



Carolin Grieshop

"Investing out of the crisis: towards a partnership between UNESCO and youth organisations"

Two years have passed since the last UNESCO Youth Forum took place. Paris hosted from 1st to 3rd October 2009 127 youth delegates and additionally 77 persons from 45 organizations. The Youth Forum gave its youth participants the crucial opportunity to exchange views, share experiences, and identify common opportunities for future commitment and actions.

The main theme of the 6th Youth Forum was: "Investing out of the crisis: towards a partnership between UNESCO and youth organizations" and a cross-cutting theme on: "Youth participation - UNESCO Youth Forum, a long term approach" The two themes of the plenary sessions reflect UNESCO's commitment to further strengthen partnerships, common goals and its work with youth organizations and networks. Youth delegates were nominated by UNESCO Member States as members of their official delegations. International Organisations, NGOs, UNESCO chairs and foundations were invited as observer. Carolin Grieshop, Secretary General of MIJARC, represented MIJARC at the UNESCO Youth Forum.

"We always want to move forward, and improve what we have done the last time" said Golda El-Khoury, Chief of UNESCO's Section for Youth, Sport and Physical Education, before the Forum. She urges the delegates to benefit from the chance it offers and to "take responsibilities in your hands and act upon them". El-Khoury also stresses that UNESCO is looking to strengthen its ties with the younger generation and solve problems that it faces, especially those that fall within UNESCO's fields of competence (education, science, culture, and communication).

The **UNESCO Youth Forum** is a biennial event that began 1999 as a very important tool in bridging the inevitable gap between young people and a complex international organisation with its many partners and networks. The Youth Forum brings together young delegates from all over the world to exchange views, share experiences and identify common opportunities and challenges.

The UNESCO General conference voted in 2003 to make the Forum a permanent feature, with a final report to be presented at the plenary session that would allow "young delegates" views, concerns and recommendations to be taken into account by the representatives of the member states and the UNESCO Secretariat.

The first Forum took place in November 1999, with 120 participants from member states, along with observers from youth NGOs. It marked a decisive step in the organisation action to involve young people as delegates in the conceptualisation and implementation of UNESCO's future orientation and programme and to integrate youth perspective into this end'.

The number of participants rose to 131 in the second forum and looked at the opportunities and negative effects of globalisation. The title of the 3rd forum 'UNESCO and Young people: a mutual engagement' was accompanied by a forum website 'conceived both as a search tool and an interactive forum of exchange and discussion'.

In 2003, it was unanimously decided (32C/ Resolution 82) by the 30th UNESCO General Conference that the Youth would become an integral part of every session of the UNESCO General Conference, the highest decision-making body of the Organisation.

The 4th forum in 2005 gathered 189 delegates and 48 observers and resulted in recommendations such as strengthening the dialogue, engaging with global youth community and NGOs, and involving youth focal points in the preparatory process.

The last forum in 2007 brought together 261 participants. It offered an opportunity to evaluate a series of regional forums that were held in 2006 and 2007 and contribute to the two Ministerial roundtables that took place during the General Conference.

Strange selection of youth delegates

To discuss how to invest out of the crisis, UNESCO called in summer 2009 for participation, National Governments of UNESCO were asked to send young delegates. Besides criteria of age, gender parity

and a membership in a youth organisation and involvement in youth related issues at the community level the criteria how the delegates were chosen are not clear. "It is nice to be here and to meet so much people from different cultures, but for me it is not clear, why I am here. Parts of discussion I cannot follow or I don't know how to involve myself. I also do not know, how I can do the follow-up in my country" said one delegate, whose name should not be mentioned.

Observer without influence

In plenary sessions as well as in parallel session, participants worked on different issues: Social Science, Online Social Networking, role of culture in promoting youth-centered sustainable development, Science for green-economy, future without violent radicalisation, education. Giving inputs at the sessions of the above mentioned themes was denied for observers.

Thus observers were invited to meet among them in an observer session to discuss the way forward of the UNESCO Youth Forum. Recommendations of observer's session contained among others a transparent and open recruitment process at the national level to increase the representativeness of youth delegates. But and as a consequence the observers had no chance to influence the final report, since the final report was adopted before the presentation of the results of the observer session.

Recommendations to UNESCO General Conference: Follow-up and monitoring process

The Forum resulted in a final report containing key recommendations made by youth delegates which was presented at the 35th General Conference. Different demands of the final report of the Youth Forum contained elements to strengthening the ties between UNESCO and the youth as well of proposal to improve educational systems. Since former youth forums also made a final reports and its follow-up processes is unknown, is the most important outcome of this meeting the request of the youth delegates to establish an evaluation mechanism of the concrete actions and support of the National Commission in implementing the recommendations of the Forum and the request for feedback of the UNESCO General Conference on the Final report.

The way forward

The next UNESCO Youth Forum will be held in 2011 in Paris. The youth delegates have been motivated to take up actions in order to improve youth participation in their countries. In two years, we will see what results can be proven.

Choice of recommendations of the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum

"In order to reach the Education For ALL (EFA) objectives, public responsibility and investment is an absolute necessity in all countries. In addition we strongly demand that donor countries follow up commitments of development aid to education at a level which will ensure the achievement of EFA objectives by 2015."

"To improve the link between education and the changing labour market, education must be accompanied by a process of early participation in the labour market. One mechanism for achieving this is two-way intergenerational partnerships, such as mentorships and internships, which enable youth to gain access to the market and to acquire relevant skills at an early stage. In parallel, technical and vocational education and training needs to become a formalized part of the education system and become a viable alternative to university studies."

"We encourage member states [of UNESCO] to cooperate closely with youth organisations and their partners, to establish or to develop existing representative and inclusive youth council at national level to enhance communication between us and our governments".

"Member states should invest in non-formal education in order to reach all youth, particularly those who are not in school, and also hold for a and events related to cultural diversity, in order to multiply the opportunities for young people to participate in their communities"

"We request the establishment of an evaluation mechanism of the concrete actions and support of the National Commissions in implementing the recommendations of the Forum"

"We request the feedback of the UNESCO General Conference on the Final report"