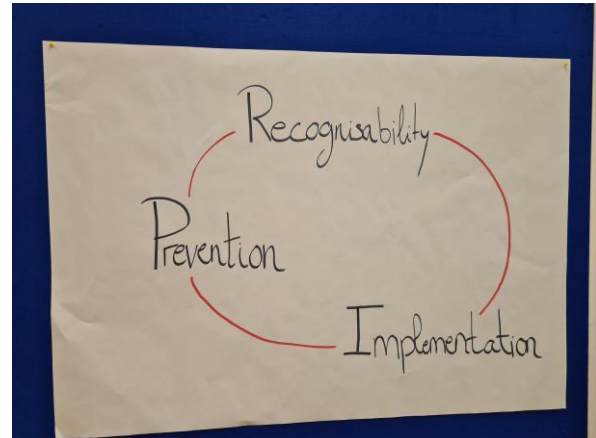
Pavel (UNYD Czechia) added that in addition of going into schools, non-formal education can also be a powerful tool to reach many people. He also talked about expectation management, where it is often not appreciated when young people go the extra mile.

Krystof (UNYD Czechia) argued that we also need to appreciate the democratic structures that exist. There is a lot of focus on informal involvement of youth. However, maybe Youth should become more involved in 'real' politics, because there is also an underrepresentation there. As Youth Delegates, there is no mandate by other Youth, as they are often chosen by ministries or their National Youth Councils. Actual change comes from being involved in the democratic political system.

Lara (UNYD Luxembourg) spoke about her experience of parties misusing youth

involvement and, for example, the Youth Parliament to recruit young people into their parties. This should not be misused.

Max (Switzerland) argued that some questions should be unpolitical, for example the climate crisis. As politics is always a competition, maybe we should be more united



Working Phase



The discussions were followed by a five hour working phase in the three groups and by the preparation of presentations (with 45 minutes lunch break). In the late afternoon, the three groups presented their outcomes to one another and gave each other feedback.

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Group A: Climate Justice, Energy Transition, Biodiversity

The key messages of the group were:

- Urgency of adhering to Paris Agreement goals in the short term
- Science-based policy and decision-making
- Change of the current economic system
- Supporting nature-based solutions
- Stressing the importance and implementation of the environmental rule of law

Regarding **climate justice**, the participants highlighted the importance of supporting people that cannot afford the transition, while making sure that rich people follow the rules (e.g. abandoning private jets). The first targets, however, should be the big polluters (i.e. the 100 companies being responsible for 70% of GHG emissions).

On **biodiversity**, the participants presented the following points:

- expand and increase urban green spaces (2/3 of the world population is expected to live in

cities in 2050, 70% of the GHG emissions come from cities)

- reduce temperature
- socio-environmental benefits
- CO₂ reduction
- dirt and dust removal
- biodiversity (birds and insects)
- support a sustainable, ethical and plant-based agriculture
- expand hedges in the countryside (increase the number of hedges by 100% each year)
- reduce animal protein foods production, e.g. by supporting farmers in the transition to plant-based agriculture (decreasing the subsidies to animal based foods production by 75% in two years' time)
- reduce pollution (e.g. ban single-use plastics)



On the topic of the **energy transition**, the participants highlighted the importance of saving energy. That should be the first effort, as the best energy is the energy

that has not been produced. For that, it is also important to educate people. In addition, measures could include:

- Increase the efficiency of buildings and machines, by supporting poor households
- Cut the unnecessary energy expenses (e.g. advertisement screens or lights during the night)
- Fair transition
- Helping individuals to access renewable energy sources on individual level, to isolate their houses, etc. (State or regional support)
- Considering problem on individual countries level according to GDP and financial capabilities of societies
- Switch to renewable energies (in 18 months, 100% of fossil fuels subsidies redirected to renewable sources of energy)

The participants concluded their presentation by saying that youth should be visionary and radical. This is why they are presenting ideas that seem unimaginable for people, but are very necessary in the long run.

Group B: Human Rights, Forced Migration, Climate Justice

The group focused their work on the topic of climate migration.

They presented three main areas where work needs to be done with regards to climate migration. Firstly, there needs to be prevention of involuntary migration due to climate change. This includes giving resources, money and expertise for adaptation, for example building dams or houses that are resistant to storms or floods.



Secondly, climate refugees need to be legally recognised as refugees and climate change needs to be recognised as a legitimate cause to seek asylum in another country.

Thirdly, implementing this recognition would also include changing the narrative around climate refugees. Rich countries need to take responsibility and accept their accountability for their polluting actions. They need to pay for the resulting damages and take in refugees.

The newly recognised human right to a safe and clean environment can be helpful for the definition of what constitutes an environmental or climate refugee.

There should be an emphasis on prevention and education of people in affected areas in order to prevent involuntary migration. The most important aspect here is giving people resources.

The issue of climate migration needs to be included in any kind of discussion about climate change, especially on the international level. It is not yet talked about enough and people do not realise that this will be a big issue in the future.

Fabian (Germany) mentioned that there is a campaign by World Youth for Climate Justice which is campaigning on the advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice.

Krystof (Czechia) asked if it is necessary or helpful to add another category of refugees, if human rights are so fragile already anyway. Will this not undermine the strength of human rights and make them more vulnerable to attacks from the far right? The group answered that this group of people exists and will grow, so it is important to recognise them and give them legal status.

Group C: Youth Involvement

This is the proposal for a Youth Committee in the ESDN as outlined by the group:

"Youth Committee is a new body within the structures of ESDN responsible for representing young people from Europe working on the implementation of SDGs. Youth Committee members will be present in various bodies of ESDN's structure."



Request for ESDN Youth Committee representatives, including:

- 1 permanent Youth Representative at the Executive Committee with voting right
- 2 permanent Youth Representative at the General Assembly with voting right
 - Establishing the position of youth observers – young people attending GA with their representative without the right to vote
 - The observer seats can be linked to the mentoring program of the ESDN on national level
- 3 Youth Representatives in the advisory Board with voting right

Youth Committee functioning

- The Youth Committee gathers in a yearly Meeting
 - To vote for youth representatives in Executive Committee, the General Assembly, Advisory Board
 - Create policy proposals
 - Network with policy makers within ESDN

- Various European countries are to be represented
- Members are the UNYDs and representatives of countries without UNYD Programme

Youth Committee prerogatives

- Annual meetings with Executive Committee
- Establishing new connections with policymakers
- Communicating with youth in home countries

In the following discussion, Ursula said that it was not likely to gain a spot at the following Executive Committee because this would be too fast. First, the Executive Committee needs to get to know the Youth Delegates better. This will be a process that happens slowly, starting with the working lunch with the Executive Committee during the ESDN Conference in Stockholm.

Some participants were a bit disappointed that the network does not yet exist and that they cannot get into the Committee right away. Katrin mentioned that the organizing side were always transparent and honest with them and only presented the concept to

them in June. The ESDN Youth office will present the suggestions to the ESDN Executive Committee and inform the Youth Delegates about their reaction.

Workshop closing

The workshop concluded with a tour of a remaining part of the Berlin wall that can be found inside the building of the BMUV. Afterwards, all participants were invited to a goodbye dinner.

Evaluation

ESDN Youth office asked the workshop participants to evaluate the workshop and to give their feedback on it. Five people answered the anonymous evaluation survey.

The participants rated an overall quality of the youth workshop at 9.2 out of 10, where 1 stood for “very bad” and 10 for “excellent”. This means that, overall, **the participants were very satisfied with their experience at the Youth Workshop in Berlin.**

The participants especially mentioned the following things that they liked about the workshop:

- Overall good organisation of the workshop and its structure that allowed for theoretical inputs and group work
- An opportunity to talk freely with policymakers
- An atmosphere of a general freedom of speech
- An opportunity to stay together in a hostel
- Vegan food and catering

When asked for possible areas of improvement, the participants mentioned the following things:

- Having a longer workshop
- Having clearer instructions for group work

The feedback will be taken into account for the preparation to the youth workshop in 2023.

