

**Policy Paper**  
On the Independence of National Youth Councils

Adopted by the Council of Members  
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## On the Independence of National Youth Councils

### Source

*The European Youth Forum is the European Platform of more than 90 National Youth Councils (NYCs) and International Non-governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs) in Europe. It aims to empower young people to participate actively in the shaping of Europe and of the society in which they live. Working for the interests of all young people in Europe, we are the representative body of our members towards the institutions and partners in the youth field.*

### Preamble

The European Youth Forum welcomes a positive development by governments in Europe, which is a general will to increase youth participation and consultation in government decision making regarding issues affecting young people.

Non-governmental youth organisations play an important role in promoting the interests of young people. As democratic and representative structures, youth organisations play an important role in a democratic society. The importance of promoting the development of youth NGOs as part of a process of consolidating and further developing democracy has been recognised by Council of Europe and the European Union as well as many governments in Europe, which have a close consultation with non-governmental youth organisations with regard to youth issues.

Supporting the development of non-governmental youth organisations, and including youth NGOs in government decision making, has become a part of the Acquis Communautaire of the European Union<sup>1</sup>.

### Policy

- The European Youth Forum believes that National Youth Councils (and similar representative structures) must be non-governmental and independent in accordance with the principles of open and democratic society.
- This is stated in the Statutes of the European Youth Forum, adopted by the General Assembly of the European Youth Forum, October 21, 2000.
- The independence of a National Youth Council is a requirement for membership of the European Youth Forum. Fulfilment of this criterion in existing members is subject to regular reassessment.

### Definition

The European Youth Forum believes that the independence of National Youth Councils, and similar representative structures, is embodied in the following rights and privileges:

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe and the European Union have repeatedly endorsed the principle of youth participation. Indeed, the Council and the Ministers of Youth meeting within the Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1999, adopted a resolution "On Youth Participation" which reiterated the importance of youth participation at all levels.

- the right to choose their own representative organisational structure, hereunder the right to decide upon its own statutes
- the right to elect its own leadership and representatives through democratic procedures,
- the right to determine composition of statutory bodies and working structures,
- the right to take decisions on issues of membership,
- the right to select its working methods, including the right to have closed meetings for its members only, to set its own agenda, determine frequency and dates of meetings, etc.
- the privilege of accountability only to its own members
- the privilege of financial support from government given freely without infringing upon the rights mentioned above

### **Policy implications**

The European Youth Forum requests that all governments in Europe respect the independence of National Youth Councils and similar representative structures in accordance with the definition above. The governments should furthermore consult the respective NYC in the case of a transition of the/a law concerning youth work in order to ensure the continued independence.

The European Youth Forum warmly welcomes co-operation between government and National Youth Councils, believing it to be essential to development and implementation of effective youth policy. However, if a National Youth Council is not fully independent in accordance with the criteria given above, this co-operation is considered to lack democratic validity and therefore risk misrepresentation of youth views and interests.

### **Other consultation processes**

The above position does not mean that the European Youth Forum does not acknowledge the importance of other joint consultation processes between youth organisations and governmental representatives. The Youth Forum encourages the inclusion of young persons and youth NGO representatives in government committees or other consultative bodies, and the active consultation with such structures on matters concerning the further development of youth policy.

However, this should not compromise the privileged role that should be given to representative, democratic and independent National Youth Councils. They are the largest and most legitimate structures representing the views of young people.