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# National Youth Councils

Their creation, evolution, purpose, and governance

International Research Project

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TakingITGlobal (TIG) is an international youth-led organization that helps young people find inspiration, access information, get involved, and take action to improved their local and global communities. The TakingITGlobal.org community gets millions of visitors a month and connects youth in over 230 countries and territories. TIG builds the capacity of youth for development, supports youth artistic and media expression, makes education more engaging, and involves young people in decision-making.

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# III Executive Summary

This project tells the story of the presence (or, in some cases, absence of), history, evolution, mandate, and purpose of a group of National Youth Councils (NYCs). National Youth Councils exist in many forms and in many countries around the world, serving as coordinators of youth organizations on the national level, contacts with similar organizations in other countries, and the nexus of youth-government relations.

The methodology of carrying out this research project on NYCs included an electronic survey distributed to NYCs around the world. With the NYCs that responded, personal interviews were conducted. This report aims to synthesize the information gathered. It is intended as a tool to look back and learn from the experiences of existing NYCs, while looking forward to future cooperation among NYCs, and perhaps to inspire their creation where they currently do not exist.

Part 1 of the report is entitled "Country-based findings." After a discussion of some of the forms a NYC can take, it provides objective information based on survey responses from the 22 participating youth councils or equivalents. These summaries include information on the history, membership, governance structures, work methodology, and areas of work of each of the NYCs.

Part 2 is entitled "Cluster-based findings." Here, convergences and divergences in the work of NYCs are identified and analyzed. These are presented under the following headings: Evolution of National Youth Councils; Membership Structure; Work Objectives and Challenges; Staff, board members, and volunteers; Government and National Youth Council Relations; Funding; International Cooperation; and Outreach and Communication Strategies.

The concluding section, "Conclusions and Recommendations," synthesizes the information presented in Parts 1 and 2 into recommendations and considerations, from which existing NYCs might learn, and which are hopefully useful for active youth organizations seeking to create or reform a NYC in their country.



# IV Introduction

The ten-year review of the UN World Programme of Action for Youth in October 2005 was impetus for youth from around the world to congregate at the UN in New York to share ideas, experiences and projects. It was there, over a UN cafeteria lunch, that the proposal for this study on National Youth Councils (NYCs) was born.

National Youth Councils have emerged in many parts of the world. For youth organizations they play an important facilitative role in the coordination of youth work, while for governments they serve as a go-to point for expertise on youth issues and concerns. And for the small group congregated over pasta at the UN cafeteria, composed of a team from the Canadian-based TakingITGlobal and from the European Youth Forum, their absence in certain countries is conspicuous. By telling the story of the creation, evolution, purpose and governance of NYCs, we hope that this project will emphasize the important role they play the world over.

For existing NYCs, this project can be a tool to compare experiences and guide future work. While some NYCs are in constant exchange and coordination with similar structures (such as the case in Europe, where NYCs are brought together under the umbrella of the European Youth Forum), others operate in relative independence. It can also demonstrate the difference between youth-led and government-led youth coordinating initiatives. For governments, it can demonstrate the role and potential of working with NYCs. Finally, for youth organizations in countries without a NYC, perhaps the findings of this report can inspire its creation if the need exists, and provide some ideas on how to ensure its growth is a by-youth-for-youth process.

A report on NYCs cannot proceed without defining what a NYC is. For this report, three broad categories of NYCs have been identified. The largest category of NYCs contacted to participate in our project is comprised of NYCs that are youth-run and which operate autonomously from government and other influences. The second category includes organizations that are part of a government structure, usually with at least several civil servants employed as part of its operation. Organizations in this category present a semantic quandary: while

in Europe they might be called youth “authorities,” elsewhere they can be called “youth councils.” Organizations in these first two categories clearly operate with different objectives and serve different purposes. Lastly, a third category is made up of alternative structures that exist to coordinate youth participation and serve roughly the same purpose as youth-driven NYCs. This study looks at the Local Agenda 21 Turkish Youth Parliament and at the Ukrainian Union of Youth Organizations as examples. While representative organizations of each of these three models are included in this study, those selected are based on a desire to have representation from all parts of the world, and also on which organizations were able to respond. This report aims to be illustrative of each of these models, but does not claim to be a comprehensive report of all the models that exist in the world!

In conducting our research, we decided to distribute surveys by e-mail to National Youth Councils around the world. Follow-up interviews were then conducted with 14 of the 22 groups who were able and willing to respond. Following a brief note on methodology, our research findings based on these surveys and interviews are presented in three main parts. After the discussion on the definition of NYCs already mentioned, Part 1, “Country-based findings,” presents a short summary of each NYC, including its history, membership, governance requirements, how it operates, and its areas of work. These summaries are by no means exhaustive of the information that was solicited through the questionnaires and it may be interesting for the reader to skip this section and go directly to Part 2, “Cluster-based findings,” which identifies convergences and divergences among the participating NYCs. Part 3, “Conclusions and recommendations,” groups the observations from Part 2 and proposes recommendations for current and potential NYCs.

Finally, it should be noted that NYCs are complex entities, and the surveys returned to us may not represent the opinions of all members of a particular NYC. Furthermore, this report is necessarily influenced by its Canadian initiators. If there are any errors, please be in touch via [research@takingitglobal.org](mailto:research@takingitglobal.org) as we hope to amend any future editions of this report accordingly.

# V Methodology

This research paper is based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of structured interviews with NYCs. In order to be able to assess the creation, evolution, functioning, and purpose of NYCs in different regional, cultural, and linguistic contexts, 20 NYCs were initially identified as preferred targets for this study. The selection was based on a ten to ten partition between European and Non-European Youth Councils<sup>1</sup>. On the one hand, we wanted to study enough NYCs in Europe, as they have the longest history and the most experience to learn from. On the other hand, we also aimed to have as much of a regional and linguistic balance as possible, in addition to studying a variety of models (predominantly youth-led, but also some state-driven initiatives for comparison's sake).

As this study was originally motivated by the absence of a National Youth Council in Canada, the selection of core countries was also based on certain characteristics that these countries have in common with Canada. The following questions influenced our decision: How can an effective NYC structure be set up in a bilingual country (Switzerland and Belgium)? How can be dealt with the vastness of a country like Canada (Russia and China)? What role does international development play for NYCs in countries with a tradition of great emphasis on international cooperation and development (the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden)? What can be learnt from countries that have recently started the process of setting up a NYC (Brazil)?

In addition to the 20 core countries, 30 more NYCs were invited to participate in our survey. Thus, a total of 50 questionnaires were sent out.

The questionnaire included a total number of 27 questions in the following categories<sup>2</sup>:

- History
- Membership structure
- Mission statement / area of work
- Organization / work methodology
- Funding resources
- Outreach / Communication Strategy

We also asked explicitly for recommendations that existing NYCs have for youth organizations in other countries looking to set up a NYC as well.

The majority of questionnaires were sent out to NYCs between late December 2005 and early February 2006 and individual e-mail reminders followed. By late March a total number of 22 responses were solicited and 14 follow-up interviews were conducted either via phone or e-mail. These follow-up interviews served to clarify answers and/or collect additional information.

The solicited information was then used for the country summaries in Part 1, which aim to provide a portrait of the NYCs and highlight differences between them. For Part 2, quantitative analyses of the data were conducted in order to compare NYCs with each other. Unique characteristics in certain areas such as innovative solutions to particular challenges were also highlighted, based on the comparison of all available data.

In some cases, NYCs didn't provide information to certain questions. The charts and descriptions refer nevertheless to the total number of 22 examined NYCs.

<sup>1</sup> European countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland. Non-European countries: Argentina, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, The Philippines, Russia and Senegal.

<sup>2</sup> Please have a look at Appendix IV for the complete questionnaire.

# PART 1: Country-based findings

## 1.1. “National Youth Council”: What’s in a name?

Before reporting on the history, governance, and work of National Youth Councils, the question must first be asked: “What is a NYC?” Since there may be as many answers to this question as there are NYCs in this world, we will, rather than tread the murky waters of presenting a definitive definition, outline how we understand and use the term “NYC” in this report.

The most prominent form of NYC in our study is the European model of an umbrella organization that facilitates the work of youth organizations nationally. These groups are in principle run by youth, are independent from the government, and operate in accordance with a democratic elective process. We have called these NYCs “Youth-driven NYCs.” They constitute the majority of the NYCs participating in this study, as it is their governance structure that we were most curious about. It can sometimes happen that two different bodies end up competing to be the authoritative NYC in the country. To this end, the importance of being recognized by the state government — and therefore, in more general terms, the importance for an NYC to maintain a relationship with the national government — is discussed in parts 2 and 3 of this report.

Although the majority of NYCs participating in this report are youth-driven NYCs, there are also other models of facilitating the work of youth organizations on a national level. In Europe, most national governments have a structure, called the youth “authority” or “ministry,” to manage state relations to youth. To make things slightly confusing, in some countries, notably in Africa and Latin America, these government structures are also called “national youth councils.” In this report, we have distinguished those organizations that are closely tied to the state as “State-driven NYCs.” A number of these NYCs have participated in this study, in order to demonstrate how they work and, in some cases, show their interaction with, and differences from, the nation’s youth-driven NYC.

Finally, alternatives to the NYC structure have evolved in some countries. We have called these “Other youth umbrella structures” and have included two examples. In Turkey, for instance, an annual Youth Parliament is held with equal regional representation from local youth councils from around the country. The working of the Parliament is facilitated by a youth-led NGO with domestic and international funding. In Ukraine, there have emerged several groups playing roles similar to that of a NYC.

For this report, we have selected examples from each of these three categories: youth-driven NYCs, state-driven NYCs, and other youth umbrella structures. The brief story of their histories, governance structures, and areas of work are now told.

## 1.2. Youth-driven National Youth Councils

### 1.2.1. Armenia

#### *National Youth Council of Armenia (NYCA)*

**History:**

The National Youth Council of Armenia (NYCA) was founded in 1997. Impetus for founding a NYC in Armenia came from 25 youth organizations who saw value in creating a body to facilitate cooperation between Armenian youth and youth internationally, and to form an umbrella for Armenian youth organizations. These original 25 were later joined by student councils and the youth wings of political organizations.

**Membership and governance:**

In 2006, the NYCA includes 54 member organizations (this number will come under review at the next General Assembly, when several non-active members may opt to leave). The criteria for NYCA membership includes accepting the NYCA Constitution, and actively engaging in youth activities in Armenia.

**Work methodology:**

The NYCA has a Secretariat of two paid employees and a board of 17 people; a majority of people engaged are under the age of 30. Funding is limited and comes from the All Armenian Youth Foundation, private contributions, and membership fees. This limited funding is spent on NYCA administration, leaving project implementation to member organizations.

**Areas of work:**

The NYCA has identified the following three priority areas: 1) Civil Society 2) Youth Policy 3) Participation. While international cooperation is highly prioritized, the NYCA cites lack of international partners among its key challenges, along with the domestic factors of lacking in finances and participation. The official mission statement of the NYCA is currently under review.



## 1.2.2. Belgium - Flemish Vlaamse Jeugdraad (VJ)

### History:

The Vlaamse Jeugdraad was founded in its present form in 2002, when four youth umbrella organizations — Catholic Youth Council (KJR), Forum for Pluralistic Youth NGO's (FORUM), Socialistic Youth Association (SJV), Liberal Youth organizations (LJO) — representing approximately 100 youth organizations, came together with a goal to work cooperatively on youth policy. Before this time, the Youth Work Council existed, representing youth organizations.

### Membership and structure:

The VJ has a unique structure, opening its meetings to any individual young person or youth organization from Flemish Belgium. While any individual may participate in the VJ, decisions are taken by 24 elected members of the General Assembly (see Work Methodology below). To become a member, it is necessary to subscribe to the rules of democracy and to the Charter of the VJ.

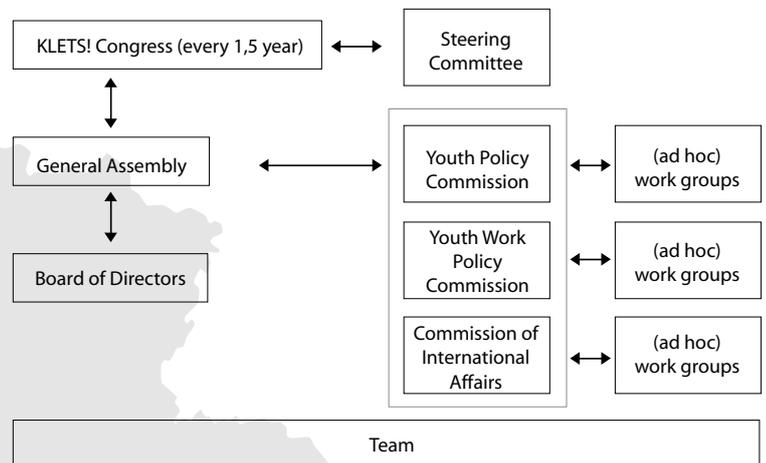
### Work methodology:

Every 18 months, a youth congress (Klets!) is organized as a forum where youth and policy-makers debate issues of relevance to young people. The General Assembly (GA) meets every month as the official body that informs the government of the opinions of young people and youth groups,

putting into practice the decisions of the youth congress. It constitutes 24 elected members, representing individual young people (10), youth organizations (12), a representative of the pupils association (Obessu member) and a representative of the students' association (Esib member). The GA elects a Board of Directors to perform the secretarial duties of the VJ. A number of committees and commissions work on specific issue areas. The VJ's budget is fixed by law within the Flemish government, at one percent of the whole budget for youth policy. The VJ has nine paid employees and otherwise operates through volunteers.

### Areas of work:

It is the goal of the VJ to use the voices and opinions of children, young people, youth organizations, and youth advisory councils to amend public policy. The VJ is the official advisory body of the Flemish Government on all matters concerning children and young people. As such, The Flemish Government is, through its responsible Minister on Youth Affairs, obliged to request formal advice by the NYC on all issues that are directly and indirectly related to young people. The VJ may also offer advice at its own discretion. Forming advisory opinions is the VJ's core business. The VJ also has regular and ongoing cooperation and networking with its colleagues of the French and German community.



### 1.2.3. Belgium - French

## *Le Conseil de la Jeunesse d'expression française (CJEF)*

#### **History:**

The Conseil de la Jeunesse d'expression française was founded in 1970, when the communitarization of youth policy resulted in the disappearance of the Conseil National de la Jeunesse (Nation Youth Council), which had been founded in 1956. Two autonomous NYCs, French and Flemish, thus came to be, and have evolved separately.

#### **Membership and structure:**

In 2006, the CJEF is comprised of 83 members. Members must be youth organizations who subscribe to the criteria established in the CJEF founding documents. The CJEF grows on average by one to three members per year.

#### **Work methodology:**

The CJEF has one full-time staff person and several part-time workers, most of whom are over 30 years of age. Funding comes from projects supported by various institutions: European Community, Ministry of the French Community, and other ministries.

#### **Areas of work:**

The objectives of the CJEF is 1) To provide, on its own initiative or at the request of one or several ministries, advice on all issues that concern French youth 2) To coordinate youth projects as well as development of international relations among youth and 3) To collaborate in studies or activities of mutual interest with existing or potential bodies to ensure youth representation in various public organizations. Its priority areas of work are 1) Training 2) Information and communication and 3) Network building. International cooperation is a priority for the CJEF, which cooperates with other countries of the Francophonie and with Eastern European countries. The CJEF influences policy decisions in the government by providing advisory statements, which are each first approved by a General Assembly comprised of youth organizations.



## 1.2.4. Germany

### Deutscher Bundesjugendring (DBJR)

#### History:

After the end of World War II the occupying powers in Germany pursued the idea of establishing democratic structures among and inside youth organizations to prevent the repetition of the political streamlining that occurred during the Nazi-regime. It was because of this influence that the Deutscher Bundesjugendring was founded in 1949. The key actors in establishing the DBJR from within Germany actually represented very different, if not to say divergent values (they came from the Union of German Catholic Youth and the Socialist Youth of Germany [The Falcons]), but their visions of a NYC for Germany united them.

One of the challenges that the German youth organizations faced when setting up the council was the political situation in Germany after the war. They had to realize that establishing a NYC that included all the youth organizations of the whole of Germany was not possible. However, after reunification in 1989, youth organizations, which had previously only existed in East Germany, quickly organized themselves within the Working Group of Democratic Youth Organizations and a few years later joined the DBJR. Regional youth councils were also established and youth organizations, formerly active in Western Germany, expanded their activities to the East.

#### Membership and governance:

In 2006, the DBJR comprises 24 youth organizations, 16 regional youth councils and five affiliated organizations, which only have an advisory vote. There is a range of criteria to become a member of the youth council. Youth organizations have to be organized nationwide (in more than 50% of the Bundesländer), they have to have at least 25,000 members, and have their own statutes (they need to be able to decide independently from an adult organization). If organizations are not able to fulfill all of the membership criteria they can still become affiliated organizations of the DBJR. It is also possible for smaller youth organizations to form a coalition (this could be either a regional or thematic one) and then apply for membership with

the NYC. Quite a number of members are organized that way and sometimes these coalitions comprise of more than ten individual youth organizations with each having no more than 3,000 members. Interestingly, the number of member organizations is constantly growing. This is mostly due to an increasing number of youth organizations that become independent from their adult organization (many within the broader field of "culture").

#### Work methodology:

The DBJR has a comparatively large secretariat with 11 employees. The Board is comprised of seven people. The most important funding resource of the DBJR is the Federal Plan for Children and Youth, which is part of the budget of the Bund (highest level of federal state). The German parliament decides annually on the sum. Including projects, which can be funded through other resources, the annual budget is about 1,5 million Euros.

#### Areas of work:

For 2006, the DBJR has identified the following three priority areas: 1) Sustainable participation of young people in society 2) Encouragement of voluntary engagement of young people and 3) Actively taking part in European youth policy. International cooperation is of high importance to the DBJR and the German National Committee for International Youth Work (DNK), a joint working group of the DBJR and the Council of Political Youth Organizations, usually runs projects in the field (such as an MDG awareness campaign in 2005) and keeps bilateral contacts with NYCs in other countries such as Poland, Russia, etc. Concrete projects in the field of international development are, however, left to its member organizations. Here, the DBJR only tries to facilitate their work, for example, by observing new programs of the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development. The main challenges that the DBJR faces are 1) Budget cuts at all national levels 2) Recognition of non-formal education and 3) Participation of young people in democratic decision-making.

## 1.2.5. Greece

### National Council of Hellenic Youth Organisations (ESYN)

#### **History:**

The National Council of Hellenic Youth Organizations was established in 1998 after being influenced by the Citizens' Society Doctrines and other European States. The key actors in establishing the ESYN were youth wings of political parties and other youth organizations.

#### **Membership structure:**

The ESYN is currently comprised of 40 member organizations. In order to be eligible for membership, organizations must have at least 400 members and sustain branches in at least three counties of Greece. The number of members is growing by around three to four organizations annually.

#### **Work methodology:**

The ESYN is only working with two paid employees in addition to a larger number of volunteers (from 10 to 100, depending on the activities it's carrying out). The Board, on the other hand, is comparatively large, with 11 members. The funding comes from state and government institutions but partly also from the private sector.

#### **Areas of work:**

The mission of the youth council is to encourage active participation of youth in social issues and to encourage the spread of pacifist, multicultural, and social ideas. The ESYN's three priority areas of work are international relationships, social problems such as poverty, trafficking, unemployment, and voluntarism. The three main challenges facing the NYC are 1) Active participation of its member organizations 2) Participation of individuals in addition to organizations and 3) New ideas for more attractive and effective activities. Since the ESYN tries to represent all youth of the country and not only the ones organized in its member organizations, the ESYN is currently planning statute revisions.

## 1.2.6. Ireland

### National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

#### History:

The National Youth Council of Ireland was established in 1967 through the cooperation of the principal voluntary youth organizations in Ireland. Its aim was and is to represent the interests of young people and youth organizations.

#### Membership and governance:

In 2006, the NYCI comprises 43 full members and ten affiliate members. These numbers have remained constant for the last decade. Members must be national or regional voluntary organizations or agencies involved in fostering the development of young people, in which young people participate in its decision-making processes, and who have a majority of members under 25 years of age. A national organization must provide services to at least 300 members representing a prescribed number of provinces, while a regional organization must provide services to at least 1,000 young people. "Affiliates" are organizations with an interest in the welfare of young people and who subscribe to the aims of the NYCI, but who, by their nature, cannot satisfy all the criteria for membership. Affiliates participate in the work of the Council but have no vote.

#### Work methodology:

The NYCI has a paid staff of 19 and a Board of 13. When compared to other countries, staff and Board members are relatively old. The NYCI provides voluntary opportunities for approximately 50 youth (under 24) each year. The NYCI had an annual budget of approximately 1.5 million Euros in 2004 (most recent audited accounts), with funding coming from the Youth Service Grant and Department of Education (41%), Health (12%), Dail na nOg (4%), Gender Equality (7%) International/EU Presidency (4%), Arts (9%), Development Education (11%) and other sources (12%).

#### Areas of work:

The NYCI is a membership-led umbrella organization that represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organizations, and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people. The NYCI has identified the following three priority areas: 1) Advocating for and representing the youth sector 2) Developing the participation of member organizations within the NYC and 3) Providing programs for its members. NYCI's international officer and the assistant director work on policy and advocacy at an international level. The NYCI cooperates with the Department of Foreign Affairs to manage the National Youth Development Education Programme (NYDEP), which implements the Development Education Strategy for the Voluntary Youth Sector 2004-2007. This aims to mainstream development education into the programs of voluntary youth organizations through promoting cooperation and collaboration between the youth work sector and the development education sector; building the capacity of the youth work sector for development education; and promoting good practice and ensuring the relevance of the program to young people. NYDEP is an observer member of Dóchas, the umbrella body for development NGOs in Ireland. It is also part of the Global Education Week network throughout the Council of Europe. Key challenges for NYCI are 1) Advocating for the youth sector 2) Becoming a truly representative organization 3) Improving members participation/networking and 4) Developing best/good practice in working with young people. The NYCI is recognized in the Youth Work Act as a "Social Partner", mandating its active involvement in various government initiatives.



## 1.2.7. Latvia

### Latvijas Jaunatnes padome (LJP)

#### History:

Latvia as a country regained its independence in 1991. Shortly before and after this time the youth organizations of the USSR collapsed and new non-governmental organizations emerged. It soon became obvious that in order to defend their interests better and promote youth policy in a broader arena, these organizations needed an umbrella organization. It was thus that the National Youth Council of Latvia (LJP) was established in 1992. Finding funding, especially for the office members, and an office space itself were the main challenges after the establishment of the LJP.

#### Membership and governance:

In 2006, the LJP comprises 40 member organizations, but the organization is rapidly growing by approximately five new organizations each year. There are two types of members: associate members and full members. Associate members are typically departments of bigger organizations; full members are youth organizations that are registered with the State's register. To become a member, organizations send their applications to the Board, which makes membership decisions. However, all decisions made by the Board must be approved by the General Assembly.

#### Work methodology:

In early 2006, the LJP was working with eight employees, seven of them under the age of 30. The number of Board members is exactly the same (eight in total and seven out of eight under 30

years). The LJP also works with a larger number of youth volunteers each year (around 20). In contrast to many other NYCs, there is no secure funding base from state departments. The majority of funding comes in through the financing of projects.

#### Areas of work:

The mission statement of the LJP is to improve the quality of life of young people in Latvia and represent their interests by promoting the importance of youth organizations and their development, cooperation, and involvement in social and political activities. Through this, it aids in the creation of a democratic society in Latvia. The top four priority areas of work include non-formal education, information, developing LJP, and lobbying decision-making.

International cooperation is important for the LJP, although not as important as the national-level work. One of the projects that the LJP recently began, and for which it is the coordinating institution, is called Youth Open the Door. The partners for this project are Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Denmark, Poland, and Russia. The three main challenges that the council faces are 1) Cooperation with the state institutions 2) Communication with its member organizations and 3) Promotion of non-formal education. In regard to influencing decision-making processes, the LJP has established a range of different ways to do this. For example, it is represented in different working groups of several ministries and is also able to draft youth laws, which it then hands over to the parliament for approval.



## 1.2.9. Nigeria

### National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN)

#### **History:**

The National Youth Council of Nigeria was established in 1964 in order to fill the existing vacuum for an umbrella body for the various youth organizations in the country. The key actors in setting up the Youth Council were Nigerian youth organizations as well as the Federal Ministry of Youth and its chapters on the state level.

#### **Membership and governance:**

The NYCN is made up of various different members: The National Congress, affiliated voluntary youth organizations and community based youth organizations, state and local government chapters and associated youth organizations. There is a total of 160 voluntary youth organizations and 37 state chapters of the council (including one in the capital territory). Both voluntary youth organizations and state chapters have voting rights in the General Assembly (Congress) of the NYCN. To be eligible for membership, organizations must have a national outlook with at least 400 members across the country and a nationwide office.

#### **Work methodology:**

The national secretariat of the youth council has ten employees. In addition to that there are state secretariats with five to seven paid staff. However, the vice-presidents in the different states who head the regional secretariats have to report to the national secretariat, which oversees all activities of the NYCN, including the state chapters. In addition to paid staff, the NYCN works with a large number of volunteers each year, usually between 100 and 500. The board of the NYCN is comprised of five people. The budget is 100 million Naira (about 6,350 Euros) and comes from government subventions, membership fees, donations from philanthropies, and grants from international development partners.

#### **Areas of work:**

The NYCN has a variety of priority areas. The first is to organize programs on topics as diverse as youth empowerment, education, human rights, health, peace, international cooperation, and sport. Programs can also be citizenship and leadership training, or be focused on community and cultural activities. The second priority area is to fight poverty and the third to ensure environmental sustainability. On an international level, the youth council has cooperation with the Common Wealth Youth Forum, the Pan-African Youth Movement and the World Assembly of Youth. It is also part of several youth exchange programs but international partners mostly anchor these. The main challenges for the NYCN are funding, organizational capacity, and co-ordination.

## 1.2.10. Portugal Conselho Nacional de Juventude (CNJ)



### **History:**

The Conselho Nacional de Juventude was established in 1985 after various youth organizations joined in an effort to create a plural youth platform that could act as an interlocutor with government institutions. Some youth organizations in Portugal, however, were unconvinced of the importance of a NYC to empower young people and to promote youth policy within the government. This, together with a lack of support for youth activism and participation on the side of the government, were the two major challenges when setting up the council.

### **Membership and governance:**

The CNJ is currently comprised of 29 organizations: 25 full members and 4 affiliate members. Full members must be national youth organizations for who membership criteria include: Be active on a national scale; majority of members between 12 and 35 years of age; be organized nationwide (half of the districts of Portugal); and have at least 350 members. Affiliate members are organizations that develop relevant activities in the youth field but don't fulfill the membership requirements.

### **Work methodology:**

The CNJ works with four employees and a larger number of volunteers and interns. The Board is comprised of five people. Staff and Board members are all under the age of 30. Funding resources are the Portuguese Youth Institute (a governmental institution) and to smaller a less degree, local authorities, foundations, and private companies.

### **Areas of work:**

The main aims of the CNJ are to provide a forum for dialogue, to express the problems and expectations of Portuguese youth, and to act as an interlocutor with government institutions on youth-related matters. There are five priority areas of work: education, employment and social affairs, environment and quality of life, associative life and youth participation, and international relations.

International cooperation has generally a high priority for the youth council and it is very active through its membership in the Youth Forum of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries. The Community is, for example, organizing conferences, seminars and meetings to provide young people from within the Community a space to share successful experiences, exchange good practices, and debate barriers to success. International activities in developing countries that were carried out by the CNJ over recent years include a student exchange program with other Community members and a project on preventative HIV/AIDS education for young people. Challenges that the CNJ faces are ways to increase the engagement of its member associations and the participation of young people in its activities.

## 1.2.11. Russia

### National Youth Council of Russia (NYCR)

#### **History:**

The National Youth Council of Russia was founded in January 1992 and was supported by a presidential decree in September of the same year that called for the development of youth policy in the Russian Federation. The initiative to create a NYC came from eight non-governmental organizations, which wanted to combine their efforts for cooperation with the government on youth issues in the country. The generally weak situation in the youth sector at the government level was one of the main challenges that the NYCR had to overcome.

#### **Membership and governance:**

The NYCR is currently comprised of 41 all-Russian and inter-regional organizations as well as 32 regional youth councils. There are several different kinds of members: all-Russian children and youth organizations, inter-regional children and youth organizations (which function in at least eight regions of the Russian Federation), regional youth councils (which unite children and youth organizations in their region), and international youth organizations residing in Russia. The NYCR is experiencing a slight increase in membership each year.

#### **Work methodology:**

The NYCR has six employees and a small number of volunteers (three to ten per year). The Board is very big with 21 members, although this number is not fixed in the statutes of the NYC. It is mainly funded by the government.

#### **Areas of work:**

The main aim of the NYCR is to support and coordinate activities of Russian children and youth organizations in order to encourage the protection and realization of their interests, as well as the rights of children and youth. The top three priority areas of work are the cooperation and interaction with legislative and executive bodies, the promotion of the work of children and youth organizations, and the representation of Russian children and youth organizations on the international level.

International cooperation is as important as the work of the council within the country; therefore, the council is carrying out a number of projects in that area. The major project is on Eastern European Youth Cooperation. The objectives of the project, which is carried out in partnership with other NYCs in the region, are to lobby the interests of youth organizations; to support sustainable cooperation, development and partnership of youth organizations in Eastern Europe; to promote the principles of democracy and human rights in Eastern European countries; and to promote cooperation and partnership of youth organizations from Eastern Europe with other countries.

Challenges that the NYCR faces are the predominance of the interests of its member organizations over joint or common interests of all member organizations, the uncertainty of the legal foundation of youth policy in Russia, and the absence of stable financial resources.



#### **History:**

With the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia and the political and social changes that followed it (such as freedom of association), a lot of youth movements and organizations began to replace the Socialist Union of Youth, the only youth organization that was allowed in the country before. These new organizations, as well as young politicians, student organizations, young leaders, and young people from former illegal youth movements were the key actors in establishing the Rada mládeže Slovenska, which was officially founded in 1990. As many other councils in the former Soviet bloc, the RMS faced many initial struggles to find financial resources and state support for children and youth activities.

#### **Membership and governance:**

The RMS currently consists of 32 organizations: 18 member organizations, six regional youth councils and eight observers. Since 2002 there has been a slight decrease in the number of members though (from 39 to 32 in four years), which can be attributed to a number of reasons, such as a lack of communication between the organizations and RMS, financial and structural problems that the organizations faced, or administrative reasons (i.e. organizations didn't pay their membership fees). In order to be eligible for membership, organizations have to consist of at least 50% children or youth under the age of 26 and have at least 300 members. Regional youth councils can also become members if they consist of at least five local organizations.

#### **Work methodology:**

RMS is working with six employees and has a board of seven members. There are only a few volunteers in addition to that working with the NYC (less than ten annually). The budget is about

135,000 Euros per year and comes from different sources such as the Ministry of Education, membership fees (about 3% of the yearly budget) and grants from the EU Youth Program, the Central European Initiative Fund and others.

#### **Areas of work:**

The three priority areas of work for RMS are to shape and influence youth legislation and youth policy, to work on media and information about youth policy and youth work, and international cooperation. The mission of the council is, accordingly, to influence state policy towards children and youth, to protect the interest of children and youth, to cooperate with international partners and non-governmental organizations, and to provide information and service for its member organizations.

International cooperation is of high importance for the RMS. The regional focus is on Eastern Europe and the Balkans; the kind of work that is being done in this field are seminars on youth participation and similar events with other NYCs.

There are a few challenges that RMS faces in its daily work regarding its own role, the first being the question of whether the council represents its member organizations or youth in general. This becomes a problem when the RMS is asked about certain issues concerning youth, but is only able to consult its member organizations for feedback and not youth at large as well. For that reason the RMS is now considering different ways of involving youth who are not members of organizations as well, or at least providing them with a space for expression (for example, through a discussion board on the website). The other major challenges are to act as an expert in different political sectors concerning youth (not only in regard to issues that are related to the work of the Youth Ministry), and to provide a real platform for member organizations instead of simply being a representative for the government.

## 1.2.13. Slovenia

### Mladinski svet Slovenije (MSS)

#### History:

During the political changes in Slovenia at the end of the 1980s discussions about a new national representative body for youth actors in the parliamentary system occurred, leading to the establishment of the Mladinski svet Slovenije in April 1990. A group of individuals from different youth and children organizations, who were able to influence different political and interest groupings among young people, were the key actors in establishing the MSS. Also, the former socialist youth structure provided some support, although very reluctantly. The existence of representative umbrella structures in Western Europe provided a clear set of directions and influenced the set-up and procedures within the MSS. It was also through the influence of the Council of Europe — which emphasized democratic youth structures in all countries wishing to enter into membership with the Council of Europe — that the MSS finally gained full recognition from the government two years after it was established.

Other challenges that the MSS had to face were political divisions between different youth organizations (mainly between those who had been part of the socialist youth structures already and newly founded organizations on the other side) and ways to secure other sources of funding beyond membership fees.

#### Membership and governance:

Since 2002, MSS has had 16 member organizations. There is a range of criteria to become a member of MSS, which is generally open to voluntary, non-profit youth organizations, whose aims and forms of operation cover the various areas of individual and social life. The criteria include, among other things, that the organization is organized democratically and operates independently, has at least 70% of its membership and leadership aged 15 to 29 years, has at least 300 members, and operates in at least 15 municipalities in different geographical regions of the Republic of Slovenia. All members who apply for full membership must have also been associate members of MSS for at least half a year before.

#### Work methodology:

MSS has a comparatively small office with only four paid staff. The board comprises seven members. Funding of their basic programs and also parts of their additional funding comes from the Office of Youth (Ministry of Education and Sport) Proposals are, however, also sent out to other agencies. The total budget in 2005 was approximately 142,000 Euros.

#### Areas of work:

The purpose of the MSS is to create an environment that facilitates the growth of young people mature personalities that society will need in the future. Its top three priority areas of work are youth participation, non-formal education, and international cooperation.

Besides its active membership in meetings and events of European institutions (such as the European Youth Forum and the Council of Europe), the MSS is focusing its international work on the SEE region. MSS has always been supportive towards initiatives to set up umbrella youth organizations in the region and is planning to start a project this year to help develop local youth structures in SEE.

The three main challenges that the MSS faces are 1) Youth participation (young people are becoming increasingly uninterested and passive when it comes to political issues) 2) Recognition of MSS as the crucial youth representative and 3) Maintenance and development of national youth organizations. In 2000, the MSS was able to prepare a legal act, which was passed by the parliament and is now forming the legal basis for the MSS and local youth councils. It also requires the government, ministries and other state authorities to inform the MSS of any drafts of laws and regulations that have an immediate impact on the life and work of young people. Furthermore, a Joint commission on Social Youth Issues was created in May 2005, which consists of representatives of the MSS and government bodies and prepares legal acts, documents, common resolutions, etc. on youth issues.

## 1.2.14. Sweden

### Landsrådet för Sveriges ungdomsorganisationer (LSU)

#### History:

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations was established in 1948 at the end of World War II, in order to facilitate contact between young people in the east and west of Europe. Created as an initiative of the youth wings of the five major political parties, its initial purpose was entirely international in scope.

#### Membership and governance:

In 2006, the LSU comprises 102 member organizations, and grows by about five members annually. To become a member of the LSU, an organization must be democratic, non-profit, and work by and with youth, at least 60% of whom should be under 25 years old. The organization must be active in at least three counties, operate independently, and constitute at least 300 individuals or 30 local organizations.

#### Work methodology:

The LSU currently has a paid staff of ten, nine of whom are under the age of 30. The Board has 11 members who are all under 30. The LSU offers approximately 50 voluntary opportunities for its members each year, including selecting youth delegates to various UN meetings annually. The 1.6 million Euro budget comes from several ministries, authorities (SIDA and the National board of youth affairs), the private sector, membership fees, and philanthropic funds.

#### Areas of work:

The LSU seeks to be a forum for matters of common interest to youth organizations, to provide a network for national as well as international organizations dealing with youth cooperation, and to work on the basis of the UN Declaration on Human Rights, as well as the UN Declaration on Children's Rights (extract from the LSU constitution, §1). At the national level, the LSU brings its members together to promote the importance of youth work in society. It also coordinates campaigns, hosts seminars, provides trainings for the executive boards of its member and other youth organizations, and monitors the field of youth policy to assist its members in government lobbying. At the international level, the LSU's international cooperation involves activities from Nordic and European matters to third world and UN issues. Priority areas of work are: 1) Advocacy and representation (representing Swedish youth organizations towards national authorities and international bodies) 2) Organizational and leadership training and 3) International cooperation projects with other youth council structures or youth networks. The LSU's international cooperation projects currently include a Democratic Youth Leadership Program in Sri Lanka, a cooperation project with eight Eastern European Youth Councils, and Tackling Poverty Together with six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Key challenges for the LSU include 1) A finance gap between aspirations and capacities (funds are particularly lacking for advocacy) 2) Getting members to feel that the LSU is a collection of themselves and 3) Retaining members and balancing the strength of bringing youth organizations together with the difficulty that each organization has a different agenda and opinion.



## 1.2.15. Switzerland

### Conseil Suisse Activités de Jeunesse - Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Jugendverbände (CSAJ-SAJV)



#### History:

The Conseil Suisse Activités de Jeunesse was set up in 1933 and is thus one of the oldest NYCs still existing today. The national foundation Pro Juventute, the institutional forerunner organization of the SAJV, was even established as early as 1912. Pro Juventute was a politically widely accepted foundation, which wanted to raise youth as a specific issue of everyday life and strived for awareness building among parents, public authorities, and the public as such. In September 1930, Pro Juventute organized a symposium on holiday and leisure time activities in Switzerland, which brought together 500 participants. Besides other issues, the establishment of an umbrella organization for all Swiss youth organizations was discussed at the meeting. This started a process that finally led to the establishment of the Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Ferienhilfe und Freizeit für Jugendliche (SAF) in January 1933, the direct forerunner of the SAJV.

#### Membership and governance:

The SAJV has currently around 80 members, with an annual growth of up to four members. There are active and contact members in the NYC. Active members can be youth organizations or other "youth actors" (other organizations or institutions), which meet the following criteria: 1) They are active on a national level or at least in several cantons 2) Their activities are focused on youth 3) They deal with youth-related aspects and questions of public concern and 4) They promote and encourage co-management and joint responsibility of youth within their own organizational structures. In exceptional cases, a cantonal organization can be accepted as a member organization.

#### Work methodology:

The SAJV works with a staff of 15-20 people and a fairly large number of volunteers, depending on the number of projects running at one time. The Board consists of nine people. The budget is about 1.5 Mio.

CHF and comes from general service level agreements with several federal offices (30%), membership fees (10%), and project bound sponsoring from federal offices (40%) and the private sector (20%). Membership fees are based on a point system, taking into account the geographical range of the member organization and the number of individuals represented (it ranges from 250 to 6.000 CHF per year).

#### Areas of work:

As written in its constitution, the SAJV focuses its work on the encouragement of youth organizations and youth in general; the coordination of national tasks in youth-related fields where its member organizations can't fulfill their tasks appropriately; and the representation and protection of the concerns of youth organizations and youth in general in the Swiss public, towards public authorities and on the international level.

It has four priority areas of work: democratic youth participation in all fields of life, voluntary work and its recognition to act as a centre for national and international questions in child- and youth-policies, and the coordination of concerns and activities of its member organizations.

International cooperation is only of relative importance for the SAJV. Nevertheless, it has been given a mandate by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation to run youth projects in Eastern European countries. The task mainly involves the empowerment of youth organizations in Switzerland and to encourage them to partner with organizations in Eastern Europe (over the last years projects were geographically focused on the Balkans). Projects covered development of partner organizations, multi-national trainings, cross-cultural events, and peace-building activities. The main challenges that the SAJV faces in its work are heterogeneity of its member organizations and their concerns, the federalist structure and complex political system of the decision-making process in Switzerland, and fundraising.

## 1.2.16. The Netherlands Nationale Jeugdraad (NJ)

### **History:**

The Nationale Jeugdraad was officially established in 2001, on the recommendation of a special project group (Towards a national youth platform) that had been working on the matter since the autumn of 1999. Interest groups identified obstacles to optimizing youth participation; among these was that while national youth organizations worked on several topics, none served an “umbrella” purpose to advocate for youth organizations and youth participation in general. The project group received financial support for its work from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports.

### **Membership structure:**

In 2006, the NJ comprises of 23 member organizations, though it is growing rapidly with approximately five organizations joining annually. There are also observing members, who do not have a vote in the General Assembly. Member organizations must be youth organizations working on a national basis and meet the following criteria: the organization must have been established at least two years before application, possess legal representation, be non-profit, focus on activities for and by youth, possess a demonstrable group of supporters among youth, and subscribe to the NJ’s articles of association. Over the years, the membership criteria have been relaxed in order to accommodate broader participation. For example, the General Assembly can have discretion to accept “young” organizations that meet most of the criteria except for the two-years prior existence criterion.

### **Work methodology:**

The number of employees varies according to projects under way; recent variation is between 20 and 25. Of these all or nearly all are under the age of 30. There are seven Board members, all of who must be under 30 when they are appointed, and may only hold a two-year term (three years in the case of the president). The NJ provides volunteer opportunities

for approximately 500 youth. The annual budget varies according to the number and size of projects. In recent years, the average actual budget was around 1.6 million Euros, coming from ministries, though increasingly projects are subsidized by NGOs.

### **Areas of work:**

The Mission of the NJ is to improve the position of youth through participation in order to allow young people to develop into citizens who can contribute to a democratic, sustainable and tolerant society. The NJ broadly realizes this aim by working to make social structures and processes accessible for input and participation of youth, and by promoting successful participation of youth in these structures. Priority areas include 1) Empowerment of youth to participate on various levels on topics 2) Representation of the interests of member organizations and Dutch youth in political and social decision-making structures and 3) Providing information on possibilities for youth participation.

Within these areas, the NJ runs projects that create opportunities for direct participation by youth, organizes debates, liaises with national and international political actors and the media, and uses peer-to-peer non-formal education methods through school tours. The NJ’s international program is one of the bigger programs. It provides information and raises awareness on international issues within the Netherlands. NJ also selects and supports the official Dutch Youth Representatives for international decision-making structures (UNGA, UNESCO, CSD, EU etc.). Challenges include 1) Working in the language of youth while being able to translate these concerns and ideas into the language of policy-makers on the other 2) Ensuring that youth participation and influence on policy development is real and not simply “pro forma” youth participation and consultations 3) Funding, which has been especially difficult since “youth participation” has in fact been erased from government goals on a national level.

## 1.2.17. Uganda

### National Association of Youth Organisations in Uganda (NAYOU)

#### **History:**

The National Association of Youth Organisations in Uganda was founded in 1998 to bring youth together to have a unified voice, to share ideas, and to come up with meaningful resolutions. Finances for developing and running programs, negative attitudes by some politicians, and access to information technology were key challenges to its establishment.

#### **Membership and governance:**

The NAYOU is comprised of 43 member organizations, and grows by a few organizations each year.

#### **Work methodology:**

Five people, all under the age of 30, are employed by the NAYOU. The Board is comprised of ten people, also each under the age of 30. The annual budget of approximately 16,300 Euros comes from membership fees and funding from international projects.

#### **Areas of work:**

The NAYOU aims to develop a strong democratic youth institution and to be one voice for youth. It works towards promoting contacts and effective coordination among its member organizations through sharing of information and skills. It works to these ends through promoting a coordinated network and contacts among youth organizations, advocating for youth involvement in the democratization process, developing a spirit of nationalism and unity among youth organizations, and empowering the youth in Uganda through awareness raising and capacity building. The Association's top priorities are to promote democracy and human rights and to work for poverty eradication. International cooperation is very important, and the Association is currently engaged in a project on poverty eradication (Tackling Poverty Together) with participants from five other African nations, and the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations. The NAYOU's greatest challenge is funding.

## 1.3. State-driven National Youth Councils or Commissions

### 1.3.1. Costa Rica

#### *Consejo Nacional de Política Pública de la Persona Joven (Conseja de la Persona Joven/CPJ)*

##### **History:**

The Conseja de la Persona Joven was founded as a state institution by law in May 2002. This came after 36 years of work by CPJ's predecessor, the National Youth Movement, which has existed since 1966. The CPJ is closely linked to another institution, the National Assembly, which was created with the purpose of discussing and approving proposals on public policy for Costa Rican youth. This policy is elaborated by the CPJ. The creation of the CPJ was influenced by a need for a body on youth to maintain a direct relation between the state and civil society, particularly focusing on legislation being passed to support youth development. Key challenges for the CPJ have been 1) Establishing a mechanism for the participation and acknowledgment of youth as a social actor, and in particular, their rights and 2) Establishing youth participation mechanisms at local and national levels. Key actors in its establishment included institutional authorities and young deputies from political parties in the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly.

##### **Membership and governance:**

As a state institution, the CPJ is not a membership-based youth council, but more closely resembles an organ of the state, comprised of 29 staff. By contrast, the National Assembly with which it works brings together 121 young people representing regional youth committees, public and private universities, educational institutes, political parties in the Legislative Assembly, ethnic minorities, NGOs, and people from development associations. Members of these organizations submit their candidacy to the National Assembly on an annual basis.

##### **Work methodology:**

Of CPJ's 29 staff, only two are under the age of 30. The 121 members of the National Assembly are all youth working within organizations. The CPJ Board is comprised of three youth from the National Assembly, and nine ministers. The budget of 872 million colones (about 1,4 million Euros) is contributed primarily by the central government, though funds are also received from projects cooperating with governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations. It is not within the CPJ's mandate to provide youth volunteer opportunities directly, although a significant part of its work deals with projects creating voluntary programs for young people. The CPJ and the National Assembly work together to influence youth policy.

##### **Areas of work:**

The CPJ aims to promote public policy that generates equal opportunities for young people, contributing to the full exercise of their rights and their integral development. Priority areas are 1) Research 2) Youth participation and 3) Youth policy. International cooperation is important to the CPJ, and while it runs no specific projects, it maintains relations with the UN Population Fund and the Iberoamerican Youth Organization. By law, the CPJ develops programs for Costa Rican youth. The National Assembly is comprised of youth representatives from youth organizations. Key challenges in carrying out these programs include 1) Youth policy formation 2) Contributing to the full exercise of youth rights and development and 3) Enforcing participation mechanisms of young people at local and national levels. The National Assembly, comprised of 121 youth, discusses and approves the policy on youth, which is then taken on by CPJ and other state institutions.

## 1.3.2. The Philippines National Youth Commission (NYC)



### **History:**

The Filipino National Youth Commission was founded in 1995. Following a series of consultations among youth leaders, resolutions were submitted to Congress, which passed a law creating a youth office to champion youth concerns. Political cooperation and harmonizing disparate objectives of youth groups were among the greatest challenges in establishing the NYC. Young legislators, young leaders within universities, and other youth organizations all contributed to its founding.

### **Membership and governance:**

In 2006, the NYC membership is comprised of 300 registered youth organizations nationwide, and is growing at a rate of 100 organizations each year. Registered members must be youth-serving organizations or youth organizations whose members are between 15 to 30 years old, doing projects for youth development according to the following categories: Youth organization, youth-serving organization, national organization, community-based organization, in- or out-of school organization, working youth organization, and youth with special needs.

### **Work methodology:**

The NYC has 66 employed staff, slightly less than half of which are under 30 years of age. The majority of the seven-member Board are under 30. The Commission provides volunteer opportunities for approximately 30 youth annually, and operates on a budget of 50 million pesos (about 800,000 Euros). Of this, approximately 15% is used on administrative costs with the remainder going directly to projects. Funding comes from the national government, local government units, other national government agencies, and private companies.

### **Areas of work:**

The mission of the NYC is to provide a framework for youth development, to ensure both the formulation of relevant policies and innovation and coordination of programs. Top priorities include 1) Research, policy formulation, and advocacy 2) Networking, partnerships, and institution-building and 3) Social marketing, public, and media relations. International cooperation is important, and the NYC cooperates with regional youth initiatives such as the Cabinet Office of Japan, and the ASEAN governments in implementing the Ship for Southeast Asian Youth Program, and other ASEAN Youth initiatives. Key challenges for the NYC in their role of representing Filipino youth include 1) Budgetary limitations 2) Motivating youth to participate in community/national affairs and 3) Lobbying for institutions to invest in youth development programs. Because the NYC is affiliated with the government, the NYC policy agenda will always run parallel to the governmental policy agenda of the day.

### 1.3.3. Zambia

## The National Youth Development Council (NYDC)

#### History:

The National Youth Development Council of Zambia was established under an act of parliament in 1986. The key actors behind its establishment were youth organizations in Zambia, the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development (representing the government), and the Zambian parliament. There were a range of objectives that led to its establishment: 1) The need for an institution that would link youth organizations and the government to ensure the smooth implementation of youth programs in the country) 2) The lack of a database of operating youth organizations in the country (NYDC was envisioned to take up the role of creating one) 3) To promote a strengthened youth movement in the country and 4) To enhance the distribution of resources among youth organizations. The objectives that led to the establishment of the NYDC in 1986 are still its main functions. The key challenges that the NYDC faced were a lack of adequate resources (financial and operational), a lack of equipment, and a lack of understanding by some sectors on the importance of creating a NYC.

#### Membership and governance:

In early 2006, the NYDC had 158 registered youth organizations in its database with each comprising a membership of about 700 to 1,000 youth. Since the database had just been set up at the end of 2005, there aren't any figures yet about the annual growth of the NYC. Zambian law, however, requires youth organizations that want to legally operate in the country to register with the NYDC, for which they have to pay an affiliation fee of 10 USD.

#### Work methodology:

The NYDC is working with a total number of 19 paid staff and has a board that comprises of 16 members appointed by the government. In comparison to other NYCs in Africa, the budget of around 45,000 USD, allocated from the national budget of the Zambian government, is relatively large, but according to the NYDC, still never meets the needs in the area of empowering youth nationwide. At times, the NYC receives additional funding from charity organizations or private companies. It also holds fundraising ventures from time to time.

#### Areas of work:

The mission of the NYDC is to promote, coordinate, monitor, and evaluate youth programs in Zambia. Its top three priority areas of work are to raise youth participation in decision-making processes, reduce the unemployment and poverty rates among youth, and enhance education. The high poverty rate among youth in the country is also seen as one of the main challenges of the NYDC. Further challenges are to revise the old Council Act of 1986 in order to meet the needs of today's youth. Lack of adequate resources also continues to be a major challenge. The NYC is situated in one out of nine provinces of Zambia and due to limited information technology and transportation resources, the NYDC has had difficulties overcoming this challenge. International cooperation is of high priority for the NYDC: it is engaged with the World Assembly of Youth, the SADC Youth Movement, and has been working since 1996 in partnership with the LSU on several initiatives.

## 1.4. Other youth umbrella structures

### 1.4.1. Turkey

#### Local Agenda 21 National Youth Parliament (LA21 NYP)



##### History:

The Local Agenda 21 National Youth Parliament was established in 2004. It brings together local and regional youth councils annually for the purpose of driving youth policy. It was the response of existing youth organizations to the lack of a coherent youth policy and NYC. Key challenges to the founding of the Parliament were reaching young people since they were not organized (particularly at the local level), lack of finances, and developing the organizational structure. The founding process was led by the Local Agenda 21 Program, Youth Association for Habitat and Agenda 21, and existing local youth councils.

##### Membership and governance:

In 2004, the Parliament comprised of 297 delegates from 75 provinces in Turkey. Membership is made up of local youth councils, each of which may elect delegates (based on proportional regional representation) to attend the annual General Assembly. Local youth council members are between 15 and 25 years of age.

##### Work methodology:

Officially, there are no paid employees in the secretariat, as the Parliament is established within a program. Youth Association for Habitat and Agenda 21 coordinates the youth component of the Local Agenda 21 Program and performs secretarial activities. There is one professional working as the youth activities facilitator, and volunteers of the Association contribute to the realization of activities. All but one of the people working for the program are under the age of 30; elected positions in the National Youth Parliament and in local youth councils carry an age limit of 26. There are 28 Board Members (two per region).

The current (third) phase of the Local Agenda 21 Program allocates 120,000 USD for youth activities.

Other funding sources include the Government of Turkey (1,400,000 USD from the budget of the Ministry of Interior Affairs) and UNDP (600,000 USD from the Capacity 2015 Program – Program Supporting Local Agenda 21 Practices). Local youth councils also benefit from external funding resources such as European Commission grants, the EU Youth Program, other foundations, and partnerships with private sector.

##### Areas of work:

The mission of the Parliament is to represent young people, develop and contribute to the development of youth policies to meet the demands of young people, solve problems of young people, and take an active role in the implementation of these initiatives. Priority areas are identified as 1) The organization of young people 2) Capacity building and 3) Youth policy/awareness raising (structural). Thematic areas of work are 1) Employment/poverty reduction 2) Information technologies 3) Health and 4) Environment. International cooperation is a high priority for the Parliament, which organizes international activities, mainly under the youth program of the European Union. Participants are mostly from EU member and candidate countries, and some are from Mediterranean countries.

Key challenges the Parliament seeks to address are 1) Education 2) Unemployment and 3) Inability of youth to express themselves (which is rooted in social problems). New laws on local authorities codified the legality of city councils in which local youth councils take part. According to this law, the recommendations of city councils — in which local youth councils participate — have to be taken into account by municipal councils. It is expected that in the near future, the influence of local youth councils will increase. At the national level, the Youth Parliament meets parliamentarians at its annual General Assembly to influence decision-making on youth issues.



## 1.4.2. Ukraine

### Ukrainian Union of Youth Organizations (USMO)

#### **History:**

The Ukrainian Union of Youth Organizations was established in 1996. The establishment was complicated by having to officially register with the bureaucratic structure of the Ministry of Justice, which was only achieved in 1998. The key actors that pushed for the creation of USMO were Ukrainian youth organizations themselves, responding to a need for better coordination among themselves in order to make their efforts stronger and more effective.

#### **Membership and governance:**

In 2006, the USMO comprises 37 member organizations, and grows at a rate of five or six each year. To become a member of the USMO, an organization must be officially registered as a youth NGO according to Ukrainian legislation, operate according to democratic principles, work with youth and for youth, and agree to the principles reflected in the statutes of USMO.

#### **Work methodology:**

Operations of the USMO are based solely on volunteers. The Board is comprised of seven people, five of whom are under 30. The annual budget of approximately 8,000 Euros comes from the Ukraine Ministry on Family, Youth and Sport Affairs, international donor organizations working in the country, and international partners. 85% to 90% of the budget goes directly to projects, while the remainder is used for administrative costs.

#### **Areas of work:**

The USMO aims to contribute to the development of civil society in the Ukraine by working on issues of mutual interest to youth organizations. It aims to realize the rights of young people by acting on the principles of humanity, openness, equality, and volunteerism. Top priorities include 1) Education of youth 2) International cooperation and 3) Capacity building of its member organizations. On an international level, the USMO organization currently cooperates with Moldova, Belarus, Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan through its member organization VUSMO. Key challenges for the USMO are 1) Financial stability 2) Promoting and maintaining cooperation between member organizations and 3) Institutional development.



# PART 2: Cluster-based findings

## 2.1. Evolution of National Youth Councils

This first cluster-based analysis is dealing with the evolution of NYCs. There are four questions that are being looked at:

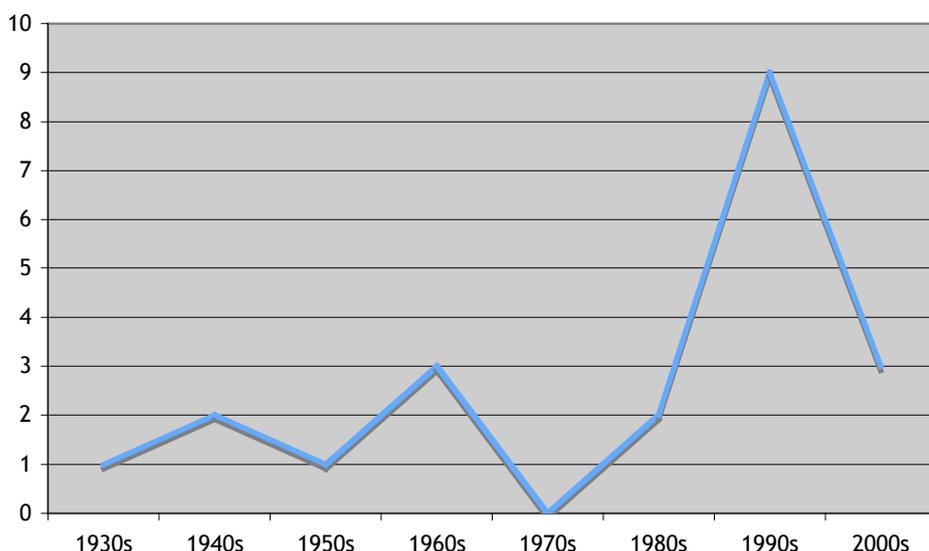
- 1) When were NYCs established?
- 2) What were the key influences that led to the establishment of NYCs?
- 3) Who were the key actors in pushing for it? and
- 4) What were the key challenges that NYCs faced during the period of establishment?

### 2.1.1. Historical evolution

When looking at the above chart, which shows the number of participating NYCs established per decade, there is an obvious peak during the 1990s. The establishment of a large number of participating NYCs during the 1990s can be attributed to the fall of the Soviet Republic, which led the former member states of the USSR into independence and more importantly, sparked a rise in non-governmental organizations (also youth organizations) due to the newly gained freedom of association in these countries.

Western Europe is home to the oldest NYCs. The NYC of Switzerland was established as early as 1933 and has a predecessor organization, which even goes back to 1912. The NYC of Sweden (1948), Germany (1949) and Belgium (1956) were all established after the end of WWII with the aim of contributing to democratic and stable structures within these countries but also on an international level (the LSU was established in order to facilitate contact between young people in the East and West of Europe).

Birth date of National Youth Councils



As for the establishment of NYCs in other countries and regions, it is hard to identify similar patterns or strong relationships with major historical events. For example, the Nigerian NYC was established shortly after the country gained independence and became a republic in the early 1960s. Zambia and Uganda, however, took much longer after independence to set up similar structures. It is therefore not possible to identify a similar rise of NYCs in the post-independence years of African nations as it is for NYCs of former Soviet Republics.

## 2.1.2. Key influences

As already became clear in the previous section, there are several countries where historical circumstances had a key influence on the establishment of the NYC. Four countries explicitly stated that the establishment of the NYC was influenced by the broader situation in the country at that time: in **Germany**, the occupying powers after the end of WWII pursued the idea of establishing democratic structures among and inside youth organizations to prevent the repetition of the political streamlining during the Nazi-regime. In **Sweden**, as has already been mentioned, the establishment of the LSU must be seen in the broader historical context of the emerging conflict between 'East and West'. In **Slovenia** and **Slovakia**, political and social changes in the countries led to the establishment of their NYCs.

Also heavily influenced externally was the establishment of the **Greek NYC (ESYN)**. ESYN set up its NYC relatively late in comparison to other European countries. It was only in 1998 that the ESYN was founded and it is therefore not surprising that influence coming from other European States played a key role. With the majority of European countries having NYCs, it almost seems natural that countries in close proximity develop similar youth structures. The role of regional platforms, such as the *European Youth Forum*, should not be underestimated either. On the one hand, the prospect of becoming a member organization of the *European Youth Forum* (and thus being able influence youth policy on an European level as well) can be seen as an incentive for youth organizations to set up an umbrella organization in their country. On the other hand, the *European Youth Forum* itself supports youth organizations in European countries without any functioning NYC or umbrella organization to set up such an institution.

These integrating forces that are strongly visible in Europe are, however, lacking in other regions of

the world and it is probably due to that fact that NYCs haven't yet spread as widely or are at least not playing such an important role in coordinating youth issues as NYCs do in Europe.

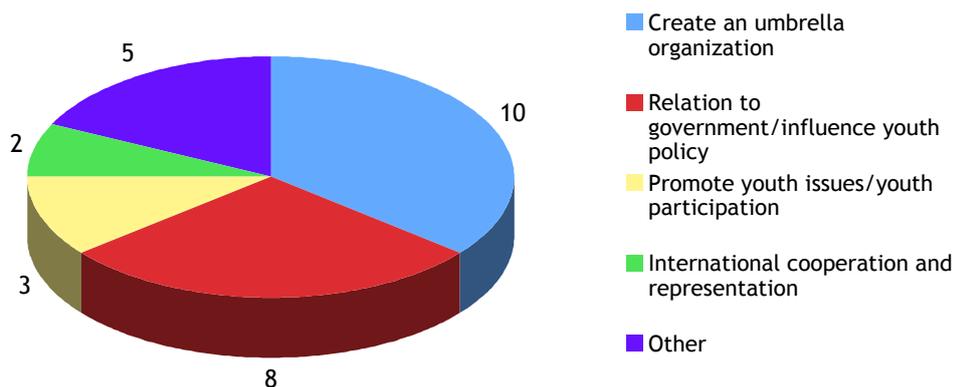
Besides these external (historical and geographical) influences, the key influences that led to the establishment of NYCs can be grouped into five main areas.

The most important reason, named by ten NYCs as one of the key influences in establishing a NYC, was the wish of youth organizations in the country to **create an umbrella organization**. Several countries stated in our questionnaire that an umbrella organization or national platform for youth organizations was needed in order to be stronger and more effective in influencing youth policy. Youth organizations realized that the interest of young people and youth organizations can be better defended and promoted when joining efforts on a national level.

Of similar importance and in close relation to the need for an umbrella organization, was the desire of youth organizations to create a platform that could act as **a link between youth organizations and the government**. For some countries, this was important in order to ensure a better communication and cooperation with state institutions as well as a smooth implementation of youth programs in the country. Other countries regarded a permanent body on youth that maintains direct relations with the state as a better way to influence youth policy.

Of less overall importance, but still mentioned by three different NYCs, was the projection that **youth issues and youth participation** as such could be better promoted through the establishment of a NYC. As Jeugdraad, the Dutch NYC, pointed out, there were still major obstacles to meaningful youth participation in the country before the council was established in 2001. For example,

**Key Influences that led to the establishment of National Youth Councils**



youth participation was characterized as a rather ad-hoc opportunity, often carried out in the form of a topic-specific consultation, since structures for involvement were absent. To create these structures that would allow more permanent youth participation was one of the key influences in the Netherlands that led to the establishment of Jeugdraad.

It was furthermore mentioned by two NYCs that they saw a need for a platform that could **represent the youth of the country internationally** and coordinate activities with youth organizations in other countries.

A couple of **other key influences** were mentioned by Zambia. First of all, the lack of a database of operating youth organizations played a major role: it was envisioned that a NYC could better oversee

the various youth activities in the country. Second, the NYC was set up in order to enhance equal distribution of resources among youth organizations, i.e. youth organizations based in rural and urban areas. Lastly, the NYC was seen as a body that could initiate, operate and manage non-profit making projects in support of youth development across the country. For the Netherlands, another major reason why a NYC was set up was the need to ensure continuity in the funding of youth activities. In Turkey, the creation of the LA21 NYP was spurred by the fact that the 25% of Turkey's population are youth, but they are not contributing to society in a meaningful way because they are not well organized. Creating structures that would allow young people to participate and contribute to the country's development were key influences in this case.

### 2.1.3. Key actors

Youth, particularly those organized in youth organizations, have been the key actors in establishing NYCs in almost all countries examined. Generally, the process has been a bottom-up process and even in countries where the initiative came from state authorities (Nigeria, Zambia, Costa Rica) such as the Ministries of Youth, youth organizations, or other, young people have at least been part of the process.

There are five different key actors that can be identified:

- Youth / youth organizations
- Students / student organizations
- Government institutions
- Young politicians / youth wings of political parties
- Local youth councils

In the majority of cases (>70% of participating NYCs) **youth and youth organizations** played the key role in setting up the NYC. But there are slight variations: in Flemish Belgium for example, four different national umbrella organizations already existed, representing together about 100 youth organizations. Here, it was these umbrella organizations and

not the youth organizations themselves that established the NYC. Some countries have also put a lot of emphasis on **individual young leaders** — some within youth organizations and some outside of any existing structures — who played a leading role in setting up the NYC. Slovenia in particular mentioned that the establishment of the MSS would have never happened without a group of young individuals, responsible in different youth organizations and organizations for children, who had enough influence in different political and interest groupings among actors in the field of youth to push for the establishment of a NYC in the country.

**Students and student councils or student organizations** have played a key role in three out of 22 countries examined (~14% of participating NYCs). In two countries (Greece and Sweden), the **youth wings of political parties** played a key role and in another three countries young **politicians/parliamentarians** were involved in the setting up process. In Turkey, **local youth councils**, for which the LA21 NYP is an umbrella organization, were part of the key actors leading to the establishment of the structure.

## 2.1.4. Key challenges

The key challenges that NYCs faced during their set-up phase can roughly be summarized in five groups:

- 1) Political hindrances and lack of youth policy
- 2) Securing funding and other resources
- 3) Harmonizing the objectives of the various different youth organization
- 4) Organizational challenges and
- 5) External challenges due to the political situation in the country.

By far the most important group was the first one: **Political hindrances and lack of youth policy.** Almost 50% of all National Youth Council stated that they had problems in regard to this in the beginning. Challenges ranged from negative attitudes by some politicians to a lack of state support for youth activities and youth participation. Some countries, particularly in Eastern Europe, also had problems being officially recognized by the State. The MSS for example was only fully recognized two years after its foundation and the decision was heavily influenced by the Council of Europe, which puts a lot of emphasis on democratic youth structures in all countries wishing to enter into membership with it. Also in the Ukraine, registration was slowed because of the bureaucratic structures of the Ministry of Justice.

A couple of NYCs also mentioned challenges in regard to **youth policy**: either there was a total lack of governmental youth policy or it was very weak. The newly established NYCs had to find ways to influence state policies towards youth and also to get legal recognition of youth policy that they saw as necessary.

The second major challenge faced by NYCs was the initial **lack of funding and other resources.** Some NYCs charge membership fees which gave them at least some initial funding, but several councils

stated that it was very difficult at the beginning to find financial resources to run programs and pay salaries of office members. Other NYCs also had problems to find office space or lacked necessary equipments such as computers to work effectively.

Third, some NYCs had to overcome initial **political divisions among the various youth organizations** and founding members. In many countries the youth organizations that established the NYC had various different, sometimes politically diverging, backgrounds and in some cases this led to internal divisions about the structure and work of the NYC. These diverging objectives had to be harmonized and a 'common language' for youth had to be found.

Fourth, NYCs faced various **organization challenges**, such as questions regarding the actual structure of the council (for example, Switzerland discussed at length whether the new body should be exclusive to youth organization or inclusive of other relevant actors in the youth field), international communications and coordination between the member organizations, and the challenges of becoming competent in all fields relevant for young people. In Turkey, the major challenge for the LA21 NYP was to reach out to young people since they were not organized especially at the local level.

Lastly, some challenges occurred out of the **political situation in the country or region** at the time of establishment. In Germany, it soon became clear that it was not possible to establish a NYC comprising the youth organizations of the whole of Germany because the *Free Democratic Youth* in the Soviet zone of occupation in the Eastern part of Germany made demands that the youth organizations in the Western part of Germany did and could not share. In Switzerland, the political development in neighboring countries during the 1920s and 1930s created a large distrust against anything centralized, a challenge that had to be overcome before a NYC could be founded.

## 2.2. Membership Structure

This second cluster deals with the membership of NYCs. The following questions were asked:

- 1) How many members does the youth council have?
- 2) What are the membership criteria?
- 3) Does the membership increase or decrease, if so, by how much annually?

Pertaining to the membership criteria, it is particularly important to ask who — individuals or organizations? — is a NYC's membership. The answers to these questions clearly depend on whether the organization in question is a youth- or state-driven NYC.

### 2.2.1. Who and How Many

There appear to be two main attitudes toward NYC membership: they can be comprised of member organizations, or of individual youth. Of the NYCs participating in our study, most work with member organizations, while **Flemish Belgium** was unique in making room in its organizational structure for both member organizations and individual membership.

Because membership numbers will vary not only according to whether the NYC is made of individuals or organizations, but also due to factors such as membership criteria (see below), how long the NYC has existed, size and population of the country, national history of youth participation, levels of government support, etc., it is more interesting to question the factors that determine membership than to question membership in absolute numbers.

Some NYCs create different categories of membership. The NYCs of **Ireland** and **Germany** make room for affiliate members. Affiliate members are those organizations that work in the spirit of youth, but do not meet the formal requirements for NYC membership, and have an advisory vote only. **Slovakia** and **the Netherlands** give these

organizations observer status, while the Constitution of the **Swiss** National Youth Council also distinguishes active from contact members. The NYC of **Latvia** also has associate members who are individual branches of larger organizations.

The Vlaamse Jeugdraad of **Belgium** has a General Assembly of 24 voting members, who are elected every three years by the broad membership, and represent different sectors of youth society (a fixed number of individual youth, representatives of youth organizations, and members of student groups). All interested young people are welcome to attend and contribute to the meetings and initiatives of the Jeugdraad. Some NYCs also have local or regional youth councils ("Roundtables" in **Russia** and **Lithuania**) as members.

As can be seen in the next section on Work Objectives and Challenges, the type of members has bearing on who the NYC understands itself to represent. The criteria for membership will perhaps have the greatest impact on how and who make up a NYC, so this is where our attention will now focus.

## 2.2.2. Criteria for Membership

Every youth-driven NYC has some form of membership criteria. Some are highly elaborate and codified in the statutes of the NYC, establishing formulae that organizations must meet in order to qualify for and maintain membership. Here as an example, taken from the Memorandum of Association of the NYC of **Ireland**: Other youth-led NYCs have taken a “come-one-come-all” approach to membership, as the Vlaamse Jeugdraad of **Belgium** already discussed. As would be expected, state-driven NYCs, which are tied to the youth concerns of national governments, such as those of **Costa Rica**, **Zambia**, and **the Philippines**, have fewer “criteria” for membership; in fact, for these

### Excerpt from the Memorandum of Association of the National Youth Council of Ireland

Membership of the Company shall be open to any voluntary organization or agency which accepts the objectives as set out in Clause 2 of the Memorandum of Association of the Company for the time being in force, and:

- a) is self-managing in structure;
- b) is involved in fostering, promoting and facilitating the welfare, advancement and development of young people;
- c) allows for the continuous participation of young people within the decision-making process of its organization;
- d) provides development programs or services for young people;
- e) which is national or regional in membership with a majority of members under 25 years of age:

...

entities, it is more appropriate to talk about “registration criteria.” The National Youth Commission of the **Philippines**, for instance, registers “youth-serving organizations or youth organizations whose members are between 15 to 30 years old.”

At the individual level, there can be age limits or ranges (i.e. between 15 and 30 years of age for the National Youth Commission of **the Philippines**) for participating or for holding positions within member organizations or within the NYC itself. As will be seen in section 2.4, some NYCs are almost exclusively run by people under 30 (**Sweden**) while others are comprised of an older staff (e.g. **Germany**, **Costa Rica**, **Ireland**).

That **member organizations of NYCs must work for the development of youth and youth participation** is not surprising, and is the predominant criterion that cuts across all NYCs. And yet, there are a surprising number of variations in what this can mean. For instance, for the National Council of **Swedish** Youth Organizations, this means that a member organization must undertake activities by and with youth. For the NYC of **Switzerland**, by contrast, a member organization doesn’t need to be by-youth-for-youth. Rather a member organization’s activities can simply be focused on youth, or deal with youth-related aspects and questions of public concern.

For the NYCs responding to our survey, this chart summarizes the most common answers to the question “What are your membership criteria?”:

As can be seen from the table, the most common membership concerns of NYCs are that 1) their member organizations **subscribe to the NYC Constitution** and other normative documents 2) they **be active in more than one region** and 3) they are organized according to **democratic principles** and **youth are central and independent in decision-making processes**. Different criteria exist for geographical distribution. To illustrate: the **German** NYC requires that its member organizations be active in the majority of the *Bundesländer*, the NYC of **Greece** requires that the branches of a member organization be active in at least three counties, and the NYC of **Portugal** requires that its member organizations be active in half of the regions of the country.

**Age of members** is also important. For example, member organizations of the NYC of **Slovenia** must have at least 70% of their membership and 70% of their leadership members aged 15 to 29 years, and for the National Council of **Swedish** Youth Organizations, at least 60% of a member organization’s membership must be under 25 years old.

Many NYCs require that member organizations have a minimum **number of active members** – ranging from 100 in **Lithuania**, to 400 in **Greece**, to 25,000 in **Germany**. In **Sweden**, criteria are combined, requiring a member organization to have at least 300 individual members, or at least 30 local member organizations. **Ireland** has a more complex formula, requiring national organizations to have 15 recognized units (one unit = minimum of 20 people) and representation in at least two provinces, while a regional organization must have at least ten recognized units with an active participation of not less than 1,000 young people. In countries such as **Germany** where the minimum requirements prevent small organizations from accessing the NYC, smaller groups have formed umbrella coalitions — based on geography or issue areas — to meet the minimum membership requirement. While having a high minimum requirement can be a response to the existence of large youth organizations operating in a country, it is important to ensure that entire demographics of young people are not denied access to the benefits of a NYC because they are too small. That a member organization has **legal status under national law** is a concern particularly for NYCs in Eastern Europe, and **legal personality** is currently an important issue among Western European NYCs.

The Turkish National Youth Parliament (which is not included in the chart above) operates according to principles of proportional representation: local youth councils from each of the 75 provinces elect delegates to the annual Parliament. Delegates are between the ages of 20 and 25.

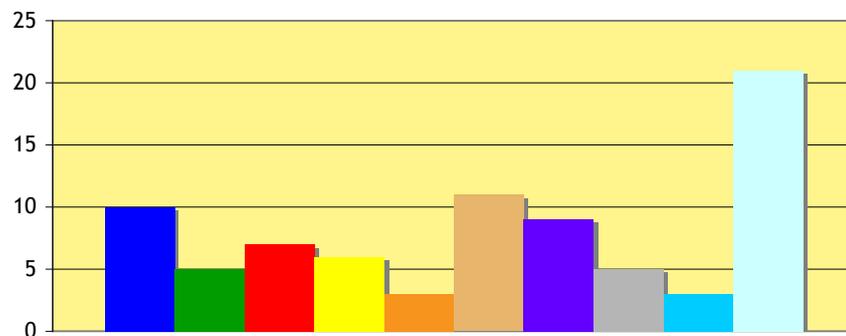
While some criteria are fundamental — for example, a respect for human rights and working in

the spirit of youth development — the **Dutch** Nationale Jeugdraad indicated a need in some cases to relax criteria to allow for broader participation. A balance must be struck between having clear and transparent criteria for members, and not barring active and competent organizations unnecessarily. For example, the Jeugdraad's General Assembly has discretion to accept a "young" organization that meets most criteria but falls short of the two-year prior existence requirement. This idea — that there is merit in providing sufficient flexibility within a

youth council's governance to allow for spontaneity — will be revisited in the recommendations made at the Conclusion of this report.

Finally, in all cases where a NYC brings its membership together in the form of an (usually annual) open meeting, final decisions on **admitting new member organizations** are taken through a **vote of the General Assembly** or equivalent body. This is seen as important to the open democratic governance that must characterize the working of a NYC.

**National Youth Council Membership Criteria**  
The Member Organization...



- ...subscribes to the NYC's founding documents, Constitution, international human rights instruments
- ...is registered with the state and possesses legal personality
- ...has a minimum number of members
- ...has a membership under a prescribed age limit
- ... has been in existence for a prescribed time period
- ...is active in a number or provinces/cantons/counties
- ...is organized according to democratic principles and processes, youth are central in decision-making processes
- ...is autonomous in its decision-making and management
- ...is not-for-profit
- ...works for the development of youth, youth participation, and promotes youth projects

### 2.2.3. Growth

Looking at the growth of participating NYCs can be both a funny and futile exercise, as annual growth varies from 1 to 100,000! Growth in membership depends on whether members are individuals or organizations, and on the membership requirements of the NYC. Most NYCs whose membership is comprised of member organizations reported moderate annual growth: between two and five member organizations per year. The NYCs of Ireland

and Portugal reported a constant membership (for Ireland, this has not changed in the past ten years), while the NYC of Slovenia explained that when the new *National Youth Council Act* was passed in 2002, some former member organizations did not meet the new requirements, and so membership decreased at that time. The National Youth Commission of the Philippines reported accepting up to nearly 100 new member organizations each year.

## 2.3. Work Objectives and Challenges

This third cluster questions how NYCs characterize the work they do, who they represent, and what challenges they face. The following questions were asked:

- 1) What is the mission statement of the youth council?
- 2) What are the top (three) priority areas of work?
- 3) How does the NYC define its own representation role – for instance, does it represent its member organizations, or all youth of the country? and
- 4) What are the (three) main challenges facing the NYC?

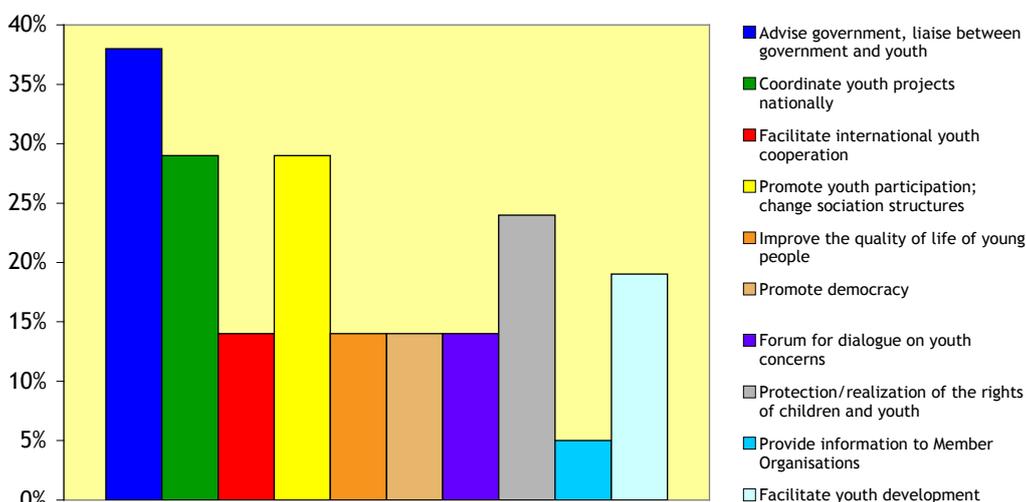
### 2.3.1. Mission statement

National Youth Council mission statements come in many shapes and sizes. Some are succinct, such as, “The German Federal Youth Council – a strong network.” Other NYCs provide lists of broad objectives and statements of purpose. Ten main themes can be identified as integral to the missions of youth councils, as seen in the chart below.

Conceptually, it is useful to divide the objectives of NYCs into two broad categories: 1) They can aim to facilitate the development of youth (coordinate projects, provide information, work to change quality of life for young people) and 2) They can aim to effect change in the attitude and space society gives to youth (work with government to change policy, advocate children’s rights protection, lobby to change social structures to accommodate youth concerns). These youth-centered and society-centered objectives can be pursued at the same time, although some NYCs focus on one or the other in their statements of mission.

Many NYCs discussed in their mission either their direct role in **advising the government** to inform policy decisions on youth, or their role in **liaising between government and member organizations** to facilitating member organizations’ ability to create and amend policies. Some councils or commissions (**Costa Rica** and **the Philippines**) were established by national governments and were given a mandate to facilitate youth-government cooperation, while others (**French** and **Flemish Belgium**) evolved as initiatives of youth organizations themselves, though hold a similar central mandate of influencing government policy. For the Vlaamse Jeugdraad of **Flemish Belgium**, it is important that not only the youth council interacts with the government, but that the voices of its children and youth members are heard by the government directly. The **Dutch** Nationale Jeugdraad identified a particular challenge in playing the role of government-youth interlocutor: external communications have to be done in

Objectives Identified in Mission Statements



a language that is appropriate for both disparate groups of young people, as well as the government. This suggests that NYCs must develop sophisticated communications strategies.

As the word “National” in the concept “National Youth Council” denotes, most NYCs **coordinate and promote youth projects** that are national in scope. In its Mission Statement, the NYC of **Ireland** indicates that it uses the “collective experiences of its members [to] act on issues that impact on young people.” For NYCs, coordination can mean coordinating groups regionally, based on issue-areas, or member organizations generally. **Switzerland, Russia, Ukraine** and **Sweden** all discussed creating cohesion among member organizations as a priority and also a particular challenge, as seen below under Challenges.

Another objective of many NYCs is to **facilitate international youth cooperation between domestic and international youth organizations**. As will be seen in the discussion below dedicated to International Cooperation, many NYCs also use their capacity to create links with other NYCs and youth NGOs abroad.

National Youth Councils that talked about promoting youth participation addressed the concept from two angles. On the one side, some work to **promote participation among youth not already active** (working to provide points of access for disengaged youth) or to **promote active participation of their member organizations in initiatives of the NYC**. On the other side, some take an institutional approach, aiming to change societal structures to

accommodate youth perspectives, needs, and concerns. A main objective of these NYCs is to **promote change in the attitudes of governments toward youth**, making these more attune and accessible to the concerns and expertise of youth.

National Youth Councils in Eastern European countries in particular stated **improvement of quality of life for young people** as an overarching objective. The NYC of **Lithuania**, for instance, states succinctly in its mission statement: “We, being a platform for dialogs, represent interests and initiatives of Lithuanian youth organizations and endeavor tangible changes for young people.” The National Council of **Swedish** Youth Organizations references the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child as the spirit that guides its work on the **protection and realization of the rights of children and youth**.

That five NYCs include in their mission statements the **facilitation of youth development** highlights the importance of this first of the two broad categories of NYC objectives. The NYC of the **Ukraine** focuses predominantly on the child-development side of the equation, with a mission statement championing “the development of the civil society in Ukraine, based on the principles of mutual interests of youth organizations for the realization of their rights and acts on humanity, openness, equality and volunteer basis.”

Other objectives common to several NYCs included **promoting democracy (within the NYC, within society)**, and **providing information to member organizations**.

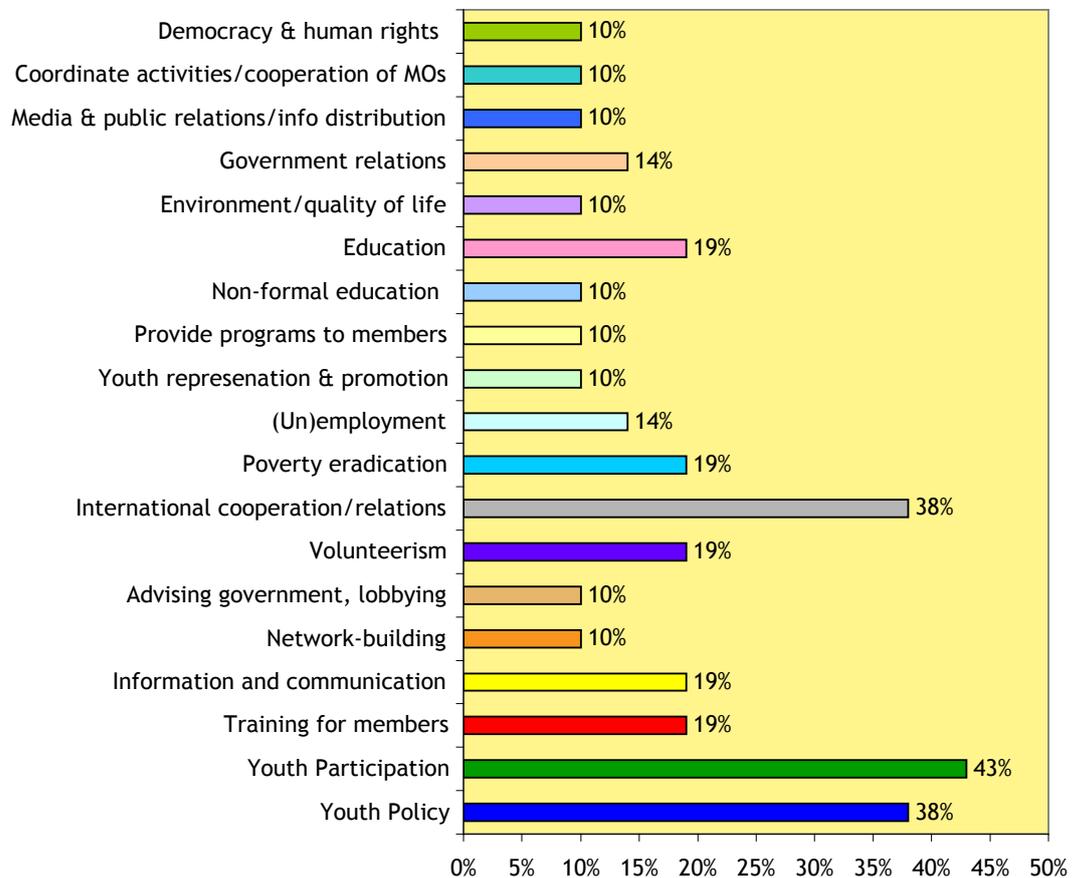
## 2.3.2. Priority areas of work

In response to the question “What are the top (three) areas of work?” some NYCs provided broad priorities that guide their work, while others offered priorities as determined by their work plan for coming year(s). This table summarizes the most common answers received to this question (by two or more NYCs):

The most common priorities include **youth participation, youth policy, and international cooperation**. Some councils prioritized *issue areas* on which they currently work. These issues were

shared by many NYCs. Examples include formal and informal education, poverty eradication, and volunteerism. In contrast to issue areas, numerous NYCs highlighted *institutional priorities* such as providing training for members and providing information and facilitating communication to and among its membership. Due to the wide range in the types of answers received for this question, the chart above should be looked at as illustrative of some priorities of NYCs, but not as an absolute statement on what NYCs prioritize everywhere.

**Priorities of National Youth Councils**



## 2.3.4. Representation role

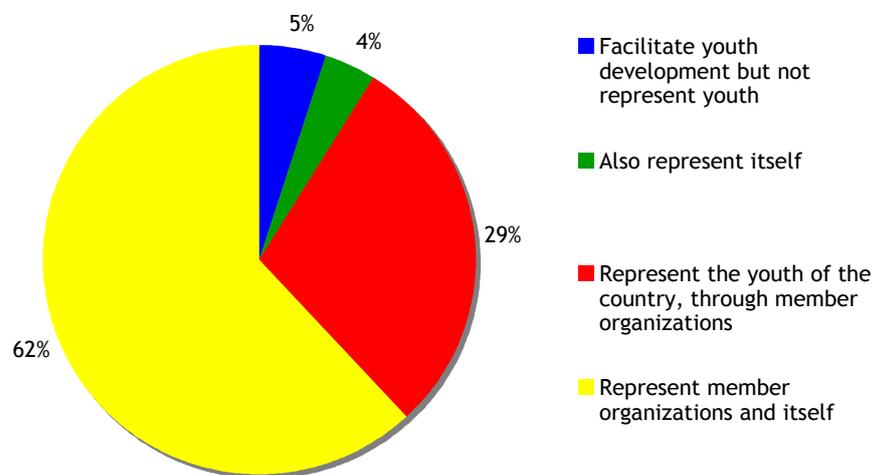
There are also many ways to answer the question “Whom do you represent?” Four different answers were provided by NYCs, as seen in the chart below. While most NYCs see themselves as **representative of their member organizations**, nearly one quarter feel they more broadly **represent all youth** in the country. The NYC of **Costa Rica** — as a body closely tied to and relied upon by the government to facilitate the work of a youth-comprised General Assembly — made clear that it **facilitates youth work**, but is not itself representative of youth. Finally, in addition to member organizations, the **French Belgium Youth Council (CJEF)** answered that it also represents **itself as an independent entity** that works for its membership.

It seems that how a NYC understands its role is a discussion frequently revisited by many NYCs. In an interview, a vice-president of the National Council of **Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU)** suggested

that for member organizations, “LSU should be a collection of themselves.” This concept stands in contrast to that articulated by the CJEF. In practice, perhaps neither concept is embraced in its totality: a NYC might act as an autonomous being when negotiating its core funding with government for instance, but as a collective of its members if presenting a position paper on a particular issue.

As seen in the Challenges discussed below, creating a common sense of purpose for member organizations can be complicated, particularly as organizations each represent different interests, political stripes, beliefs, and regions. The challenges also indicate that some NYCs struggle to create space for individual youth: both those who are active but do not fit into the mandate or structure of existing member organizations, as well as those individuals who are simply not engaged.

### The role of the National Youth Council is to...



## 2.3.5. Challenges

The table below illustrates the primary challenges met by NYCs in carrying out their work and in striving to achieve their objectives. Funding was mentioned most frequently, by nearly 60% of the responding NYCs. Many of these challenges, including funding, need some further explanation.

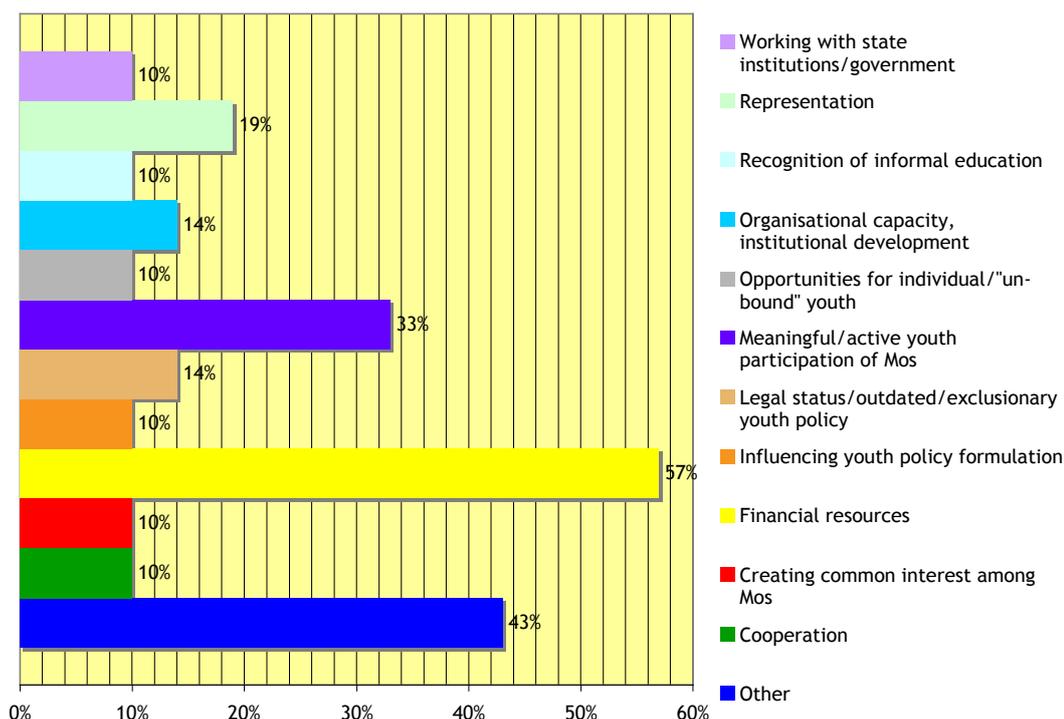
While many NYCs identified **funding** as a primary challenge, there was surprising variation in what this meant. For the most part, NYCs did not simply identify insufficient funds as a challenge; in fact, NYCs are apparently quite capable of finding creative means to use and stretch available resources! **Lack of stable or predictable funding** was a common theme. **Russia** stated that instability in resources made long-term projects difficult to plan, while **Germany** identified **government budget cuts** as an operational challenge. Other NYCs explained that their budget is set by law as a fixed percentage of the total national budget for youth policy (e.g. both **Flemish** and **French Belgium**) — a possible response to Russian uncertainty, though this would not help the German concern in the case of national budget cuts in all sectors. The NYC in **Sweden** identified a gap between aspirations and capacity, particularly for advocacy projects that the government and independent funders are less inclined to fund. For Sweden this was problematic as advocacy was stated among their top priorities. This demonstrates that government and other funders can have an indirect influence on a NYC's agenda (initiatives are not possible if funds are unobtainable) and highlights that in an ideal situation, a NYC should have at least a portion of its

funds over which it has complete allocative control. Sweden also indicated that **tied funding** (e.g. where funds must be used for a particular project with limited flexibility to use them for overhead) creates challenges or frustrations — frustrations shared by many not-for-profit organizations.

Participation was a second common challenge, and included both **the meaningful and active participation of individual youth as well as of Member Organizations**. The NYC of Greece spoke of active participation of its member organizations in its work as a challenge, **Sweden** of retaining member organizations, while **Armenia** identified the lack of youth participation in society as a broader societal problem. The National Youth Commission of **the Philippines** spoke of the difficulty in translating between youth participation at the community and national levels.

As discussed above, the question of whether and when a NYC **represents member organizations or youth generally** remains a key challenge for many NYCs. The NYC of Ireland identified being a truly representative organization as a key challenge, while that of Slovakia discussed the currently open question of whether the NYC ought to represent member organizations or youth generally. For the National Council of **Swedish** Youth Organizations, a key challenge is the perception member organizations have of the NYC: believing that the NYC should be a collection of its members, rather than an organization that is separate from them.

Challenges of National Youth Councils



For several NYCs, **legal status** and **outdated or exclusionary youth policy** were identified as challenges. **Russia** spoke of uncertainty of the legal foundations of youth policy as a primary concern. The importance of a strong policy for youth participation in decision-making was corroborated by other NYCs when asked for recommendations to nascent NYCs. On multiple occasions, they identified strong youth policy, protected by national legislation, as imperative. **Zambia** similarly discussed old legislation on youth policy as an obstacle to their work, while **Uganda** spoke of prejudicial attitudes of government institutions and individuals within them as inimical to the youth agenda.

In listing **participation of individuals** as a key challenge, the NYC of **Greece** identified a key challenge for representative structures like NYCs: what about individual youth that do not easily fit the “mold” created by the NYC, particularly in cases where the NYC is comprised of member organizations and not individuals? Among its key challenges, the **Dutch Nationale Jeugdraad** also spoke of the challenge of serving member organizations while also **reaching out to “un-bound” youth** (those youth who are not already part of a youth organization). The **Dutch Jeugdraad** also spoke of the need to balance its own outreach activities to individuals with activities of its member organizations, as these must not

compete or repeat the same efforts. A second category of individual youth would be those youth who are active or interested in a particular issue area, but for whom there is no relevant member organization through which to carry out their activities.

Many **other** challenges were identified by NYCs, among these:

- Strengthening regional and local youth councils
- Implementing European policy documents
- Working cross-sectorally (not just in youth policy, but in all areas that disproportionately affect youth)
- Self-promotion/outward communication – in a manner at once accessible to youth, governments, and media
- Lack of diversity of membership
- Retaining members
- Poverty among youth
- Too few international partners
- Developing best practices in working with young people

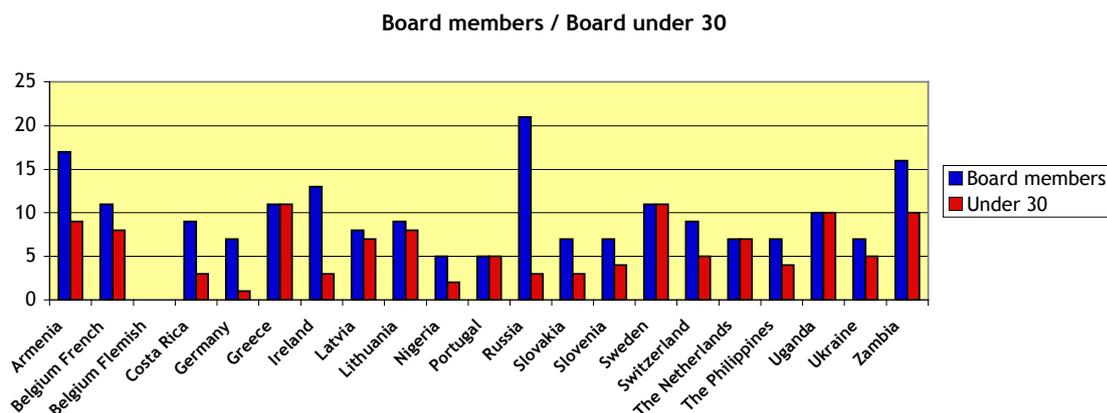
## 2.4. Staff, Board Members, and Volunteers

Who are the faces behind National Youth Councils? They are usually a combination of paid staff, board members, and volunteers.

### 2.4.1. The Board

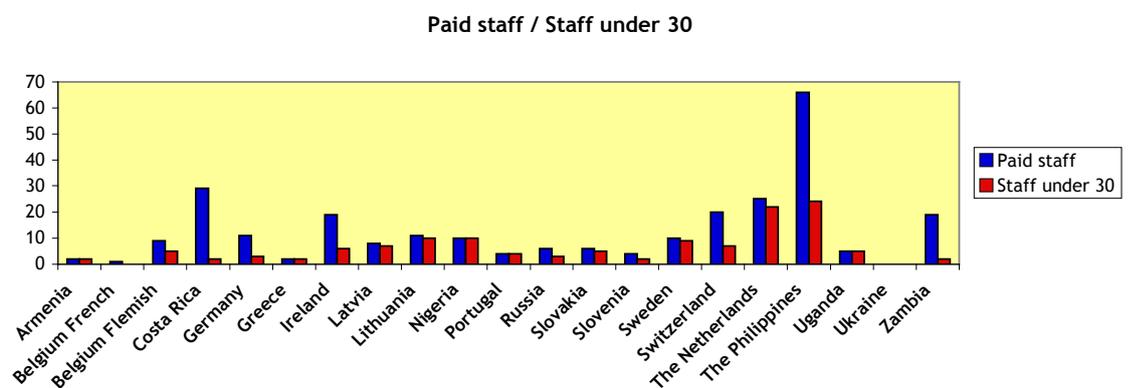
National Youth Councils have also developed many formulae for who and what comprises their Board. The National Youth Council of Costa Rica has a Board made up of three youth from the General Assembly, and six government ministers. Board Members of the National Youth Council of Switzerland must be under 35, and the composition is determined in part by a language quota — at least 33% German speaking, 33% French or Italian speaking — as well as parity of gender. The absolute number of board members ranged from 5 to 21.

While many of the participating NYCs have a board comprised largely or completely of young people under the age of 30, some also have a large number of older board members.



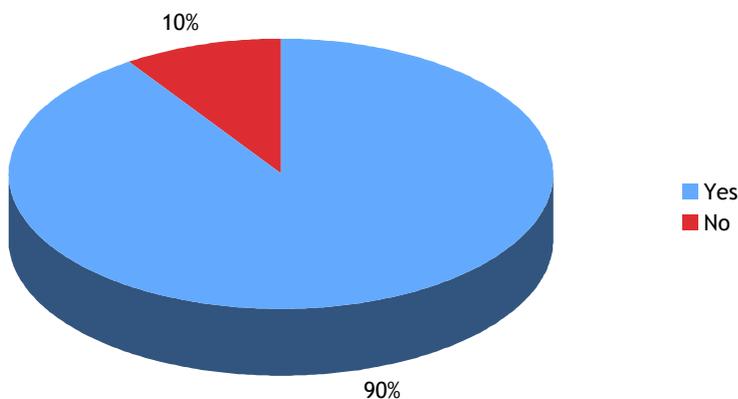
## 2.4.2. Staff

Many of the NYCs who responded to the survey have policies limiting the age of their staff to 30 or 35. For example, an employee of the Dutch Nationale Jeugdraad must be 30 or less when hired, though exceptions can be made for finding the most qualified director and financial manager. Those NYCs with direct connections to the national government (e.g. Costa Rica, the Philippines) have both a larger and older staff demographic. Of the respondents, only one NYC of Ukraine had no paid staff members.



## 2.4.3. Volunteers

**Does the NYC work with volunteers?**



Most NYCs depend, to a greater or lesser extent, on volunteers. While the National Youth Council of the Ukraine is completely reliant on volunteers, most NYCs have a board comprised of volunteers, and many provide directly or facilitate volunteer opportunities for interested individuals who are usually active members of the NYC's member organizations.

In some cases, such as for the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, the NYC is responsible for selecting a youth (volunteer) delegate to be part of the country's national delegation to the UN General Assembly and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and UNESCO events.

## 2.5. Government - National Youth Council relations

Obviously, the relation that a NYC has with the government is of high importance for its work. We've asked NYCs two questions to find out how governments and NYCs are influencing each other.

### 2.5.1. Change of government

The first question relates to the influence that a change of government has for the work of the NYC. Only 33% reported that it has some influence on their work, while 67% reported that a change of government doesn't influence the work of the youth council at all. Still, many of the "No"s were rather a "No, but..." and the different influences that a change of government has are even similar to some extent in the "Yes" and "No" group of answers.

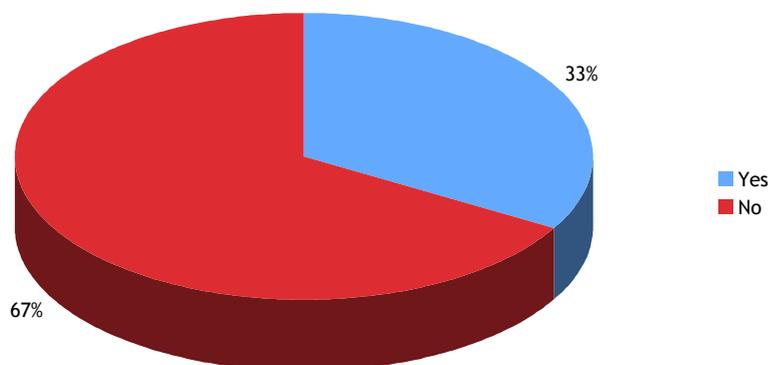
Put together, there are three areas that a change of government can affect to several degrees, depending on the relation that the NYC has with the government.

The first area is **funding**. The NYC of **Greece** reported that a change of government usually influences the budget that is spent for youth participation institutions, which means it has a direct effect on the work of the youth council. Also the NYC of **Switzerland** mentioned that a shift in the government usually has a long-term influence on the overall budget that is spent by the government on social and cultural issues — and thus, also on youth issues.

A second area that is affected through a change of government is **priority setting in youth policy** and along with this is a change in the priorities of advocacy and programs of the Youth Councils. In the **Philippines** the agenda of the National Youth Commission should always be parallel with the government's policy agenda, so the influence here is very high. However, in another example, the National Youth Council of **Ireland** reported that a lot of their work is done in response to government policies. Here, the Youth Council campaigns for improved facilities, services and policies for young people, thus if these policies and the overall approach to young people changes, the response from the National Youth Council will change as well. The answers of **Portugal, Sweden** and **Germany** were similar, which stated that a change in government doesn't directly influence the work of the Youth Council. Nevertheless, both Youth Councils saw different governments bringing changes to priority setting in youth policy and related programs.

Lastly, Latvia, Slovakia, and Lithuania mentioned that a change of government has some indirect influences on the NYC's work as it affects the **co-operation with the different state institutions** and in particular **personal relations** that the NYC was able to build up over the last years. For the NYC of **Slovakia** it means an influence on the stability of its work, also because a lot of time needs to be invested again to get to know each other, time that could otherwise be spent on organizational development and other activities.

Is a change of government influencing the work of the youth council?



## 2.5.2. Ways of influencing decision-making processes

### Side Note:

This section focuses solely on the relations between National Youth Councils and their national governments. As the National Youth Council of Slovakia pointed out in their response to our questionnaire, National Youth Councils also play a critical role in influencing decision-making processes through the regional youth platforms they are part of. In Europe for example, the European Youth Forum plays an important role in advising institutions of the European Union on youth issues. These mechanisms can, however, not be dealt with in detail in this report.

The second question aimed at identifying the influence NYCs have on governments and particularly decision-making in the area of youth and youth-related policy. All NYCs said that they are influencing decision-making processes, but of course the mechanisms vary from country to country. While some NYCs were able to establish permanent participation structures that allow them to influence processes and be part of decisions on a regular basis, other NYCs are left with providing input and advice if the government asks about their opinion.

The NYC of **Lithuania** has achieved to establish one of the most effective youth participation structures, that of **co-management** and co-decision-making. But what exactly is this and how does it work? Co-management is an understanding that young people through their organizations have an equal role to play in setting priorities with government for youth development. In Lithuania, the *State Council for Youth Affairs* has adopted this structure. It is comprised of eight representatives from government appointed by the prime minister (from ministries that have a specific role to play, such as social affairs, education and science, internal affairs, health, defence, local municipalities, etc.) and eight representatives from youth organizations appointed by the LiJOT. Through this structure it is guaranteed that young people have an equal say in decisions that affect them.

In a number of other countries, NYCs were able to acquire a **seat in similar governmental bodies** dealing with youth issues. Here, however, representation is limited to a few seats and an equal say in the decisions made is therefore not possible. It is also not always a permanent seat that NYCs are taking up and they cannot influence the agenda of these bodies. In **Slovenia**, the MSS achieved in a meeting with the president of parliament in May 2005, and the MSS is invited to meetings of some parliamentary committees where they can contribute to the outcomes. Until today, the subjects that were discussed in these committees had, however, not been of particular interest to the MSS. So while it is generally a very good achievement that gives the youth council the chance to influence policies as they are made, it is still a more passive role that it has in these commissions in comparison to the role of the LiJOT in the State Council of Youth Affairs.

Other government bodies that NYCs have acquired seats in are, for example, the *Youth Consultative Council* and *Portuguese Youth Institute* in Portugal, working groups of the Department of Youth of the Ministry of Education in Slovakia, and the Presidential Committee in Nigeria. Also in Latvia, the LJP is influencing decision-making in different working groups of ministries it is invited to.

Another way of influencing decision-making is to prepare and **write youth law**. The NYCs of Latvia and Slovenia both have experience in writing youth laws that they handed to the parliament for approval. In **Slovenia**, the *Youth Council Act*, which was slightly changed through parliamentary pro-

cedures but accepted in 2000, is now forming the legal bases for the MSS and local youth councils. It is also the only law in Slovenia that concerns youth as such. Through setting up the *Joint Commission on Social Youth Issues* between the MSS and the *Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Affairs* in May 2005, the MSS has now even established a permanent structure that will allow them to constantly exchange information with the government and prepare legal acts on youth issues together. In **Latvia**, a youth law was prepared by the LJP that should define what a young person actually is (as there is no clear definition and distinction between children and young people in the law so far) and what kind of funding youth NGOs can ask from the government, etc. The cooperation with the government in preparation of the law was overall very positive, but it was nevertheless rejected after submission through a political party. The LPJ is now cooperating with ministries and is hoping that the law will be approved in parliament soon.

The lack of coherent laws on youth is also driving other NYCs to draft youth laws. The NYC of **Switzerland** reported that youth policies are not yet mainstreamed in the country, which is a problem arising from the federalist political system of Switzerland. There are not many laws or policies on youth on a national level, as the 26 *Swiss cantons* have the main responsibility for many aspects concerning youth (e.g. education). This political structure makes it extremely difficult for the SAJV to lobby effectively. For that reason, the SAJV is currently working on the establishment of national law, which would unify *cantonal* endeavors on youth issues and streamline them to a national law providing guidelines for youth issues.

The most common way for NYCs to influence governments and decision-making is, however, through **consultations** and mostly informal, ad-hoc meetings with government bodies and parliamentarians (see chart above). 73% of all NYCs reported that they are advising governments or being consulted by them on issues that matter to young people.

The role of NYCs can also vary here, though. In the Philippines the NYC plays a more passive role in the sense that it provides input when the government asks for it. Other NYCs are more proactive, such as Jeugdraad in the Netherlands, who said that they give their opinion on youth-related issues both when requested and when not.

Structural mechanisms for consultations are, however, almost non-existent. Often times, NYCs are able to arrange formal or non-formal meetings with staff responsible for youth issues in ministries or other government bodies through personal contacts that they were able to build. As mentioned above, a change of government can thus influence the work of the youth council as new contacts, which are important for the lobbying role that NYCs take up, have to be established again.

While some NYCs, such as De Vlaamse Jeugdraad in **Belgium** are officially recognized by the government as experts in the field of youth, other youth councils are struggling to get their advices heard. The NYC of **Greece** reported that despite their efforts of setting up commissions with committed young people equivalent to the ones of the Greek parliament, the main official and state institutions do not pay as much attention to their statements and activities as they would like them to do. Even in **Slovenia**, where under the *Youth Council Act* governments, ministries, and other state authorities are required to inform the MSS about the drafting of laws and regulations that have an immediate impact on the life and work of young people, none of the authorities voluntarily do so (in fact, most don't even know about the law), so that the MSS still has to struggle to get the attention that it deserves.

Another way of influencing decisions is through **written position papers and contributions** that are handed over to relevant government officials. Every fifth NYC reported to influence decision-making that way.

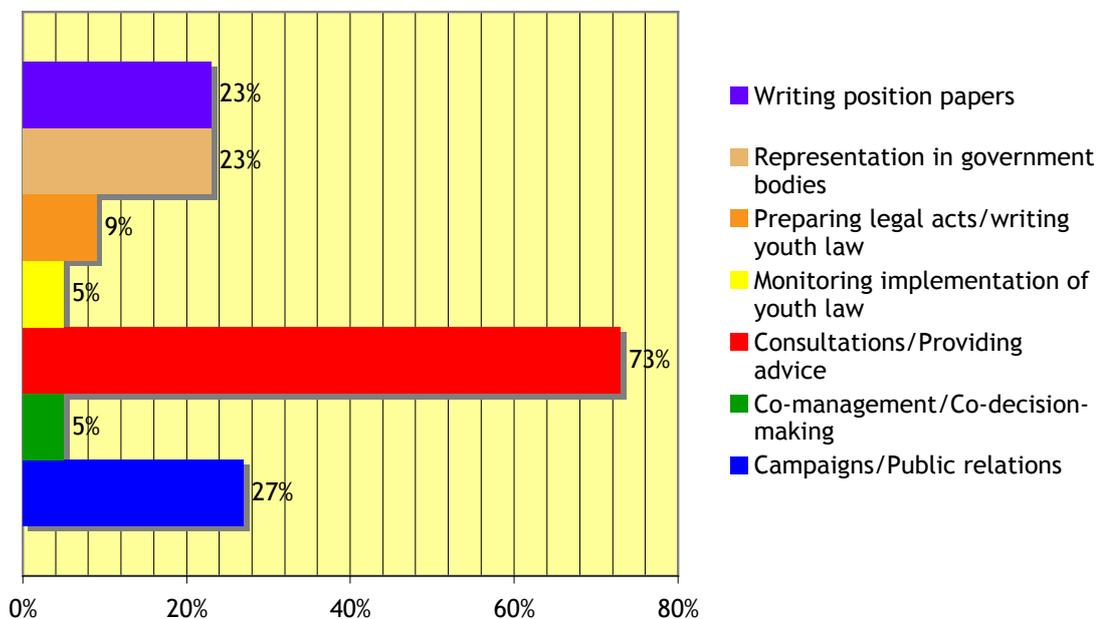
Very important are **campaigns and public relations** work. 27% of NYCs stated that they are

running lobbying campaigns or work with the media to form public opinion on relevant youth issues as part of their influencing processes. Writing press releases and presenting manifestos and the youth point of view to policy makers, and organizing political roundtables are among the activities that NYCs mentioned in this section.

The NYC of Zambia, explicitly mentioned the role of NYCs in the process of **monitoring the implementation of youth laws** as well.

Lastly, some NYCs cooperate with ministries and government bodies on specific youth programs and see this as a way of influencing decision-making. For example, the NYC of **Germany** is awarding the *Heinz Westphal Preis*, a German prize for voluntary engagement of young people, in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Youth. If decision-making is not interpreted as solely influencing decision-making on policy, then this is certainly a good example of how NYCs can influence government decision. In any case, it is an excellent example of how governments and NYCs can work together in a mutually beneficial way.

### Ways of influencing decision-making



## 2.6. Funding

This section of our research looks at three main questions: how big is the budget that NYCs have available annually? What are the funding resources? And how is the money spent (ratio of administration to projects)?

### 2.6.1. Budget

Obviously, it is hard to compare the budgets of NYCs in different parts of the world. Overall, the difference ranges from about 6,000 Euros in Nigeria to about 1.6 million Euros in Sweden and the Netherlands. The average budget is about 650,000 Euros.

In Western Europe, which is one of the most developed regions of the world and also has a long tradition of NYCs the annual budget of NYCs (Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands) lies between 950,000 and 1.6 million Euros. In South-East and Eastern Europe (Greece, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey) the annual budget lies between 100,000 and 150,000 Euros and in Africa (Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia) between 6,000 and 37,000 Euros. An exception is the Ukraine; the budget of the NYC with about 8,000 Euros is very low in comparison to other countries in the region. This might be due to the fact that there are different entities in the Ukraine competing to be the NYC, so the government isn't providing the same funding as other national governments do.

## 2.6.2. Funding resources and mechanisms

In regard to funding mechanisms of NYCs, five major sources can be identified: government bodies, membership fees, foundations, the private sector, and other international (governmental) organizations or non-governmental organizations.

By far the largest source of funding comes from **government bodies**. There are in fact only three countries, which don't receive any money from their national governments. In many cases funding is provided through the Ministry for Youth or similar state bodies that are dealing with youth affairs. Other state bodies or ministries contribute to funding as well though. The NYC of **Ireland** for example receives its funding from a wide variety of state bodies ranging from those responsible for education and gender equality to health and arts.

Usually, the amount of money that is given changes slightly from year to year. In **Germany**, the most important funding resource is the *Federal Plan for Children and Youth*, which is part of the budget of the *Bund* (the level of the federal state), so the actual sum that is given to the NYC is decided by the Parliament. As mentioned earlier already, a change of government could also have some influence on the actual amount that is spent on youth affairs, although these are longer-term influences. Some NYC's budget is also tightly fixed to the overall amount spent by the government on youth affairs. In **Flemish Belgium** the NYC receives one percent of the whole budget for youth policy, which means that a change in the budget can have a very large impact on the budget of the NYC.

A relatively unique model is that of **Slovakia**: here, non-governmental organizations can receive money from tax income assignment and a small part of the budget of the NYC is usually derived from that.

In most cases, the government provides the NYC at least with the budget for their basic programs and to cover administrative costs. In addition to that, they can apply for project-based funding either from the government as well or other organizations (more below). This funding mechanism provides NYCs with the necessary stability to keep their basic programs and services running.

This **project-based funding** can come from a variety of organizations and institutions other than

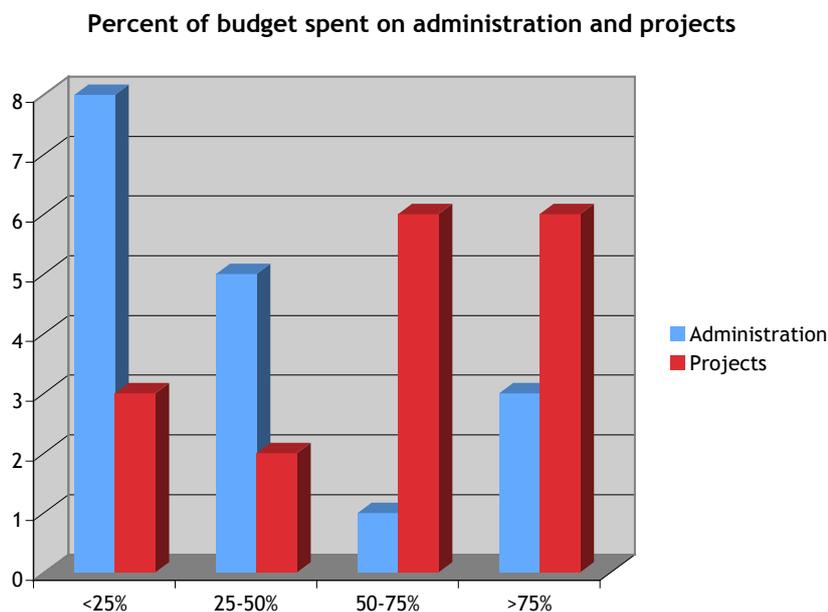
the already mentioned government bodies, which also provide project-based funding for youth councils in addition to funding their main administrative costs and basic programs. In Europe, the European Union has several programs to which NYCs can apply for funding. The *Council of Europe* is another institution that is very supportive of youth programs. The NYCs of African countries receive support also from international donor organizations and charities that work in their countries. The LA21 NYP is similarly supported by the UNDP Capacity 2015 Program, which is a special program supporting LA21 practices. Moreover, other non-governmental organizations can be a source of funding for NYCs, particularly through cooperation projects.

**Foundations** and the **private sector** can contribute to the budget of NYCs as well. Four NYCs (18%) stated that part of their budget comes from Foundations, such as National Youth Foundations or Philanthropic Foundations. Six National Youth Councils (27%) stated that they get sponsored from private companies, banks or health insurances.

Lastly, a number of NYCs (Armenia, Nigeria, Slovakia, Switzerland, Uganda, Sweden) draw upon **membership fees** as another source of regular income. In relation to the overall budget, the contribution of membership fees is, however, relatively small, making up three to ten percent maximum. There are different systems for membership fees. In **Slovakia**, members pay their fees in accordance to the number of their individual members. Observers and regional councils pay a fixed amount, which is smaller than that of member organizations. In **Switzerland**, a point system was introduced by the youth council, which calculates the membership fee, taking into account the geographical range of the member organization as well as the number of individuals represented by it and the work they do. The amount can thus vary from 250 CHF (~ 160 Euros) to 6,000 CHF (~ 3,800 Euros).

In addition to providing the NYC with unrestricted funding that they can use for programs and basic services, the RMS pointed out to us that the membership fee also serves as a good way to increase the interest among member organizations about the work that the NYC is doing. Furthermore, it creates an awareness that the NYC is working for them and not as a separate body.

## 2.6.3. Allocation of budget



On average, NYCs spent about 40% of their annual budget on administration and 60% on projects. Some countries spent, however, as little as 10-20% on administration. This is particularly the case for NYC of the Ukraine, which is restricted in its funding from the government and other donors to spend its money solely on projects. But NYCs in other countries, such as in the Netherlands, Zambia or Ireland, report that a minimum amount is spent on administration costs. The only exception is the NYC of Armenia, which doesn't carry out any projects itself and thus spends the small budget they have entirely on administrative costs.

## 2.7. International cooperation

International cooperation plays a very important part in the work of NYCs. In response to our question how important international cooperation is for the NYC on a scale from 1-10, four NYCs gave it ten points (highest priority) and no Youth Council gave it less than five points. All together, the average was eight points.

The majority of NYCs (90%) also run international projects or have partners on an international level that they work with. Language communities, such as the Francophone Youth Network or the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, play an important role, as NYCs are often actively engaged in these networks. But NYCs also cooperate very frequently with each other.

In fact, when asked about projects in the area of international development, the majority of NYCs reported to us about projects they are running in cooperation with other NYCs or similar organizations. This shows that the concept of international development is very different around the world. Not all see international development projects solely as projects in partnership with developing countries that are aimed at reducing general levels of poverty.

When interviewed, the NYC of Germany explained that they are not running projects with developing coun-

tries because their member organizations are already doing this. The DBJR only sees itself in a facilitating role. For example, it observes new policies of the ministry responsible for development cooperation and informs its member organizations about changes.

Yet there are a few youth councils that carry out programs in the area of international development themselves. A very active NYC in this regard is the LSU in **Sweden**. Over the last few years, the LSU ran programs with youth organizations ranging from Sri Lanka and Cambodia to Ghana and Lebanon. Most recently, the LSU has started a program called *Tackling Poverty Together*. It is carried out in partnership with the *United Nations Programme on Youth* as well as the NYCs of Uganda and Zambia. The aim of *Tackling Poverty Together* is to strengthen the role of young people in poverty reduction strategies. Another interesting program that is carried out through Jeugdraad in **the Netherlands** is the *Youth Employment Spark*, a project in five countries aimed at stimulating entrepreneurship and capacity building. Finally, the NYC of **Portugal** is running a project in developing countries through its membership in the *Youth Forum of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries* that is focused on HIV/AIDS prevention education for young people.

NYCs also run programs about international development within their countries, mostly aimed at increasing the awareness among young people about certain development issues or development in general. Four NYCs have recently been active running such programs: Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

The NYC of **Ireland** is currently managing the *National Youth Development Education Programme (NYDEP)* in partnership with the *Development Cooperation Ireland and the Department of Foreign Affairs*. NYDEP implements the *Development Education Strategy for the Voluntary Youth Sector 2004-2007*, which aims to mainstream development education into the programs of voluntary youth organizations through promoting cooperation and collaborations between the youth work sector and the development education sector, building the capacity of the youth work sector for development education, promoting good practices, and ensuring the relevance of the program to young people.

The NYC of **Germany** focused in 2005 on the Millennium Development Goals by running a campaign to inform young people about the MDGs, the Millennium+5 Summit and the projects that its member organizations have in the area of international development. The overall aim was to raise awareness about the problems of developing countries. The project included an online forum where young people could ask questions to politicians (i.e. the German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the German youth delegates to the UN General Assembly.

In the **Netherlands**, JeugdRaad has also centered a lot of its activities around the MDGs. Generally, the NYC focuses on providing information, raising awareness, and empowering young people in the Netherlands. Activities were organized, such as seminars about the MDGs, school tours with workshops based on peer-education, and a hip-hop battle in which young people were invited to rap against each other on the topic of HIV/AIDS.

The other NYCs were running international programs as well, but not with an international development focus. Their programs can roughly be summarized in two categories: networking/exchange projects and trainings/capacity building workshops.

The major project in the area of international cooperation for the NYC of **Russia** is the *Eastern European Youth Cooperation* project. Its objectives are to lobby the interests of youth organizations; to support sustainable cooperation, development, and partnership of youth organizations in Eastern Europe; and to promote the principles of democracy and human rights in the region. Among the many implementing partner organizations are the NYCs of Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and others. A similar program called *Youth Open the Door* is soon going to be implemented by the NYC of **Latvia** as the coordinating institution in partnership with youth councils from Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Lithuania,

Estonia, Finland, Denmark, Poland, and Russia. The aim of the project is to raise the level of youth cooperation and establish networks between the Baltic Sea region and Eastern European countries by promoting the *YOUTH programme*. Also the NYC of **Greece** reported that it laid the groundwork for a forum on youth dialogue with states in the Balkan and Middle East. This will be similar to work of the NYC of Slovakia that had a solidarity project towards Eastern Europe and the Balkans, which included an international seminar of 13 youth councils from these regions on youth participation, and that is planning to run a similar activity in 2006 in order to support mutual cooperation between umbrella organizations from various countries.

While all the projects mentioned above fall into the category of networking/exchange projects, Slovenia, Portugal, and Lithuania reported to have run or are going to run projects that are either focused on training or capacity building. The NYC of **Lithuania** ran two training courses, one in 2004 and one in 2005, with young people from Eastern European states (Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia in 2004 and Belarus in 2005). The NYC of **Portugal**, on the other hand, is trying to support the constitution of youth councils in other Portuguese-speaking countries through the experience it gained in the 20 years of its own existence. Similar are the plans of the NYC of Slovenia to start a project in 2006 aimed at helping to develop local youth structures in South-Eastern Europe.

The NYC of **Switzerland** has been running a program that fits into both categories. The *Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation* has given the NYC the mandate to administer 500,000 CHF (~318,000 Euros) for youth projects in Eastern European countries. The task included the empowerment of youth organizations in Switzerland, and to encourage them to formulate youth projects with Eastern European partners and then apply for financial support. The vast majority of projects conducted in the last years were geographically focused on the Balkans (Kosovo, Bosnia, Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria) and minor projects with Belarus, Romania, Ukraine and the Caucasian States. There was a wide variety of projects, ranging from organizational development of partner organizations and multi-national trainings to cross-cultural events and peace-building activities.

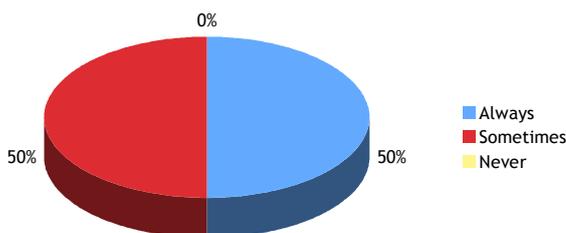
The NYCs of French Belgium, Nigeria, the Philippines, Ukraine and Zambia, and the LA21 National Youth Parliament of Turkey also reported running projects with international partner organizations but it is not known what kind of projects these are.

Overall, it can be said that only about a quarter of those NYCs examined by us were running projects with a clear focus on international development. The majority of the other projects can be summarized as exchange programs and cooperation projects between NYCs (or their member organizations), with a particular regional focus in Europe on the less developed countries in East and South-East Europe.

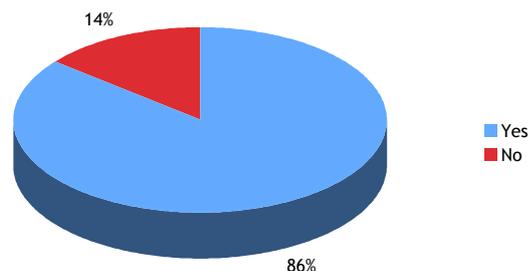
## 2.8. Outreach and Communication Strategies

This section looks at the offline and online communication tools that NYCs use in their daily work as well as at other forms and tools of outreach.

Offline Communication Mediums



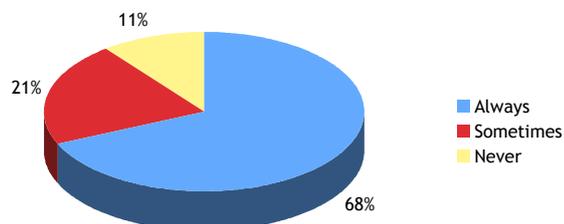
Availability of resources



As the chart shows, **offline communication mediums** (such as publications, brochures and newsletters) play a major role in the communication strategy of NYCs. 50% stated that they always use these kinds of mediums in their work and 50% stated that they use them occasionally. There is no NYC that does not work with offline communication tools.

Offline communication tools are also usually made **available as resources** for member organizations, youth, or other organizations interested in the work of the NYC.

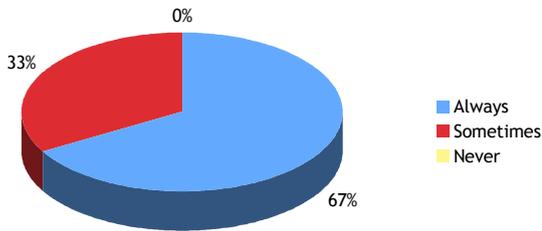
Website



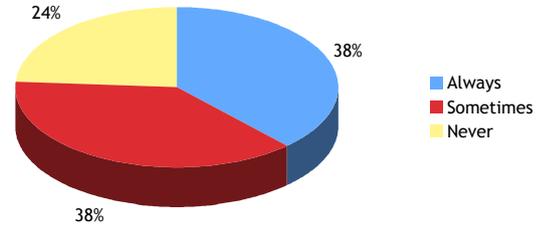
68% of NYCs have a **website** that they always use for communication with their member organizations. 21% state that they use it sometimes and only two NYCs (Nigeria and Zambia) don't have any website set up yet. Zambia, however, is in the process of developing one at the moment.

In terms of other online communication mediums, our research shows that NYCs are widely making use of the possibilities that the Internet offers. **E-Mails** are used for the communication with member organizations and partners and **e-newsletters** have found their place next to offline communication tools. **Online events** are, however, barely organized by any NYC; only 40% of respondents stated that they are using video conferences or online consultations from time to time.

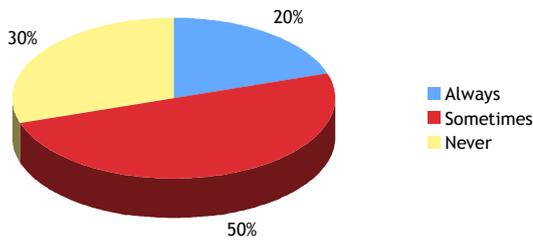
E-Mail



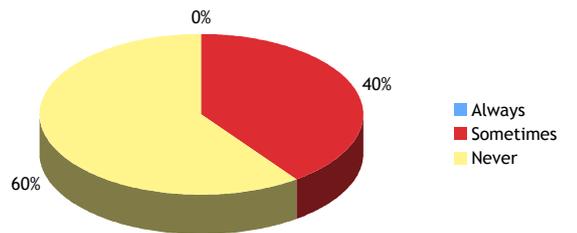
E-Newsletter



Discussion Boards



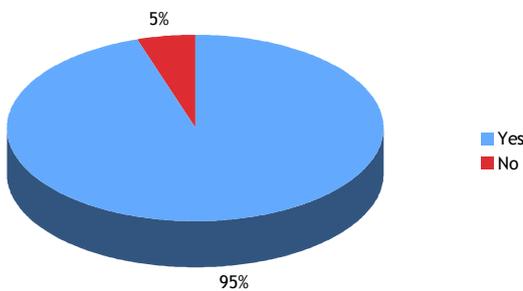
Online Events



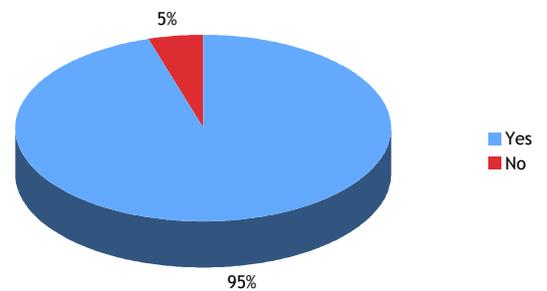
**Other communication mediums** that were mentioned are meetings, trainings, conferences, and face-to-face consultations with member organizations.

Except the NYC of Armenia, which doesn't implement any projects itself (all projects are run by its member organizations), NYCs are hosting events and running projects as part of their work and outreach to member organizations.

Host events



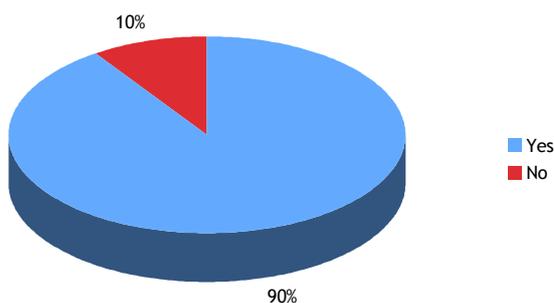
Run projects



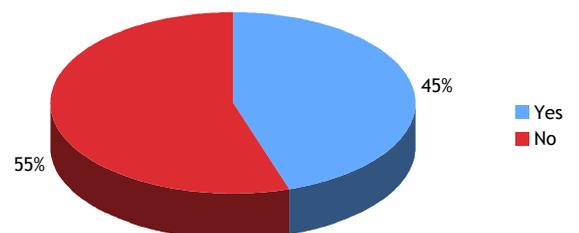
While NYCs generally have **professional and volunteer opportunities**, most of them don't provide any **financial opportunities** and if they do, they are in most cases restricted to member organizations. In the Netherlands, some individual youth and youth groups can apply for money and support from the NYC through some projects to realize ideas they have. In Zambia, the NYC set up an *Enterprise Development Fund* of about 20,000 USD

(~16,000 Euros) aimed at assisting and supporting youth entrepreneurship as one of the means of the NYC to tackle poverty among youth in the country. Similar small grants might be given out by other NYCs as well, as part of the financial opportunities they provide. Beyond these kinds of small grant opportunities through specific programs, however, financial opportunities are rather limited.

Have professional/volunteer opportunities



Provide financial opportunities



# PART 3: Conclusion and Recommendations

This conclusion provides observations and recommendations based on the findings in Part 1 and 2, and additional advice given by NYCs in our questionnaire. It is guided by the question: “What makes a NYC effective?” and structured in such a way that youth organizations that want to set up a NYC in their country can find useful information and help in regard to the establishment or in the early years of the council’s existence. Already existing NYCs can also learn from the recommendations to improve their own structure and work. Recommendations are bolded so that they are easily identifiable.

## 3.1. What are the necessary steps to establish a National Youth Council?

Establishing a new organization, especially one that is supposed to bring together a variety of already existing organizations and groups, is a challenging and lengthy task. There are, however, many lessons that can be learned from already existing NYCs and their evolution.

One of the key conclusions that came out of our survey is that the establishment of NYCs has always been a bottom-up process. Youth organizations must be the key actors behind the establishment of any NYC if the organization is to function independently from the government and in the spirit of “by youth for youth.” Organizations and institutions outside the youth movement of the country, such as philanthropic foundations, civil society organizations or even government bodies, which would like to support a representative body of youth and youth organizations in the country, can play a facilitating role in the process. They can provide advice and even financial support, but their role must be limited to facilitators.

**Recommendation for actors outside the youth movement: If you want to support the creation of a NYC, limit your own role to that of a facilitator. The process of setting up a NYC must be lead by youth organizations themselves.**

One assumption that is sometimes made is that youth wings of political parties in European countries have played a strong role in establishing NYCs. As our survey showed, this is not true — youth wings of political parties have only played a role in establishing the NYC in Sweden and Greece. Thus the lack of strong youth wings of political parties in many countries cannot be seen as a hindrance to the establishment of a NYC. The key actors can be youth organizations alone. But in countries that have a strong student movement, student organizations and groups could play an important role as well.

**Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Identify where young people are organized in your country — forms of organization vary from country to country. Youth wings of political**

**parties, student groups, youth networks and other forums in which youth organize themselves can all play a role, but no organizational type is a ‘must be ingredient’.**

Another conclusion from our survey is that in many countries it was individual young people — both within and outside of youth organizations — who played a key role in establishing the NYC. It can only be of advantage for youth organizations to have influential young people supporting the establishment of a NYC. Young parliamentarians with relations to the government, young entrepreneurs with relations to possible financiers, and other youth actors with networks of helpful contacts can be essential for the success of establishing a NYC.

**Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Allow leadership and be open to youth actors who can further the course of establishing a NYC through their political influence and contacts.**

For some European countries, external forces (political pressure from the Council of Europe, incentive to become a member organization of the European Youth Forum, guidance from other National Youth Councils, etc.) had a tremendous influence on the creation of the NYC. Such regionally integrative forces could also play a role in other regions of the world if they become stronger. Latin America, for example, is on its way to developing a strong regional youth platform similar to the European Youth Forum. Membership with the Latin American Youth Forum (FLAJ) could soon become a major incentive for youth organizations in countries of the region to establish NYCs. Already existing NYCs could at the same time help youth organizations in other countries through the exchange of experiences and best practices.

**Recommendation for already existing NYCs: Support the establishment of NYCs in countries of your region by sharing your own experiences and provide training and capacity building courses for youth organizations wishing to set up a NYC.**

📌 **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Get in touch with already existing NYCs and don't hesitate to ask them for advice. There is a great deal you can learn from their experience!**

Once the key actors have come together and decided that they want to establish a NYC in their country, there are three important steps that are necessary if the NYC is to work effectively in the long-term:

Establishing an effective NYC is a three-step process:

1. The founding members of the NYC must agree to a basic spirit of cooperation.
2. The NYC must be recognized by the national government.
3. The NYC should ideally be protected by legislation.

Although the **first step** might sound like the easiest step to achieve, it is not just a matter of course. Limited funds for youth work (among other reasons) have led to situations where youth organizations in many countries see themselves as competitors rather than as partners. Establishing a NYC is thus a democratic learning process they will have to go through: working together within a NYC brings a lot of advantages, but it also means that everyone has to learn to compromise (for a more in-depth discussion see “How do we run a democratically governed National Youth Council?”). A number of NYCs reported that they had problems in finding a “common ground” when starting their work. One possible way of ensuring such a minimum common ground is met by all member organizations is to enshrine references to normative declarations (such as the Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, as done by the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations) in the founding documents of the NYC.

📌 **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Agree to a minimum spirit of cooperation and enshrine it in the founding document of the NYC.**

The **second step** is to get recognition from the national government. As the NYCN put it: “Government relations are imperative!” No NYC will be able to work effectively without being officially recognized as representative body for youth organizations by the national government. Official recognition doesn't have to mean “control” or any close form of affiliation though. As the responses to our survey have shown (see 2.4.1.), NYCs act completely independently from governments (exceptions are of course those NYCs that were set up by governments and fulfill important tasks for the government).

📌 **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Get officially recognized by the national government as representative body for youth organizations in the country.**

However, to ensure that the recognition transcends government change, newly set up NYCs should aim for the **third step** — to be enshrined in legislation. This is in fact a recommendation that was named by several NYCs in our survey: “Demand that the role of the youth council is properly defined in legal acts” (National Youth Council of Slovenia) and “Having the existence and work of the youth council embedded in legal frameworks is very important, and puts a youth council in a strong position” (Dutch Nationale Jeugdraad). This is certainly not an easy task to achieve and it took some NYCs several years. Outdated and exclusionary youth policy legislation can create many challenges for NYCs though, for example, in obtaining funds or accessing decision-making structures. Amending existing laws or creating youth law where none exists yet must therefore be seen as necessary third step in the establishment of any NYC that is to work effectively for youth in the country.

📌 **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Demand that the role of the NYC is enshrined in legislation.**

## 3.2. What do we have to consider when defining the role of our NYC?

This set of conclusions includes a number of general observations and questions rather than recommendations. The questions are universally important; their answers by contrast will be particular to the cultural and political society in which the NYC operates.

The purpose of NYCs appears to address two main 'audiences':

1. Youth themselves (role of the NYC: youth development),
2. The society in which this youth development takes place (role of the NYC: make social structures and institutions more youth-accessible and accommodating for youth issues).

Some NYCs discuss both roles in their statements of purpose, while others champion one over the other.

**Question: To whom does the NYC address its efforts?**

Liaising with the government is often an important part of the work of a NYC. A NYC must therefore decide whether it can be the port-parole of its members or of youth concerns more broadly in talking with the government, or whether it is there to facilitate linking its member organizations with the government directly.

**Question: Does the NYC act as a direct liaison, bringing the concerns of its member organizations to the government? Or does the NYC act as facilitator between its member organizations and the government? Can it do both?**

There are both practical and ideological answers to the question "Who does a NYC represent?" The answer will affect the work of the NYC, and in parallel, the work carried out will influence who it is seen to represent. While most NYCs participating in this project state that they represent their member organizations, some also state that they represent youth more broadly through the work of their member organizations. Councils that are more closely affiliated to the government have defined their role as facilitative of youth rather than as representative of youth, being a vehicle to transport youth concerns.

**Question: What is the representational role of the NYC?**

**Question: Is there a real or only semantic difference between representing member organizations and representing youth more broadly?**

Representation has not only to do with how the NYC understands its role, but also with how member organizations understand the NYC. While for French Belgium it is important that the youth council also represents itself as a separate entity, for the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations, it is important that it be seen a collective of its members and not a separate entity. The NYC of Slovenia commented that regardless of its representative role, a NYC should always remember to work in a way that benefits all young people even if they are not a part of the youth council.

**Question: How can the NYC work so as to benefit youth broadly?**

### 3.3. Who should be part of it?

It has already been discussed that the founding members of a NYC must agree to a minimum spirit of cooperation, but who are these founding members, and who may later join them?

As a NYC is to be home to the issues and concerns belonging to the youth of the nation, its membership therefore must aim to include rather than exclude youth organizations. While most NYCs have a transparent and sometimes intricate list of criteria for membership, these criteria must be as general as possible.

Of those NYCs participating in this project, it can be concluded that the most common membership structure is comprised solely of member organizations. For the NYC to be representative of youth interests in the country, it makes sense that it be a collective of organized youth interests, rather than a collection of individual youth. (Alternatively stated, a NYC comprised of individuals will look more like a NGO that works for youth issues, perhaps with the exception of cases where membership is very large, such as in Nigeria). Some NYCs (Greece, the Netherlands), however, noted that it is important to take into account individuals who want to be active at the national level but who do not fit naturally within the member organization-based structure. This might be of concern where for instance there is no regional youth organization working on particular issues, or in cases where a NYC accommodates only exceptionally large member organizations such as in Germany. The NYC of Flemish Belgium provides an example of a structure that accommodates both individual and organizational representation.

■ **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: In order to be representative, a NYC must be built by**

**bringing together existing youth organizations. A challenge however is to ensure that there are mechanisms in place to accommodate cases where the process excludes certain individuals.**

With regard to what these member organizations look like, our survey showed that the most common NYC member organizations are youth NGOs, student organizations, and local and regional youth councils, and youth wings of political parties that meet the NYC's membership criteria.

Specific to political party youth wings, their role in establishing NYCs has already been discussed, but what is their role within NYCs? There are a few different models that exist. In Germany there is a separate umbrella organization for the participation of youth wings of political parties, which work together with the NYC on the international level. In the Nordic countries and elsewhere, political party youth wings are simply regular member organizations of the NYC. Problems can become apparent where political parties operate with a mandate contrary to that of the NYC, or where the NYC becomes a forum for party politics. This has occasionally been the recent experience in parts of Eastern Europe. In cases where parties are excluded from the NYC whether by law or because their purpose is contrary to that of the NYC, other arrangements are made, such as having regular meetings between the NYC and political party representatives.

■ **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: In countries where youth wings of political parties exist, the NYC should accommodate them in some form, while being careful not to make the NYC a platform for party politics.**

The youth organizations that constitute the membership of a NYC exist in many shapes and sizes. It follows as another conclusion that NYCs have to be creative in accommodating members in their many forms. Local youth councils are one type of group that NYCs have accommodated in different ways, for example through regional youth councils in Spain and Germany, through a national federation of local youth councils in Spain and Sweden, and through the LA21 Local Youth Parliament in Turkey. Small youth NGOs have also been accommodated in different ways — in some NYCs small NGOs may be members directly (the NYC of Lithuania requires 100 members) whereas in countries like Germany where only very large member organizations may be part of the NYC, smaller organizations create coalitions to become part of the NYC. Finally, some youth councils welcome only member organizations that are run by youth and for youth (NYC of Sweden). Others make room for organizations that work on issues that deal more peripherally with youth (NYC of Switzerland) by creating alternatives such as associate memberships.

➤ **Recommendation for aspiring and existing NYCs: To not unnecessarily exclude member organizations that would contribute to and benefit from the work of a NYC, different categories of membership can be created to accommodate different kinds of member organizations.**

A related question is what to do when a candidate member organization meets most but not all criteria for membership. Though not addressed by all participating NYCs, some agreed that membership criteria ought to have flexibility mechanisms to allow for maximum participation in the work of the NYC. In response to this dilemma, the Dutch Nationale Jeugdraad allows the GA discretion to waive certain criteria for membership.

➤ **Recommendation for aspiring and existing NYCs: To not unnecessarily exclude member organizations, flexibility must be built into the decision-making process on membership in the NYC.**

NYCs also often have geographic criteria for their member organizations, requiring a member organization to be active in a prescribed number of regions. This might be practical in smaller countries or countries with long-established youth networks at the national level, and less so in larger countries where these networks don't already exist. A related challenge is to counterbalance regional over-representation. The Turkish Youth Parliament, for instance, ensures that each region has a set number of representatives, while the NYC of Switzerland also ensures for quotas in linguistic representation.

➤ **Recommendation for aspiring and existing NYCs: Particular regions must not be overrepresented in the working of the NYC. Regional and linguistic quotas on the advisory and/or executive board are an option for addressing this.**

### 3.4. How do we run a democratically governed National Youth Council?

A number of conclusions can be drawn on the democratic governance of NYCs.

Firstly, themes of decisional and financial autonomy were common among NYCs responding to the survey. Clearly, the closer a NYC is tied to the working of the government, the less control it will have over who its members may be (Costa Rica, the Philippines), making the NYC at once more inclusive, but less autonomous.

📌 **Recommendation for aspiring and existing NYCs: A balance must be struck between government cooperation and decisional and financial autonomy.**

Parity in representation is imperative for democratic governance. To this end, NYCs generally have certain governance requirements that are clearly set out in their founding documents, such as a constitution and mission statement. Examples are as follows: The Swiss National Youth Council sets minimum gender and linguistic representation for its board structure, while the Turkish Youth Parliament ensures for equal regional representation. Age limits are often set for those holding executive positions. New member organizations must meet membership criteria that ensure a minimum spirit

of cooperation among members. New member organizations must be approved by the existing membership, usually through a vote in the GA.

📌 **Recommendation for aspiring and existing NYCs: The NYC must have clear and transparent governance requirements, set out in a constitution (or similar document) that is easily available to its membership.**

A challenge for NYCs lies in identifying concerns that are of common interest and concern to all members. Among its recommendations to new NYCs, Armenia suggests it is important that a NYC delivers a message to member organizations that they are “in the NYC to contribute towards the youth movement by becoming its family member — thus is it as much about giving as taking.” This notion is perhaps at the heart of democratic values: with the strength comes compromise!

📌 **Recommendation for aspiring and existing NYCs: National Youth Councils must try to foster among their members a sense of being part of something bigger than their individual organization. Through working with the NYC, they are part of a bigger population that can find strength in its mass.**

### 3.5. How do we effectively work with governments to shape youth policy?

Influencing decision-making is one of the key working areas of every NYC, as the responses to our survey have shown (see 2.3.2 and 2.5.2). Nevertheless, in the majority of countries it is still based on mostly informal processes and personal contacts rather than fixed and reliable structures through which young people can have a permanent voice in shaping youth policies. As personal contacts are at risk to change with a change in government, it is one of the biggest tasks of NYCs to continuously lobby for more permanent and stable structures of youth participation in decision-making. One of the greatest successes of the NYC of Lithuania (LIJOT) since it was founded was the establishment of co-management and co-decision-making structures in the *State Council for Youth Affairs* in Lithuania. With this achievement LIJOT and the *Council of Europe*, which is using the same model, are clearly leading the way to more effective youth participation structures worldwide. It is not only providing youth with a permanent voice in decision-making, but also with an equal voice.

But also other NYCs have had a number of achievements in shaping youth policies and lobbying for greater youth participation (i.e. in successfully lobbying for the inclusion of youth delegates to the UN GA or CSD). Sharing these achievements (good models of legislation, effective structures of youth participation, successful lobbying techniques) openly with each other should become a matter of course.

📌 **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Aim to establish structures, such as co-management, that give youth a permanent and equal voice in decision-making.**

📌 **Recommendation for existing NYCs: Establish mechanisms to openly share best practices with other NYCs, youth organizations in countries without a NYC, and institutions that are supportive of increasing youth participation in decision-making (such as the UNPY).**

## 3.6. Where could the money come from?

The ideal funding situation for a NYC seems to be a combination of government and project-based funding. Almost all NYCs are to a certain extent government funded. Government funding that covers at least administrative costs of the NYC and its basic programs is important because it is predictable and thus essential for long-term planning. Government funding usually also comes without any strings attached to it, which gives the NYC independence in how at least some of the funding is allocated. Where it does come with restrictions (such as in Sweden, where the NYC is not allowed to use government money for advocacy), it can indirectly influence an otherwise independent work agenda. For this other reasons, NYCs usually seek additional project-based funding.

Membership fees can be another source of funding, although as our survey has shown, it has more of a symbolic meaning for NYCs rather than contributing essentially to their overall budgets. Membership fees are tying member organizations closer to the council and can also serve as control mechanisms for NYCs to check if member organizations are still active and interested in contributing

to the work of the NYC. Particularly in countries that want to include smaller NGOs that are at a higher risk of existing only for a limited time and then disappearing again, membership fees can serve as a good mechanism to oversee member organization's activity. If membership fees are introduced (and all NYCs that have a membership fee system in place would recommend it also to other NYCs), a point system such as the one in Switzerland could ensure that organizations differing substantively in their number of members and outreach in the country don't have to pay the same amount, while at the same time being transparent and fair.

- 📌 **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Get your government to fund at least your administrative costs and basic programs.**
- 📌 **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Aim for a combination of funding resources to increase your independence and flexibility.**
- 📌 **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Charge membership fees to tie your member organizations closer to the NYC.**

## 3.7. How can we communicate effectively?

National Youth Councils have to communicate with a range of different actors that each require a different "language" to be used: government bodies, the media, member organizations and unorganized/unengaged youth in the country. Finding always the right language and "translating" what one group said for another group (for example, translating recommendations from young people into a policy language that governments are familiar with) is often a big challenge for NYCs that requires not only a strong communication strategy, but also skilled people who are able to understand the different languages and who can easily switch from one language to the other.

- 📌 **Recommendation for youth working within NYCs: Always be clear whom you are communicating with. Different actors require the use of different languages.**

Outside their communication with governments and the media, NYCs often target their communication strategies towards their member organizations. Available resources, but also events that are organized and opportunities that are offered, are limited to member organizations as the majority of NYCs see themselves primarily as representatives of their member organizations and not youth more broadly. A couple of NYCs are, however, also trying to reach out actively to unorganized youth. The Dutch Nationale Juegdraad runs a couple of projects that are aimed at reaching youth who are not (yet) organized in any of its member organizations and also their website offers a lot of information for young people who want to become more

active. The NYC of Slovakia is currently revamping their website in order to include a discussion board that will also give youth that are not part of the council a space to contribute to discussions. And the NYC of Slovenia is recommending: "Try to create your programs in benefit of all young people, even if they're not a part of the youth council."

In this sense, NYCs do not only have to decide if they want to open their membership to individual young people, but also if they want open their programs to individual young people and include young people as targets of their communication strategy. NYCs can decide, for instance, to allow only organizations as members, but still have open programs and offer information and opportunities for youth outside their member organizations. Whichever way a NYC decides to take, it should be very clear about it though, in order to be effective.

- 📌 **Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Decide who you want to target with your communication tools (such as your website, newsletter etc) and develop a strong communication strategy to make sure that you reach everyone you want to reach.**

Internally, communication can be a great challenge in bi- or multilingual countries. While Belgium has two NYCs (one for the French and one for the Flemish part of the country), multilingualism is a big issue for the NYC of Switzerland (SAJV). The staff and the Board of the SAJV have to speak at least two official languages and the meetings are often in French and German as everyone can speak his/her

mother tongue and should be able to understand the other language. For the members of the Board there are even language quotas: 33% must be German speaking, 33% French speaking and 33% Italian speaking. In an interview, a staff member of SAJV pointed out that this is a quite a good solution to the problem as “it is a commitment and has to be taken into action.”

Beyond being a mere issue of understanding each other, multilingualism is also a budget issue, which needs to be taken into account in every strategic plan. For the SAJV, written translations and simultaneous translation is a big element of expenditure. Also because of the language, a second office had to be opened in the French-speaking part of Switzerland as member organizations weren't staying in touch with the national office, which is based in Bern, the Swiss capital. This shows that there is of-

ten more to multilingualism in a country than the use of another language: “It is not only a matter of language, but rather a matter of different cultural approaches: a different approach to political questions, project management activities etc.”

**Recommendation for NYCs in multilingual countries: Ensure that all communication is happening in the most commonly used languages of the country and introduce a language quota for the Board of the NYC. Also, don't favor one language over the other in meetings etc.**

**Recommendation for NYCs in multilingual countries: Be aware that the language always includes many aspects in life — it can also be a question of different cultural approaches and not only a technical question of understanding each other with words.**

### 3.8. What can National Youth Councils do internationally?

Many NYCs aim not only to be an umbrella organization for their members and the go-to point for youth-government relations, but also to be a gateway to youth initiatives in other countries for projects in international development and international cooperation. The majority of programs that NYCs run are exchange programs with other NYCs, sometimes including a training or capacity building component. As already mentioned above (see 3.1.), these training and capacity building programs, if extended to youth organizations in countries without a NYC, could play a critical role in helping to build up effective youth participation structures. Particularly NYCs that are part of international youth networks such as the Francophone, Portuguese and Ibero-American networks could use their outreach to other youth organizations in these communities to help further youth participation structures beyond their own country.

**Recommendation for existing NYCs: An important part of international cooperation could be training and capacity building for youth organizations that want to set up a NYC in their country or strengthen youth participation structures. Working with youth organizations in developing countries in particular could help further the cause of youth participation on a global level.**

**Recommendation for existing NYCs with membership in international youth networks: International youth networks should be used to work together on international development projects and share experiences with each other.**

International development projects are mostly left to member organizations. This makes sense: carrying out international development projects in partnership with developing countries is certainly not the expertise of most NYCs. Youth councils can still play an important role in international devel-

opment. As a couple of NYCs already do, they can run programs that are aimed at raising awareness about development issues among young people in their own country more broadly. They can also serve as link between their member organizations and international organizations, such as those within the UN system. Channeling information about current events and issues on the global development agenda to member organizations could inspire those to start new programs in the area of international development. Lobbying their own governments to support more youth-led development projects is another field of work. Furthermore, they can (and again, many NYCs already do so) play a key role in selecting youth delegates to UN summits and events, such as the UN GA, CSD or other commissions that are relevant to young people. NYCs that are already sending youth delegates can support other NYCs to send youth delegates as well.

**Recommendation for aspiring NYCs: Plan to set up international cooperation and international development programs in areas where NYCs have a particular expertise and don't aim at doing the same work that youth organizations are already doing.**

**Recommendation for existing NYCs: Lobby your own government to increase youth-led development projects.**

**Recommendation for existing NYCs: Help increase youth participation on a global level by continuously lobbying for the inclusion of youth delegates to relevant international events, particularly of the UN system.**

**Recommendation for existing NYCs, which are already sending youth delegates: Support NYCs in other countries to send youth delegates by sharing experiences, lobbying techniques etc.**

# Appendix I: List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CJEF	Le Conseil de la Jeunesse d'expression française (National Youth Council of French Belgium)
CNJ	Conselho Nacional de Juventude (Portuguese National Youth Council)
CPJ	Conseja de la Persona Joven (National Youth Council of Costa Rica)
CSD	United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
DBJR	Deutscher Bundesjugendring (German National Youth Council)
DNK	Deutsches Nationalkommittee für Internationale Jugendarbeit (German National Committee for International Youth Work)
ESYN	National Council of Hellenic Youth Organisations (Greece)
GA	General Assembly
LA21	Local Agenda 21
LA21 NYP	Local Agenda 21 National Youth Parliament (Turkey)
LIJOT	Lithuania Youth Council
LJP	Latvijas Jaunatnes padome (National Youth Council of Latvia)
LSU	National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MO	Member Organization
MSS	Mladinski svet Slovenije (National Youth Council of Slovenia)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NYC	National Youth Council
NYCA	National Youth Council of Armenia
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland
NYCN	National Youth Council of Nigeria
NYCR	National Youth Council of Russia
NYDC	National Youth Development Council (Zambia)
NJ	Nationale Jeugdraad (National Youth Council of the Netherlands)
RMS	Rada mládeže Slovenska (National Youth Council of Slovakia)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAJV	Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Jugendverbände National Youth Council of Switzerland)
SEE	South-Eastern Europe
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
UN	United Nations Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USMO	Ukrainian Union of Youth Organizations
VJ	Vlaamse Jeugdraad (National Youth Council of Flemish Belgium)
YFJ	Youth Forum Jeunesse (European Youth Forum)

# Appendix II: Contact information

## **National Youth Council of Armenia (NYCA)**

15 Koriunstr.  
Yerevan 375009 ARMENIA  
Tel: +374.528.378  
Fax: +374.156.0309  
nyca@freenet.am

## **Flemish Youth Council (VJ)**

Arenbergstraat 1D  
1000 Brussels BELGIUM  
Tel: +32 2 551 13 80  
Fax: +32 2 551 13 85  
info@vlaamsejeugdraad.be

## **Le Conseil de la Jeunesse d'expression française (CJEF)**

Bld. Léopold II 44  
1080 Brussels BELGIUM  
Tel: +32.2413.2929  
Fax: +32.2413.2931  
conseil.jeunesse@cfwb.be

## **Consejo Nacional de la Persona Joven (CPJ)**

100 norte y 50 este de la Casa "Matute Gómez"  
San José, COSTA RICA  
Tel: +506.257.1130  
Fax: +506.257.0648  
personajoven@racsa.co.cr

## **Deutscher Bundesjugendring (DBJR)**

Mühlendamm 3  
10178 Berlin GERMANY  
Tel: +49.30.4004.0400  
Fax: +49.30.4004.0422  
info@dbjr.de

## **National Council of Hellenic Youth Organisations (ESYN)**

Acharnon str.417  
GR-111 43 Athens GREECE  
Tel: +30.210.251.2742  
Fax: +30.210.772.2752  
obako@mail.ntua.gr

## **National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)**

Montague Street 3  
Irl-Dublin 2 IRELAND  
Tel: +353.1478.4122  
Fax: +353.1478.3974  
info@nyci.ie

## **Latvijas Jaunatnes padome (LJP)**

Kalpaka blvd. 10/18  
LV-1050 Riga LATVIA  
Tel: +371.722.1402  
Fax: +317.722.1402  
ljp@ljp.lv

## **Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations (LIJOT)**

Didzioji 8-5  
01128 Vilnius LITHUANIA  
Tel: +370.5279.1014  
Fax: +370.5279.1014  
lijot@lijot.lt

## **National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN)**

Youth house, Plot 768b Ikot Ekpene Close,  
off Emeka Anyaouku Street, Garki Area 11  
Abuja, NIGERIA  
Tel: +234.80.3703.8097  
Fax: +234.80.5459.4806  
nycnyes@yahoo.com

**Conselho Nacional de Juventude (CNJ)**

Rua dos Douradores, N°106 a 118 - 5° Andar  
1100 - 207 Lisboa PORTUGAL  
Tel: +351.21880.2130  
Fax: +351.21880.2139  
geral@cnj.pt

**National Youth Council of Russia (NYCR)**

Maroseyka 3/13  
101970 Moscow RUSSIA  
Tel: +7.095.206.8012  
Fax: +7.095.206.8017  
info@youthrussia.ru

**Youth Council of Slovakia (RMS)**

Pražská 11  
811 04 Bratislava, Slovakia  
Tel: +421.25729.7220  
Fax: +421.2524.93301  
rms@rms.mladez.sk

**National Youth Council of Slovenia (MSS)**

Linhartova 13  
1000 Ljubljana SLOVENIA  
Tel: +386.1430.1209  
Fax: +386.1433.8507  
info@mss.si

**National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU)**

Pustegränd 1-3  
118 20 Stockholm SWEDEN  
Tel: +46.8440.8670  
Fax: +46.8440.8680  
info@lsu.se

**National Youth Council of Switzerland (SAJV)**

Gerechtigkeitsgasse 12  
3011 Bern SWITZERLAND  
Tel: +41.31.326.2929  
Fax: +41.31.326.2930  
info@csaj.ch

**Nationale Jeugdraad (NJ)**

Maliebaan 127  
3581 Utrecht NETHERLANDS  
+31.30.230.3575  
+31.30.230.3585  
info@jeugdraad.nl

**National Youth Commission of the Philippines**

4th Floor, Bookman Building, 373 Quezon Avenue,  
Quezon City THE PHILIPPINES  
Trunk Lines: 749.9399, 749.9401  
nyc@youth.net.ph

**LA21 Turkish National Youth Parliament**

Youth for Habitat International Network  
Fulya Mah. Mevlüt Pehlivan Sk. Ali Sami Yen Apt.  
8A/2 Mecidiyeköy  
istanbul TURKEY  
Tel: +90.212.275.5519  
info@youthforhab.org.tr

**Ukrainian Union of Youth Organizations (USMO)**

Kirov str.33, Donetsk region  
Gorlovka, 338046 UKRAINE  
Tel: +38.6242.53593  
Fax: +38.6242.56288  
vusmo@cafe.ditek.dn.ua

# Appendix III: Links

## **National Youth Councils and Youth Umbrella Structures:**

Comité pour les Relations internationales de Jeunesse de la Communauté française de Belgique:

<http://www.cjef.be>

Consejo Nacional de la Persona Joven: <http://www.mcjdcr.go.cr/juventud/consejo.html>

Conselho Nacional de Juventude: <http://www.cnj.pt>

Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations: <http://www.lijot.lt>

Deutscher Bundesjugendring: <http://www.dbjr.de>

Latvijas Jaunatnes padome: <http://www.ljp.lv>

Landsrådet för Sveriges ungdomsorganisationer: <http://www.lsu.se>

Local Agenda 21 National Youth Parliament: <http://www.youthforhab.org.tr/eng/index.htm>

Mladinski svet Slovenije: <http://www.mss.si>

National Council of Hellenic Youth Organizations: <http://www.esyn.gr>

National Youth Commission of the Philippines: <http://www.youth.net.ph>

National Youth Council of Armenia: <http://www.nyca.am>

National Youth Council of Ireland: <http://www.youth.ie>

National Youth Council of Russia: <http://www.youthrussia.ru>

Nationale Jeugdraad: <http://www.jeugdraad.nl/>

Rada mládeže Slovenska: <http://www.mladez.sk>

Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Jugendverbände: <http://www.sajv.ch>

Ukrainian Union of Youth Organizations: <http://www.civilsoc.org/nisorgs/ukraine/vusmo.htm>

Vlaamse Jeugdraad: <http://www.vlaamsejeugdraad.be>

## **Other:**

Council of Europe: [http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural\\_co-operation/youth](http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/youth)

European Youth Forum: <http://www.youthforum.org>

TakingITGlobal: <http://www.takingitglobal.org>

Tackling poverty together: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/TPT.htm>

United Nations Program on Youth: <http://www.un.org/youth>

YOUTH programme: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/index_en.html)

# Appendix IV: Questionnaire

## History

1. When was the youth council established?
2. What were the key influences that led to the establishment of the youth council?
3. What were the key challenges faced when setting up the youth council?
4. Who were the key actors in establishing the youth council?

## Membership structure

1. How many members does the youth council have?
2. What are the criteria to become a member of the youth council? Is the membership comprised of individuals or organizations, or both?
3. Annual growth of membership in numbers?

## Mission statement/area of work

1. What is the mission statement of the youth council?
2. What are the top 3 priority areas of work?
3. How important is international cooperation for the youth council (scale from 1-10, 1 being low priority/10 being high priority)?
4. Does the youth council have any concrete projects in the area of international development (especially with developing countries)?
5. How does the youth council define its own representation role: is it representing its member organizations? Or is it representing all youth of the country?
6. What are the three main challenges facing the youth council?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
7. Is a change of government influencing the work of the youth council? If yes, why and how?
8. Is the youth council influencing decision-making processes? If yes, how (what are the mechanisms)?

## The organization/Work methodology

1. How many paid employees work in the Secretariat of the youth council?
2. How many of the paid employees are under age 30?

3. How many board members has the youth council?
4. How many of the board members are under age 30?
5. Is the youth council working with volunteers (Yes/No)?
6. If yes, how many youth volunteers (under age 24) work with the council each year (approximately)?

## Funding

1. How big is the budget?
2. What are funding resources/mechanisms?
3. What percent of the budget is spent on administration of the youth council?
4. What percent of the budget is spent on projects?

## Outreach/Communication Strategy

1. What tools does the youth council use for communication with its members?  
Offline Communication Mediums  
Always  
Sometimes  
Never  
Online Communication Mediums (please specify: Always, Sometimes, Never):  
Website  
E-mail  
E-newsletter  
Discussion boards  
Online Events (e.g. video conferences, consultations, etc)  
Other (please specify):
2. Does your group/ organization:  
Host Events (Yes, No)  
Run Projects (Yes, No)  
Have Professional/ Volunteer Opportunities (Yes, No)  
Provide Financial Opportunities (Yes, No)  
Have Available Resources (e.g. toolkits, publications, guides, etc) (Yes, No)

## Setting up National Youth Councils in other countries, such as Canada

Do you have any recommendations for other countries, which would like to establish youth councils?

