



**YEN JEV**

Youth of European Nationalities  
Jugend Europäischer Volksgruppen

# Strategy YEN 2024/2025

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# 1. Introduction

YEN's mission is clear: we're dedicated to preserving and advancing the rights of national, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, with a strong focus on empowering youth. This strategy is our response to the dynamic landscape we face, shaped by insights derived from our activities, structures, and valued member organisations.

Consider this strategy as our roadmap for the next two years, drawing up our course to amplify the voices of minority youth and foster active citizenship. Developed collaboratively by our Board and Office, it draws heavily from the experiences from the past years of YEN as an organisation and the minority youth who are part of our network.

Our past reports, such as "Minority Youth in Europe: A State of Play" from 2021 and the "White Paper on Minority Rights" from 2014, underpin our approach. Added to these are the membership survey from 2021 and the learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic and the immediate period that followed. These documents and experiences highlight our history and the ongoing concerns of minority youth, providing a solid foundation for our work and this strategy.

Our core belief is that by empowering minority youth, we equip them to play essential roles in their local communities and advocate for their rights. We are committed to strengthening local and regional minority youth organisations, and forming a robust and sustainable network. Our goal is to empower young people through international youth work and intercultural exchanges, bolstering their identities and expanding their advocacy skills.

By developing this strategy we're also preparing minority youth to navigate an increasingly interconnected world. This means building alliances and fostering solidarity among diverse social groups. We recognize the importance of collective effort to achieve the betterment of minority rights.

Our approach involves collaborative work plans and partnerships with European and international organisations, but also learning from other minority youth organisations, including those representing young Roma, LGBTQI+ youth, and refugees. This strategy encompasses both thematic aims and internal developments. It defines our understanding of challenges and goals and outlines how we plan to achieve them.

This strategy is built around our thematic aims and internal developments. In the first part, we describe our understanding of the challenges and topics relevant for young people from minorities and the way, we as YEN want to respond to them. In that chapter, our understanding of the subject is presented, the goals within this topic, and a concrete implementation plan. The thematic aims are followed by our plans for internal developments. These relate to the structures and the way of working, which we want to adjust, to be more effective. In the last chapter, we elaborate on the plan, how we want to reach the aims and objectives. Following this strategy, we will define a work plan for each year to come, that shows how the implementation ideas will be realised.

## 2. State of Play and Achievements of 2022/2023

To look ahead and plan our work for the next years, it is crucial to evaluate our achievements so far and identify the current state of play. Overall 2022 and 2023 were difficult times marked by the lasting impact the Corona Pandemic had on us and our network of volunteer-led minority youth organisations as well as prolonged financial insecurity. At the time of writing (September 2023) we are now in a more stable situation again. In 2022 and early 2023 a lot of our efforts went into keeping the organisation going and ensuring more financial stability for the future. Since mid of 2023 we could again put our energy and time into developing the organisation further (including new staff, new projects, new media efforts,...).

**Lasting impact the Corona Pandemic:** From 2022 onwards we were able to again implement our work without direct impact from the pandemic. However, as a network, we still felt the impact the past years have had on our voluntary run member organisations and our own volunteering structures. YENs Board (which is made up of volunteers) was not filled completely and also our Working Groups (also volunteers) were also relatively small. In many of our member organisations generational shifts or even gaps are impacting the work. The regular changing of active members in youth organisations was interrupted by the measures to address the pandemic and therefore many of our members were in 2022 slowly re-starting their activities.

**Prolonged financial insecurity:** Additionally, YEN did not receive structural funding from the EU in 2022 and thus we had to face great financial uncertainties, our paid staff had to put in a lot of additional time to ensure that the organisation could continue its work, seek additional support and more frequently replanning activities and closely monitoring related spending. We also had to reduce some of our activities in 2022 as our capacities (both in terms of finances and volunteer and staff time) were fewer than what we hoped for. We were therefore focussing on the most important aspects, which are the implementation of our events, supporting our member organisations, and external representation with the most important partners. We had to reduce our activities for example in terms of communication and visibility activities or external representation towards ECOSOC.

In spring 2023 we received (among other positive developments) a positive reply for our structural funding from the EU which of course has an impact on how far we can implement the variety of activities needed to follow our strategic approach. In 2023 we again have a full Board which brings the organisation new motivation and new ideas and we are excited to put effort into the processes to further develop YEN. For example, we are updating our media work, creating new connections, re-thinking our structures, and hiring and training new staff to support the work of the volunteers. This development process is important and has only just started and will stay also with us in the coming years.

Looking back at these challenges, we are very proud of how much YEN has achieved even in these difficult times. Not only to continue the work but also to develop further (in small steps). We were able to implement a variety of high-quality activities fitting the needs of our member organisations. We offered several activities focussing on personal and organisational development and received great feedback for it, with the wish to continue this kind of activities. Collaboratively we updated and in 2023 voted on our Code of Conduct, we became

a member of the EU Youth Dialogue for the first time (and second time in 2023). We started new cooperations with events and projects focussed on marginalized/endangered languages and continued to use our report “Minority Youth in Europe: A State of Play” for our lobby work and participated in activities preparing the Conference on the Future of Europe and on the European Year of Youth. We are proud of everyone in the network who invested their time, energy and motivation into overcoming the challenges we faced in 2022 and early 2023, and are grateful for everyone who supported us.

Looking at the current situation of different national, ethnic, and linguistic minorities in Europe, we saw that in the last years, populist rhetoric, hate speech, xenophobia, hatred, and stigmatisation of minorities have become stronger again. Additionally, when evaluating our achievements and the challenges of the last years we see that most of our strategic aims still need to be pursued and we thus have adjusted them for the coming years.

## **Social inclusion**

National, ethnic and linguistic minorities belong to marginalised and discriminated groups in the society. Very often members of the minority cannot use their minority language in official settings, they have limited access to media in their language and their culture, and they face prejudice and stereotypes. As minorities live often in rural areas, their life situation is also impacted by fewer mobility possibilities, etc.

Young people belonging to minorities, were hit especially hard by the negative impact of the Corona Pandemic and the aftermaths still need to be addressed. Such as the impact the restrictions on assembly and the closing of borders had on minority activities and the enjoyment and strengthening of minority identity. Many non-governmental organisations, specifically youth organisations as spaces for social inclusion have suffered due to the restrictions. Young people from minorities are then very often confronted with multiple discrimination as they are also often not taken seriously as youngsters.

With our work, we want to empower young people from minorities and boost their self-confidence. With the workshops, we train them, so they gain skills and competencies improving their chances at education and job market later on. As members of minorities, we continuously show that our strength is in building alliances, and we want to continue showing the world the positive impact of empathy, and not allow solidarity and diversity to remain just slogans but rather strive to live up to their potential.

In the last years, we have used our “Social Fund” to allow young people without funds to join our seminars – they didn’t have to cover any travel costs or participation fees. In 2022 we placed great emphasis on building up local minority youth organisations as places of empowerment, democratic participation and solidarity. Also, we engaged in a project with UNPO (the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisations) to further build our network of solidarity. These efforts need to be continued in order to support minority youth to be fully included can one day have equal rights in society.

## **Roma**

Building upon our cooperation with Phiren Amenca that started already in 2017, we have been quite active in our efforts to support Roma in their fight for equality and equal rights. With Pia Šlogar, our member in the Advisory Council on Youth, who is a CMJ Rapporteur on Roma issues, we continued to be engaged in the Roma Youth Action plan.

While we tried to reach out to Roma organisations as possible new member organisations or partners this has proven more difficult since the Corona Pandemic. Sadly, we also could not send YEN representatives to participate in DHNB 2022 and 2023 as we encountered some issues in communication with the organisers and also had to face the issue that the youth active in our network had to shoulder more responsibilities between fewer people. We are however very happy that we could reconnect in 2023 with one of our member organisations, a Roma Youth organisation in North Macedonia. Our efforts to increase exchange between our non-Roma organisations and Roma members as well as to create more interest for the Roma among our network is however still affected by the aftermaths of the Corona pandemic, with some of our international ties being weekend.

Worryingly, the external situation does not look that optimistic. Roma and Travellers continue to face the biggest marginalisation of all minorities in Europe, being exposed to many attacks and acts of discrimination which has only been increased during the Corona pandemic with attacks against democratic values and fair representation as emergency laws were put in place. Moreover, we saw a threat in governmental representatives singling out minorities and especially Roma communities as scapegoats for the crisis and a health hazard, prompting prejudiced measures. Here we see a need to renew our focus, strengthen existing and building new ties and we are optimistic that we can do so in the coming years.

## **Youth participation**

Activities of Youth Organisations are still impacted by the aftermaths of the pandemic, as well as the subsequent economic decline. Some of our member organisations suffer from the lasting reduction of their funding and due to austerity measures, often the needs of youth and children have stayed unheard. Although 2022 was the European Year of Youth and we applaud the idea behind this initiative, for us (and many other European youth networks) the year was overshadowed by financial insecurities. In many of our member organisations generational shifts or even gaps are impacting the work and their ability to demand impactful youth participation. The regular changing of active members in youth organisations was interrupted by the measures to address the pandemic and therefore many of our members were in 2022 slowly re-starting their activities. In YEN we have mainstreamed youth participation in all our events involving people from the network in preparing, running, and evaluating the events. Apart from being run and led by youth, we see it as a high value that our members are informed about and engaged in all in the most important decision-making bodies of the organisation.

Equally important is that we want the needs and issues of the youth in our network to be the basis for our work. Therefore, we put much effort into an extensive membership survey

and the outcomes of it directly inform this strategy and our Workplans for the coming years. As this survey showed us the need to support the development of sustainable youth organisations, youth participation will continue to stay a main topic for us.

We continue to share and use the toolkit on youth participation which we developed in 2019, and since publishing it in early 2021 also the booklet on project management and good practices from our member organisations. Both are a great tool for us and our Member Organisations to further support and inspire youth participation. Our Workplan in 2022 additionally supported young organisations to re-build their work as important spaces of youth participation. In 2022 and 2023 YEN continued to have a representative in the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe and participated for the first time in the EU youth dialogue. Since 2023 we are a partner in an EU Horizon project aiming to bring in the view point of youth into the project focussing on endangered language

### **Empowerment and personal development through voluntary work**

We are very happy that in 2022 and 2023 we were able to again provide opportunities for youth in our network to develop themselves further through their voluntary work in YEN projects. With our approach of junior trainers, who support senior trainers, we gave young people from our network an opportunity to gain skills in facilitating the. After not having many opportunities for youth interested in this task in 2023 we have started to renew the process related to this opportunity and want to continue developing it further with external trainers who support the work on YEN regularly.

When looking at the evaluations of the seminar, we can conclude that participants joining the workshops recognize personal development and empowerment. In their feedback, they state that they are more motivated and inspired than before joining our activities. In 2022 with a focus on organisational and personal development as members of youth organisations, we focussed on more “practical” topics, while in 2023, addressing traditions, we created opportunities for reflection of aspects of the participants' minority identity, empowering them to address wished for change within their minority community.

The past years have deeply impacted opportunities for young people, with having to stay at home for long stretches of time, youth were not only not able to travel and meet different people, but also not able to experience “normal” socialisation in schools, universities or work places on a local level. Now, volunteering opportunities and offers supporting personal development are even more important than before. Also through our membership survey, we see the need to focus again on passing on knowledge, skills, and motivation to the youth active in our member organisations. Many of them face a generation gap, with newly active members not having had opportunities to gain necessary skills through volunteering. In the future, we want to refocus on offering different opportunities for personal development and thereby encourage and enable youth to stay and become active.

### 3. Thematic Aims and objectives

The aims of YEN are set in the statutes: *YEN shall work actively for the promotion and further development of the language, culture, identity, and rights of European autochthonous, national minorities to maintain this cultural heritage for the general understanding among nations. It is YEN's aim to achieve a higher level of tolerance for different cultures within our society. One particular focal point shall be work with children, teenagers, and young adults.*

This last point of working with young people impacts the way, methods, and tools of reaching our goals. The needs and challenges young people from minorities face are different from that of adults and therefore require different tools.

After analysis of the actual situation, challenges and opportunities we have decided to keep the basic focal points from the last years. They continue to be important or in many cases have even become more important. Even though we achieved many things in each of them, we also think that it is necessary to re-address these topics with some adjustments. One such re-adjustment is a renewed focus on solidarity and rights which impact most focal points.

The **focal points** are:

- Social inclusion
- Roma
- Youth participation
- Empowerment and personal development through voluntary work

Apart from these four focal points, which impact all work we do, we have decided to place even greater importance on **internal structures and developments**. Thereby we support our member organisations (as well as the YEN network itself) to become or further develop into sustainable, active, and strong minority youth organisations:

- Membership development
- Communication
- External Representation
- Funding

These internal points are a priority for the next years and are also relevant for the thematic priorities of YEN – only with strong members organisations, good communication, strong network, and representation as well as solid and sustainable funding, we are in the position to effectively work on the subjects important for young people from national, ethnic and linguistic minorities.



### **3.1. Social inclusion**

Social inclusion remains a fundamental pillar of our mission. It signifies our commitment to enhancing the opportunities and ensuring the dignity of all individuals and groups, particularly those facing disadvantages based on their identities. As an organisation primarily representing national, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, we recognize that young people from minority backgrounds often face multiple layers of exclusion and discrimination. These challenges are rooted in their minority status, language, culture, age, and the structural discrimination embedded in many European societies. As minorities live often in rural areas, their life situation is also impacted by fewer mobility possibilities, etc. As a European network YEN offers young people belonging to minorities a space to reflect on their identity, aims to enable them to preserve, develop, and access their rights, and provide them with means of influencing their communities and realities.

#### **3.1.1 Identity and Empowerment**

In our pursuit of social inclusion, in 2024-2025, we want to address identity from a multi-faceted perspective. We want to encourage young minority members to explore their own identity and place their belonging to a minority in relation to other markers of identity. We believe this is the basis for empowered minority youth who are comfortable to identify as belonging to minorities, and can demand that their rights to be fulfilled.

#### **3.1.2 Fighting Discrimination and Promoting Human Rights**

Our strategy for 2024-2025 also recognizes the evolving political landscape, such as the upcoming EU elections in 2024. We want to strengthen engagement in political processes and encourage youth to stand up for their rights. We remain dedicated to combating discrimination and promoting human rights. Building upon the Code of Conduct implemented during the previous strategy period, we aim to refine our approach by addressing elements such as selecting and training contact persons and responding to different scenarios effectively. We also emphasize the importance of empowering young individuals to speak out against racist, sexist, and other discriminatory comments. It is crucial that we equip our members with the tools and confidence needed to challenge discrimination in all its forms. In all of our work, we will continue to address Human Rights and their relation to minority rights.

#### **3.1.3 Promoting Diversity**

Promoting diversity continues to be a central value of our work at YEN. Our efforts in promoting diversity extend to fostering intercultural learning and understanding among youth. We believe that our work in this area contributes significantly to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, particularly in regions like the Balkans, where our activities bring together national groups to promote social cohesion. We view diversity as an asset that, when embraced, can prevent conflicts, build alliances, and create inclusive societies.

#### **Implementation**

As we embark on this new strategy, we remain committed to implementing concrete measures to achieve our social inclusion goals. These measures include:

- **Addressing Identity:** We will include identity as a cross-cutting theme in our events, encouraging young people from minorities to explore the multi-faceted nature of their identities. We will provide safer spaces for intercultural exchange and promote awareness of the benefits of diverse societies.
- **Empowerment to Speak Up:** As part of our commitment to empowerment, we will implement activities that focus on equipping young individuals with the confidence and skills to speak up against racism, sexism, and all forms of discrimination.
- **Fighting Discrimination and Promoting Human Rights:** We will support our member organisations in combating discrimination at all levels. This includes monitoring the situation of minorities and their rights across Europe, cooperating with the Minority Monitor of FUEN, conducting workshops on multiple discrimination and improving the use of the two official instruments of statements and resolutions. We will also directly address the topics of Rights and Advocacy in our Workplan 2024 enable youth to stand up for their rights. In our activities we continue to include elements of Human Rights Education and promote the “Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People” from the Council of Europe. We will continue to implement workshops where the members of minority organisations learn about their rights and how to claim them.
- **Promoting Diversity:** We will continue to incorporate diversity as a cross-cutting theme in our events, organizing sessions that raise awareness about multiple discrimination and enable intercultural exchange. Additionally, we will organize a Diversity Festival to engage young people with limited experience in non-formal education. We will also aim to create partner projects with different marginalized youth organisations to create opportunities for exchange and build strong alliances and solidarity.
- **Organisational Structures and Inclusion within YEN:** YEN is committed to providing opportunities for young people to build their capacities through internships or traineeships in our Berlin office. We will also ensure that our events and activities are accessible to young people with different needs, aiming to reduce obstacles and increase access for all, including the use of our social fund. In order to actively promote and support gender equality within the network, we will promote and implement our Code of Conduct, support women and non-binary youth to take over leading positions and aim to use non-discriminatory, non-violent, and gender-neutral language.

## 3.2. Roma

Roma communities continue to face profound marginalization, making them one of the most disadvantaged minority groups in Europe. Many Roma individuals and families live on the edge of society, trapped in poverty and confronted with persistent discrimination, defamation, and social exclusion across European countries. In some regions, they even endure attacks and persecution. Recognizing that Roma youth within our organisation face unique challenges in today's Europe, our strategy for 2024-2025 reaffirms our commitment to addressing these issues. These difficulties often arise from a combination of factors, including social exclusion, limited participation opportunities, and restricted access to their rights.

### **Creating Solidarity and Raising Awareness**

Building on our positive (re-) connections with Roma organisations in 2023, we emphasize the importance of creating solidarity with Roma communities in the coming years and re-focusing this topic. In 2024-2025, we want to address the import issue of expanding our connections with Roma organisations, building bridges of solidarity, and striving to eliminate stereotypes against Roma within our network. To achieve this, we will strengthen our partnerships with existing Roma youth organisations, such as Phiren Amenca and ternYpe, and expand our collaboration with new Roma youth organisations, such as the University Students' Association of Austrian Roma and relevant stakeholders, including the Education Centre Against Antigypsyism in Berlin. Our strategy goes beyond cooperation; we aim to build capacities among our participants, empowering them to become effective allies to the Roma cause. We believe it is essential for our network to possess in-depth knowledge of the challenges Roma communities are facing in Europe. We will also pay attention to the Council of Europe's Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025). Our goal is to actively contribute to the social inclusion and empowerment of Roma youth across Europe. This approach aligns with our commitment to foster solidarity within our network.

### **Implementation**

- **Collaborative Engagement:** We will invite Roma networks to actively participate in YEN events (as participants of trainers), fostering joint seminars, study visits, and study sessions to address shared challenges and opportunities.
- **Supporting Dikh He Na Bister:** We will refocus our attention on the Dikh He Na Bister initiative, ensuring YEN's active participation and representation at this important event.
- **Cooperation with Roma youth networks:** Continue to fight together with our Roma partner organisations against antigypsyism, discrimination and raise awareness on the existence of prejudices and stereotypes through ECOSOC, YFJ, and other networks we are a part of.
- **Promoting Knowledge and Solidarity:** Our focus will be on deepening the knowledge and understanding of the situation of Roma communities among our network members. We aim to challenge stereotypes and biases against Roma communities within our network by actively raising awareness about the diverse

forms and living situations within Roma communities. This will be achieved through various means, including podcasts, discussions at events, and a commitment to exploring the Roma situation during our seminars to foster greater empathy and understanding.

### 3.3 Youth Participation

While the recognition of youth participation is growing, translating it into meaningful action remains a challenge. Youth participation, particularly for young people from national, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, is paramount. These young individuals often face multiple forms of discrimination and barriers due to their minority status and youth. At the YEN, participation aligns with our fundamental principles of self-organisation, democratic decision-making, and shared responsibility.

YEN is committed to addressing the increasing obstacles hindering youth participation, especially among minorities and marginalized groups. There's a noticeable gap in youth representation within societal, political, institutional, and legal structures. Many young people lack information about opportunities, the significance of participation, and the necessary skills for active engagement. In response, we aim to inform and motivate youth, equipping them with the tools and skills required for active participation through non-formal education methods.

Given that most of our member organisations operate locally or regionally and not nationally, YEN has established strong connections at the grassroots level. This local engagement positions us to support our member organisations in building partnerships at the local and regional levels, fostering youth participation and advocating for transparent and inclusive decision-making processes.

In the coming years, YEN's focus on empowering young people from minorities in their participation efforts will remain constant. We will continue to support them in taking ownership of their communities and networks, allowing their voices to be heard in societal and political discussions, both at local and international levels.

#### **Implementation**

- **Mainstream Youth Participation:** Integrate youth participation into all YEN events, from preparation to seminar execution and evaluation.
- **Dissemination of reports and manuals:** Continue disseminating YENs "Minority Youth in Europe: A State of Play" report to support advocacy and lobbying efforts. Disseminating the Council of Europe's "Have your say" manual to our Member Organisations, partners, and young people in our network to support them in their efforts. Creating new manuals for the coming years adapted to the needs of our member organisations.
- **Advocacy and Lobbying:** Actively engage in advocacy and lobbying efforts, emphasizing the importance of youth participation to "adult" minority organisations and partners. Highlight the conditions necessary for meaningful participation and

presenting the perspective of young people. We will address this topic specifically in our activities in 2024.

- **Addressing Ageism:** Address the issue of ageism within minority communities and organisations, providing guidance on how to tackle it during our seminars.
- **Capacity Building:** Support member organisations in capacity building and training, as they are self-organized and self-determined youth organisations.
- **Partnerships with Local Authorities:** Establish partnerships and dialogue between minority representatives and local/regional authorities to create user-friendly tools, such as online platforms, public dialogue, and various communication channels.
- **Partnerships with National Youth Councils:** Develop and create new partnerships with National Youth Councils to collaborate on participation-related matters.
- **Promotion of the Revised European Charter:** Promote the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, emphasizing its importance to YEN Member Organisations in their local and regional work.

Internally, YEN aims to ensure that participatory principles are ingrained in its work and functioning.

### **Internal Implementation**

- **Seminars and Workshops:** Offer seminars and workshops on subjects relevant for minority youth and topics proposed by our network;
- **Diverse Activity Formats:** Explore different formats for activities, such as shorter events, regional events, to ensure broader participation.
- **Enhancing Working Groups:** Make activities within the Working Groups more meaningful by responding to members' requests for tailored capacity building, longer-term projects, certification, and leveraging synergies between the three working groups.
- **Regular Reflection:** Foster regular reflection within the Board and Office of the organisation on the participatory approach to leadership.

In addition to these measures, YEN will review its relationship with FUEN, educate members about the importance of youth participation, and utilize methods to showcase the levels of youth engagement, ranging from tokenism to active participation. The organisation will continue promoting youth participation through engaging, fun approaches, sharing personal stories during events, and ensuring that young voices are integrated into decision-making processes effectively.

### **3.4 Personal development through voluntary work and recognition of voluntary work**

YEN continues to uphold its identity as a self-organised and self-determined youth organisation, driven by the passion and dedication of volunteers. Our board members and Working Group members all contribute voluntarily, and our activities are primarily led by volunteers, with the support of our dedicated employees who assist in administrative tasks.

At the heart of our mission is the empowerment and personal development of young people. The fact that young individuals, who have a variety of other commitments, choose to dedicate their free time to volunteerism is inherently valuable. Through their involvement in YEN, young people not only experience democracy in action but also actively participate in shaping their communities.

Our central theme remains to provide volunteers, participants, and leaders within our network with opportunities for personal growth through engagement in non-formal activities and processes. This approach broadens their horizons, fosters stronger personalities, and encourages active citizenship. Research has shown that individuals who engage in international networks tend to exhibit a greater inclination for societal participation and contribute to the advancement of democracy.

#### **Developing Skills and Competences**

Throughout our events and meetings, YEN maintains a continuous commitment to develop participants' skills and competences. We are dedicated to helping them with leadership, organisational, communication, and social skills. To this end, we remain devoted to the principles of non-formal education, fostering an understanding of its significance among our participants.

Intercultural learning continues to play a pivotal role in our seminars. Participants engage with diverse groups, learning to navigate cultural differences effectively. We strive to develop training competencies within YEN, motivating and training past participants to lead their own events, potentially extending beyond the YEN network. This empowers young individuals in our network to become active citizens, influencers within their communities, and leaders in their respective organisations. For our experienced volunteers, we aim to create opportunities that spark their desire to remain engaged in YEN as experts and facilitators of knowledge sharing.

#### **Implementation**

- Inclusion of intercultural learning and non-formal education in all our seminars.
- Ensuring trainers at our events actively support the personal development of participants.
- Continued implementation of the concept of junior trainers from our network supporting senior trainers. Improvement of the concept through more personal reflections in order to provide more tailored learning experiences.

- Establishment of a team or pool of trainers to provide qualified and motivated trainers for YEN events.
- Utilization of the skills and experiences within our network by creating opportunities for peer learning.
- Creation of opportunities to acquire skills for organisational development, such as project management, leadership, and membership development, supporting young individuals from minorities in taking action and assuming leadership roles within their communities and networks.
- Offer Training for Trainers: In the coming years, YEN will introduce training programs designed to empower volunteers with the skills needed to become effective trainers and facilitators within the network.
- Sustainable Activism and Self-Organisation: A new focus area will be self-management and self-organisation of volunteer workloads. Tools and strategies will be provided to help volunteers effectively manage their responsibilities and maintain a healthy activism-life balance.

### **Stronger Recognition of Volunteering**

We firmly believe that youth and volunteer work are instrumental in fostering active citizenship and directly empowering citizens at the local level. Therefore, we advocate for the recognition of volunteer youth work, emphasizing the importance of non-formal and informal learning to validate the competencies and abilities of youth workers and volunteers. We are committed to enhancing the recognition of volunteers for the activities they organize and the time they dedicate to YEN. We aim to emphasize the impact of their work and provide volunteers with the tools to showcase their accomplishments to the wider world.

### **Implementation**

- Continuation of the use of certificates for participants, highlighting the skills gained during our events and workshops and Promote the Recognition of Volunteers. YEN recognizes the need to further promote the certification and recognition of volunteers. We will focus on demonstrating the value of volunteering, differentiating it from formal employment.
- YEN will actively showcase the best moments and achievements of our network, highlighting the positive outcomes and experiences that result from volunteering within our organisation. Personal stories and testimonials will be utilized to showcase the impact and significance of volunteering within our network and serve as inspiration for current and future volunteers.
- Continued use of tools such as the "Youth Passport" and the "European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers" to document the personal development of YEN volunteers.

- Raising awareness among employees regarding the positive aspects of volunteer work and its profound impact on participants.
- Active support for initiatives led by the European Youth Forum (YFJ) that advocate for the recognition of qualifications obtained through youth work in youth organisations, in addition to school and university grades.
- Reviewing the European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) with the Board and Working Groups and incorporating it into our advocacy efforts.

## 4. Internal developments

To realize our vision and effectively advocate for the rights of minorities and ethnic groups, it is imperative that we focus on internal development. YEN's strength resides in its Member Organisations and their dedicated efforts across European regions. Thus, we must allocate resources to enhance our internal structures, ensuring sustainability and optimizing our impact. This commitment to internal development is deeply rooted into our strategy to enable YEN to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Those topics for the upcoming two years are:

- Membership development
- Funding
- Communication
- External representation

As we progress into the years 2024 and 2025, YEN is dedicated to refining its internal structures and operations to better serve its mission and membership. Our aim is to strengthen YEN's identity, optimize its structures, and enhance its visibility.

There will be new elements to help us achieve these internal topics:

- **Redefining YEN's Corporate Identity:** Merchandise and Branding: YEN will embark on a journey to redefine and present its corporate identity. This will include the development of YEN merchandise that reflects our identity, values, and mission. These items will serve as symbols of our collective commitment to championing the rights of minorities and ethnic groups.
- **Reflecting and Updating Structures and Activities:** Shorter Events: Building on our experiences, YEN will consider the implementation of shorter events to accommodate the evolving needs and preferences of our participants. These condensed gatherings will be designed to maximize engagement and impact within a shorter timeframe.



- **Anniversary Celebration:** The upcoming 40 years anniversary will be an opportune moment to celebrate the best of YEN. We will highlight personal stories from our members, showcasing the positive impact YEN has had on their lives and communities. This storytelling initiative will enhance our visibility and illustrate the real-world significance of our work.
- **Reviewing Internal Structure and Working Groups:** Structural Review: YEN will conduct a comprehensive review of its internal structure to ensure it remains adaptable and aligned with our evolving goals. This review will encompass the roles and responsibilities of various entities within YEN.
- **Working Groups Enhancement:** In line with the structural review, we will update our working groups to better reflect the current challenges and opportunities facing minority youth in Europe. These updated groups will focus on areas of critical importance and develop strategies to address them effectively. These internal developments are vital for YEN's continued growth and effectiveness.

## 4.1 Membership development

Membership development remains a fundamental pillar of YEN's strategy for 2024-2025, ensuring that our organisation thrives as a membership-based entity, guided by the collective will of its members.

### Implementation

- **Empowering Local and Regional Minority Youth Organisations:** YEN's members hold the ultimate decision-making power within our organisation. They determine the network's direction, elect leadership, and choose host organisations for our events. Our commitment to empowering our member organisations, especially local and regional minority youth organisations, continues.
- **Continuation of Study Visits:** Building on the success of study visits as an effective tool for expanding our membership base and fostering closer ties among member organisations, we will continue to organize these visits. Study visits not only provide opportunities for members to connect but also enable them to support each other in addressing common challenges. These visits will serve as platforms for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and mutual support.
- **Promotion of Member Organisations:** In the spirit of promoting our member organisations, we will actively engage with attendees at YEN events. By asking specific questions and asking them for content, we aim to create engaging content that showcases the diversity, strength, and enthusiasm of our MOs. This will not only raise awareness of the valuable work our members do but also encourage others to join our network.
- **Encouraging Participation:** To ensure the full participation of our member organisations, we will explore different event formats, including digital, shorter events, and regional gatherings. These formats will cater to the needs of those who may face constraints in attending larger gatherings.

- **Sharing Media Content:** We recognize the importance of visual storytelling in conveying the essence of YEN and its member organisations. To this end, we will actively share graphics and videos that provide clear and engaging insights into our network. This media content will help answer the question, "What is YEN?" and encourage potential members to get involved.
- **Support During Challenging Times:** Building on lessons learned from the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to offer support to member organisations that have been particularly affected. Reconnecting through personal contacts, better information dissemination about YEN activities, and direct invitations will be part of our efforts to ensure that our member organisations remain resilient.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** We recognize the value of partnerships in expanding our reach and impact. We will actively seek partnerships with organisations interested in becoming YEN members and collaborate with those working in related fields. These partnerships will serve as valuable resources for mutual learning and exchange. **Enhancing Accessibility:** We will continually evaluate the accessibility of YEN events to ensure that all member organisations, regardless of their size or resources, have the opportunity to participate fully. This includes exploring various event formats and providing support to member organisations in promoting YEN within their ranks.
- **Cultural Exchange and Informal Learning:** YEN events will continue to offer space for cultural exchange and informal learning. These experiences play a vital role in fostering mutual understanding and solidarity among our member organisations.

In summary, our commitment to membership development remains unwavering in the 2024-2025 strategy. We will leverage successful tools like study visits, engage actively with attendees, promote member organisations, and share compelling media content to expand our network, empower local and regional minority youth organisations, and promote inclusivity within YEN.

#### 4.1.1. Empowering our Member Organisations

Our members, local minority youth organisations are democratic civic spaces, tools for self-representation and a main pillar to enable participation, access to social rights, and creating an inclusive society for minority youth. The aims and focus' of the Youth of European Nationalities are decided by its member organisations. They are the core of YEN's existence and it is in their interest that the YEN acts. The strength and success of the YEN lies in the diversity of our members. As such, YEN is more than a sum of its members.

To strengthen and support our Member Organisations in their efforts, we want to share the expertise that lies in our network.

#### **Implementation**

- Including experts from various Member Organisations in the Working Groups and using their expertise to run the work of YEN;
- Providing Member Organisations with the possibilities for training and capacity building – by forwarding information, but also organising activities ourselves;

- Providing Member Organisations with support for (re-)building minority youth organisations by assisting them in learning about and implementing activities (for example to develop their membership base);
- Facilitating the European and international engagement of member organisations in all relevant settings;
- Supporting and advising Member Organisations to be able to fully take part in the Platform;
- Focus on topics relevant to our Member Organisations such as ageism in minority communities, reflection on minority identity and rights, ways to advocate for them.
- Encourage our Member Organisations to think about joining with National Youth Councils in their countries to raise awareness and ensure communication between different groups of society in one country.
- Encourage our Member Organisations to establish cooperation with like-minded organisations on a local level.

#### **4.1.2. Support and foster networking between members**

As a European network of minority youth organisations, YEN aims in providing these organisations with space and the possibility to meet and exchange. One of our principles is to expand our horizons through international contacts, knowledge of diversity, and various cultures. By bringing our member organisations together, we bring and connect people from conflicted areas (especially Balkan countries) or border regions impacted by long conflicts over the borders. With the workshops and non-formal education, we actively promote intercultural learning and aim to overcome potential misunderstandings and reluctance.

Most of the time, our members work multilaterally in the framework of YEN and meet in our seminars and during activities. However, members should also be enabled to run projects between themselves (bilaterally), like EVS or e.g. pilot projects supported by the EYF or other voluntary schemes.

#### **Implementation**

- Continue to design our events so that the space for intercultural learning and international exchange is provided;
- Run info sessions on the sponsoring programs during YEN events;
- Run sessions on program management and the implementation of projects;
- Support the members with the pool of trainers;
- Support the members with information on potential funding and grant opportunities;
- Encourage members to develop joint projects by offering funding opportunities and promoting examples of successful collaboration on YEN social media;

- Facilitate peer learning between member organisations with similar interests and aims;
- Continue exchange with the Youth Group of the AGDM (the youth section of the Working Group of German Minorities in FUEN) – e.g. by regular contact and exchange with the Youth Coordinator;
- Support the exchange of experiences, sharing of ideas, and discussion of problems between members during YEN events.

## 4.2. Enforce communication

Effective communication is vital for maintaining an informed and motivated membership. In the 2024-2025 strategy, we will build on our existing communication efforts and incorporate new approaches to ensure that our members stay engaged and well-informed.

### Implementation

- **Utilizing various communication channels for Low-Threshold Communication:** To provide a low-threshold communication platform for our members, we will introduce a communication group dedicated to YEN events. This informal and convenient channel will facilitate quick updates and discussions among participants, enhancing their overall event experience. We will carefully address data protection issues to ensure compliance with regulations.
- **Leveraging YouTube Videos:** YouTube is a powerful platform for visual storytelling. We will create and share informative and engaging videos, including highlights from our events. These videos will not only serve as valuable resources for our members but also help raise awareness of YEN's work to a broader audience.
- **Expanding Facebook and Instagram Engagement:** We recognize the importance of reaching our audience through popular social media channels. In addition to our current communication channels, we will increase our presence on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Regular updates, live streams, and interactive content will keep our members and partners engaged and informed.
- **Enhancing Consistency:** Consistency is key in effective communication. We will commit to maintaining a regular flow of updates and news through our various communication channels. This consistency will ensure that our members receive timely information and stay engaged throughout the year.
- **Engaging Member Organisations:** We will actively seek ways in which member organisations can support YEN's communication and dissemination efforts. This includes encouraging them to contribute to publications and engage more actively on social media platforms. Collaborative efforts will amplify our reach and impact.
- **Transparent Data Handling:** We are committed to protecting the personal data of our participants and young people in our network. We will further develop our communication regarding how we handle data and ensure that our member organisations understand and comply with data protection measures.

- **Accessible Information Material:** To welcome new members and acquaint them with YEN, we will create easily accessible information materials. These materials will comprehensively explain our organisation, its structure, activities, and objectives, facilitating a smooth onboarding process for new member organisations.
- **Publication Sharing:** We will continue to share our publications, such as the report "Minority Youth in Europe: A State of Play," with member organisations. We will encourage them to utilize, reflect on, and provide feedback on these valuable resources.

### 4.3. External representation

Our external efforts are twofold: we want to cooperate with other youth organisations on the subjects relevant for young people, but also continue our partnership with other minority organisations, who work in the field of minority rights.

Among the youth organisations, one of our important partners is the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the biggest European platform of youth organisations and national youth councils. Even though YEN does not have a representative in the Advisory Council on Youth for the period the Council of Europe 2024-2025of, we want to continue staying in contact with the Advisory Council as we need to be active on both levels: among the Member States of the European Union as well as the Council of Europe.

Regarding minority organisations, we want to continue and review our partnership with the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), but also develop the relationship with the Educational Centre Against Antigypsyism (in Berlin), the European Center for Minority Issues (ECMI), the European Free Alliance Youth (EFAy), the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS), Active Rainbow, Voices of Young refugees in Europe (VYRE) and the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisations (UNPO). Furthermore, we plan to continue our involvement within the United Nations Structures, taking advantage of the consultative status in the ECOSOC as well as our cooperation with the Society of Threatened People (STP/GfBV). Both organisations work globally, which opens a great opportunity for us to build up good cooperation with neighboring and other world regions.

We will continue to strengthen our cooperation with organisations that share our mission and values. Building on our existing partnerships, such as the one with the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), we will actively contribute our expertise in youth issues to further mutual goals. However, we also see the need to expand our external efforts, fostering partnerships with other youth organisations and minority rights groups.

#### **Implementation**

- Stay connected to the **Advisory Council on Youth** of the Council of Europe;
- Follow the responsibilities in the **European Youth Forum** by active engagement in the strategic planning of the organisation as well as involvement in various activities and meetings;

- Continue the cooperation with **FUEN**; participating in their Congress, but also providing them with our expertise on youth issues (e.g. within the German Minorities Working Group);
- Strengthen our Cooperation with **ECOSOC** by participating in sessions and handing in statements on minority issues and connect to other UN bodies within the Human Rights Council;
- Strengthen our Cooperation with **UNESCO**, follow up on the activities and developments from previous years;
- Develop the partnership with the **Educational Centre Against Antigypsyism** by organising common activities and exchange of good practices and knowledge;
- Share our **publications** such as the report **“Minority Youth in Europe: A State of Play”** to raise awareness on the situation, needs, and ideas of young people from minorities with various policymakers and actors on all levels. Use the report to strengthen our position in civil society and the connections with our network, partners, and European institutions;
- Establish and continue strong collaboration and partnerships with European civil society organisations to build bridges together between different minority groups as well as between minorities and the majority
- Use different channels of communication to reach different groups and present the outcomes of our projects in our external missions and communication;
- Ensure a constant flow of quality information to the outside, finding a balance between fun reporting and hard content and expertise on minority rights, youth work, non-formal education, etc.
- **Resolutions and Statements:** In the upcoming years, we will focus on making our voice heard through resolutions and statements. This will involve active participation of our member organisations in discussions and dialogues relevant to minority rights and youth engagement in Europe. By voicing our opinions and concerns, we aim to influence policies and decisions that impact minority communities.
- **Reevaluating Our Involvement:** It's crucial to periodically reevaluate our participation in various structures and organisations. In 2024-2025, we will take a closer look at our existing affiliations and partnerships to identify areas where we can improve our impact. By reassessing our role and strategies within these structures, we can ensure that our efforts yield meaningful results.
- **Participation in International Conferences:** To broaden our perspective and actively engage in discussions on minority issues, we will participate in international conferences. These gatherings will provide opportunities to exchange ideas, share best practices, and advocate for minority rights on a global scale.

- **Exploring New Partnerships:** In 2024-2025, we will actively seek new partnerships that align with our mission, including organisations of other minorities/marginalised groups. By expanding our network of allies, we can collectively work towards creating inclusive and peaceful societies.

As we embark on the journey of 2024-2025, our external representation efforts will focus on strategic engagement, impactful advocacy, and meaningful collaborations. By championing the rights and needs of minority youth, we aim to contribute to the creation of more inclusive and just societies across Europe and beyond.

## 4.4. Funding

The years leading up to 2023-2024 posed significant financial challenges for us. These hurdles had a considerable impact, but we persevered and successfully secured funding, notably from the European Union. It's crucial to keep these lessons in mind as we move forward. Our approach to funding encompasses two vital aspects: ensuring funding for our events, which serve as essential educational tools, and securing administrative funding to support the critical work of our Secretariat.

### 4.4.1. Ensure funding for events

The events of YEN aim to create a good educational environment, in which our participants can learn, reflect, and become actors of change in their respective communities. With all our events, we empower young people in their minority identity, and we see empathy and solidarity developing. That combined with gaining knowledge, tools, and competencies in the field of human rights education, youth participation, and anti-discrimination leads to a higher level of participation of these young people. Our events are very often the first international experience for young people and the feedback we gather can be only summed with the phrase "more events are needed". Therefore, we need to secure the events we plan, but in the long-term perspective, we shall consider running even more seminars.

On the other hand, however, we note the increasing costs of the seminars whereas the funding often stays the same.

We continue the implementation of the „Solidarity Fund“ which consists of the membership fees of the supportive members. This fund is to cover the travel costs (usually the 30% which is covered by the participants) or the participation fee of the participants, who have trouble covering that themselves. In the last year, this Fund has been used at each event, and especially when the travel costs were high, the demand and interest in the “Solidarity Fund” was high.

### **Implementation**

- Apply for funding of youth events at sources such as EYF, Erasmus+, German Federal Ministry of Interior, etc.;

- Partnering up in projects of like-minded organisations and filing own grant applications to large-scale projects on the European level;
- Cooperate with more minority regions (i.e. South Tyrol and Schleswig Holstein);
- Gain more supportive members;
- Address business and regions for the in-kind sponsoring more frequently;
- Concretise and implement the financial strategy;
- Promote and make use of the "Solidarity Fund";
- Explore new funding possibilities for international youth events.

#### **4.4.2. Ensure administrative funding**

To support the activities of YEN as well as to give professional support to the board and the Working Groups, a stable Secretariat is needed. It is also to be observed that the workload connected to the events is growing over the years (young people traveling A-B-C instead of A-B-A; weak local structures of the organisations requiring more engagement of YEN; translation and description of the invoices etc.).

To finance this, administrative funding resources are needed as costs are very high. Besides this, a stable financial basis needs to be set. This means in case administrative funding cannot be obtained for any reason, the network does not run any risk of being dissolved.

#### **Implementation**

- Apply for administrative funding;
- Concretise and implement the financial strategy especially regarding the work of the Secretariat;
- Seek funding from different minority regions;
- Diversify the administrative funding to ensure a stable financial basis and to be able to pay fair wages.

## **5. Implementation**

This strategy depicts the aims and objectives that YEN has set for the next years and links them with the ideas for implementation. From this document, a work plan for each year will be drawn. The thematic will inspire the subjects of the seminars. All thematic aims are connected to the topic of membership development mentioned in point 4, which will be a main focus in the coming year. The other aims and objectives mentioned under point 4 will be mainly for internal discussions in the Board and the Working Groups. However, a plan of action for this will be drawn up by the bodies mentioned to tackle those issues. By realising its seminars and leading discussions many of the networking aspects are realized automatically so that they can be implemented together with the content-based objectives.