

Stepping up our Engagement with Youth

International Youth Day - 12th August 2021

Young people can be a positive force for development if they are provided with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities prosper.¹ Today, there are around 1.2 billion youth aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 16% of the global population. Projections suggest that the number of youth will reach 1.3 billion by 2030 and almost 1.34 billion by 2050.²

To celebrate the qualities of young people, women and men, and recognise the challenges that they are facing, the 12th of August of each year, has been designated as the ***International Youth Day***.

The aim of this year's theme, ***'Transforming Food Systems: Youth Innovation for Human and Planetary Health'*** highlights the fact that the *"success of a such a global effort will not be achieved without the active participation of young people."*³ During the UN Economic and Social Council's (ECOSOC) 2021 Youth Forum, youth participants stressed the importance of working towards more equitable food systems. Additionally, they underlined the importance of empowering youth to make informed decisions on food choices through increasing global education on the healthiest and most sustainable options for both individuals and the environment.⁴

Youth's participation is necessary in many other areas, as delineated in *'The World Youth Report: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda'*,⁵ published in 2020 by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. This report seeks to contribute to the understanding of how youth social entrepreneurship can support youth development and help accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/youth-day>

² Ibid

³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2021/05/IYD-Concept-Note-2021-for-website-v3.pdf>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/07/2020-World-Youth-Report-FULL-FINAL.pdf>

(SDGs) including the long-term goals on issues such as the global climate crisis, as outlined in this year's theme to mark the **International Youth Day**.

Furthermore, youth's activism should not be limited to environmental issues. Young people's active participation is also needed in the political, educational, social, and economic spheres. Indeed, on a European level, the **EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027** provides a framework of objectives, priorities, principles, measures, and core areas for youth policy cooperation, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018.⁶ The EU Youth Strategy fosters youth participation in democratic life, supports social and civic engagement, and ensures that all young people have the necessary resources to participate in society. It focuses on three core areas of action, around the three words: engage, connect, and empower.⁷

Youth activism was also the main highlight during an online workshop organized in March 2021 by the European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET) in cooperation with the European Youth Forum (YFJ). Over 50 youth civil society representatives and equality bodies, were brought together to discuss how they should better tackle age discrimination and how to improve their engagement with youth⁸ The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), an independent equality body entrusted by Chapter 456 of the Laws of Malta to safeguard equality, actively participated in this workshop.

During this workshop, participants explored ways to strengthen collaboration between equality bodies and young people to fight discrimination. Young women and men shared their knowledge and experience on how to establish this cooperation. They discussed how equality bodies should mainstream youth engagement across different aspects of their work, by including youth in their strategy and work plans, and engaging more in conversation with young people on social media channels, and co-creating relevant awareness-raising materials.

To this end, the **NCPE is currently circulating an online survey among young people (15-29 years)** to gauge their level of awareness concerning discrimination and sexual harassment in

⁶ https://europa.eu/youth/strategy_en

⁷ Ibid

⁸ <https://equineteurope.org/2021/tackling-age-discrimination-stepping-up-our-engagement-with-youth/>

order to identify their level of knowledge and expectations. This would enable the NCPE to improve its reach among young people and better address their concerns. Ideally this short 5-minut survey should be completed by Friday 27th August 2021; for more information on NCPE's social media platforms ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#)).

Moreover, the NCPE investigates complaints of persons who believe they are victims of discrimination on the ground of age. It also works to safeguard equality in the areas covered by its remit by raising awareness through training and information campaigns; networking with different stakeholders; carrying out research; and giving feedback to policies.

Indeed, in 2020, as part of its feedback to the **Draft National Youth Policy – Towards 2030**, the NCPE stated that the policy should strive for the elimination of discrimination and harassment of young people, when these happen on the basis of their age, but also when they are related to other intersecting identities, such as gender, race/ ethnic origin, religion/belief, sexual orientation and gender identity, with special attention given to hate-speech, especially on social media.⁹ The NCPE also recommended that all entities offering services to youth are aware of the different needs and barriers experienced by young people from different social groups, so that such services can adequately cater for all young people and their intersecting identities.

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Young women and men should not be seen as targets or recipients but as contributors towards innovative solutions. On **International Youth Day**, let's step up our efforts to involve young people in decision-making processes and provide them with an opportunity to assume leadership roles and gain skills that lead to better policies in the future.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) can be contacted on: 2295 7850 or equality@gov.mt or our Facebook page.

5th August 2021

⁹[https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Our Publications and Resources/Annual Reports/NCPE%20Annual%20Report%202020%20\(online\).pdf](https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Our_Publications_and_Resources/Annual_Reports/NCPE%20Annual%20Report%202020%20(online).pdf)

¹⁰ Ibid