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the Permanent Mission of Romania  
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With the support of the Secretary  
General's Envoy on Youth

## YouthUP democracy through participatory policy-making

Concept note – Side Event at the UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law  
*Version: 15 November 2016*

21 November 2016 (13:00 – 14:30)  
Room XIX, Palais des Nations, Geneva

### Background

With decreasing participation rates in elections at all levels, decreasing membership in political parties in most established democracies, and less than 2% of parliamentarians globally under the age of 30, young people are increasingly marginalised in traditional political processes, and do not feel represented in political institutions; they therefore do not have access to the right to participation. This lack of participation in formal decision-making creates an ever-growing gap between young people and political systems, and consequently, little priority is given to young people and policies targeting them, as well as the obstacles they face in accessing their human rights.

Youth must be involved in all decision-making processes that impact their lives, striving towards a rights-based approach and creating ownership of political decisions. Equal opportunity to participate in public deliberation, policy- and decision-making improves institutions' understanding of young people, the legitimacy of political decisions and addresses problems created by the vote-centered democratic process. Participatory policy-making mechanisms must therefore be created to work in parallel to existing systems of representative democracy. They must be improved, promoted and extended where they do exist, or introduced where they do not.

Young people's passion to fight for the future is demonstrated outside of the formal political system: they volunteer, vote in single issue votes such as the Scottish Independence referendum, join social movements, and protest. Drawing on research, the European Youth Forum's "YouthUP" campaign ([www.youthup.eu](http://www.youthup.eu)) promotes ideas to fix democracy so that it truly includes young people.<sup>1</sup>

### Objectives

The side event will bring together young people and decision-makers in order to discuss ideas, challenges, best practices and recommendations on improving young people's participation in decision-making through participatory policy-making mechanisms. It will provide food for thought ahead of the second panel session of the Forum on the first day: 'From formal to transformative participation of youth'.

### 13:00 – 13:15 Welcome and opening remarks

- Johanna Nyman, President, European Youth Forum (moderator)
- H.E. Ambassador Adrian Vierita, Permanent Representative of Romania
- Mr. Tomaž Deželan, author of *Young people and democratic life in Europe*

<sup>1</sup> Deželan, Tomaž, 2015. Young people and Democratic Life in Europe.  
[http://www.youthup.eu/app/uploads/2015/11/YFJ\\_YoungPeopleAndDemocraticLifeInEurope\\_B1\\_web-9e4bd8be22.pdf](http://www.youthup.eu/app/uploads/2015/11/YFJ_YoungPeopleAndDemocraticLifeInEurope_B1_web-9e4bd8be22.pdf)

### **13:15 – 13:45 What do young people say? Ideas to improve young people’s participation in policy-making**

Four young people will take the floor to present their concerns regarding participation. Each young person will address one key question and put forward one idea or recommendation to decision-makers.

- Andras Farkas, Cluj-Napoca 2015 European Youth Capital
- Rode Magrete Hegstad, Norwegian Children and Youth Council
- Annina Grob, National Youth Council of Switzerland
- Aleksandra Kluczka, European Students’ Forum (AEGEE-Europe)

### **13:45 – 14:05 What can we do?**

The speakers will address the questions and ideas put forward by young people.

- H.E. Ambassador Adrian Vierita, Permanent Representative of Romania
- Julian Fleet, Permanent Observer, International Development Law Organisation (IDLO)

### **14:05 – 14:25 Discussion and Q&A with audience**

### **14:25 – 14:30 Concluding remarks**

- Ahmad Alhendawi, UN Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth

Snacks will be provided.

**Twitter: #youthUP**



**Note:** Participants without a UN badge will need to register on the Forum platform (<https://democracyforum.ohchr.org>), and upload a letter of accreditation at the latest Wednesday, November 16, 2016 at 6. pm, Geneva time in order to access Palais des Nations, once the accreditation is approved.