



Resolution on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on minority youth

The Youth of European Nationalities (YEN), is a European umbrella organisation that represents young people identifying as ethnic, national and linguistic minorities. YEN is run and led by young people, for young people, and it sees itself as a self-determined and self-organized youth organization. Its activity is carried out and determined by youth and provides them with **a space to exchange their experiences and support each other in promoting**, defending and supporting minority rights, youth rights and cultural diversity.

Background

The year 2020 has been profoundly impacted by the world sanitary crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This crisis had, has and will continue to have negative impacts on everyone. However young people belonging to minorities, are hit even harder because of their socio-cultural status.

Since the beginning of March 2020, international events have been cancelled. Among them youth exchanges that bring together young people from different backgrounds and foster understanding, the valuing of cultural diversity and counteract the rise of populism, ethnocentric nationalism, racism and discrimination.

The crisis forces States and public institutions to revise and create new policies. It also brings all of us to deeply question our ways of living and our ways of thinking.

Overall objective

The crisis did not change the main mission of YEN, which is to defend the rights of minority youth in Europe and to offer them a space to express their identity and culture and to foster their empathy and solidarity.

The COVID-19 pandemic is before everything an unprecedented health and socio-economic crisis. Nevertheless, it also gives opportunities to question fundamental structures of our society, including the ones that have been holding back the fulfilment of minority and youth rights.

This crisis will create deep democratic, socio-economic and cultural breaches in our globalized world. We can only overcome them with a collective effort, by each of us showing solidarity and taking on our individual but also collective responsibilities towards society. As young people we have been on the front lines of different socio-economic fights, coming up with creative solutions to world challenges, and are eager to offer these experiences also in the light of this pandemic. However, monumental changes cannot be done alone. As members of minorities we continuously show that our strength is in



building alliances, and we encourage the world to show empathy, and to not allow solidarity and diversity to remain just slogans but rather strive to live up to their potential.

Recognitions

As YEN, one of the biggest European network of young people from minorities, we observed:

- That political representation, good socio-economic circumstances, education, and the expression in culture and language are all factors that often are a given for the majority. In contrast many minorities are still denied those rights and their lack has proven to be a serious, even deadly, obstacle;
- That managing of the pandemic while respecting human rights has been, is and will be an extensive challenge in many European States. The global spread of the coronavirus has fuelled the populist rhetoric masked as nationalistic “stand united” calls to actions. It is diminishing any kind of acknowledgement of diversity and is driven by hate speech, xenophobia, hatred and stigmatization of minorities. The pandemic should not act as an excuse to trade off fundamental rights to privacy and to exploit existing security measures and citizens’ fear under the pretext of safety;
- Attacks against democratic values and fair representation as emergency laws are put in place. What is more, we see a threat in governmental representatives singling out minorities as scapegoats for the crisis and a health hazard, prompting prejudiced measures;
- That poor socio-economic factors and linguistic bias can deepen inequality of minorities. Many minority communities become even more isolated, and proper access to online, educational or health services are not secured;
- That access to information on health and governmental decisions was, and in some countries still remains, limited, exclusive, even discriminatory when it is only offered in one official language;
- That the economic crunch will be felt by vulnerable groups as well as minority youth long after this health crisis recedes. The economic crunch will have a significant impact for their livelihood, but also for their cultural, educational, and youth activities as income and public funding will likely drop.

YEN is particularly concerned that help and support in economic, cultural and social domains are distributed to minority youth last, or even not distributed at all. This reinforces all former observations and pushes minority youth further to the margins of society.



Operative clauses

Therefore, YEN:

1. **Endorses** measurements that take into account the diversity of Europe;
2. **Calls for** well-considered national measurements and policy-processes that are not based on xenophobia, racism or discrimination;
3. **Stresses** the importance of inclusion of young people in discussions and decision making processes, including young people from minorities;
4. **Highlights** the importance of social, economic, educational, cultural and linguistic inclusion of minorities as this crisis will deepen inequalities with long lasting effects;
5. **Highlights** the need to hold governments accountable for any breach and violations of human rights and democratic values;
6. **Urges** everyone to reflect on the management of the crisis by their representatives, especially on the consequences of governmental decisions on human and minority rights;
7. **Asks** local, regional, national and international institutions for practical and economic support of minority and youth organisations so they can practice and support their unique culture and/or language, and to help them to become more resilient and sustainable;
8. **Urges** youth organisations to stay active and to let their voices be heard;
9. **Presses** for governments to reflect on all consequences when imposing border restrictions and to accommodate cross-border minorities as well as international exchange and cooperation of minorities;
10. **Calls** for everyone to show solidarity, empathy and benevolence and step up to tackle this crisis without exclusion or prejudice;
11. **Asks** the media and all communication actors to raise awareness on the fragile situation of minorities within the COVID-19 crisis;
12. **Highlights** the major role of everyone defending minority youth rights during the crisis and their need of strong support;
13. **Calls** all actors working with minority youth to create a protocol or a document with the most important issues for minority youth and forward it to the relevant institution. Thereby making sure that when planning emergency actions, minority youth rights are respected and not forgotten