

# Structured dialogue: structuring the elite, cultivating exclusion

Why the European Structured dialogue with young people is  
excluding most of them, and why that is a problem



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The EU will start a new cycle of the “structured dialogue with young people”. The European level events of the previous cycle mainly included the “usual suspects”: the same young one's all the time. For others -not only youth with fewer opportunities, but to all except the “professional-youth”- there are barriers to participate. These barriers, and thus the status quo, are maintained by both institutions and the “youth establishment”.**

The structured dialogue aims to be a genuine dialogue between the European institutions and all young people. Input from the grass-root level should reach the European level in European youth events. It is my conviction that these aims are not reached. The youth events are exclusive to most young people. They are only inclusive for the usual suspects, or “professional youth” - young people with a (long) background in youth organisations, highly educated and having the capacities and interest to operate in political structures - and there are barriers for other young people – not only young people with fewer opportunities, but all without politics as hobby/profession.

In this paper I try to identify barriers for “non-professional youth” to participate. These barriers are not only structural - in the way the events are organised – but these structures are rooted in a whole culture that, often intended, is exclusive.

### **This non-participation of the majority is a problem.**

There is a problem in my opinion. A large number of young people, potentially interested in political issues, turns away from classical politics. Youth participation should be a tool for them for influence. Instead it now mainly includes those that can and even like to function within classical politics. And there is no compensation to still have other voices heard. First of all because there consultations either didn't take place or were not more than a farce (Rome summit) and thus no bottom-up structure through which “normal youth” are represented exists: the included youth are too much occupied with their own agenda. Instead of a desire too represent others, they have an elitist/matriarchal “knowing what is best for their peers” attitude. Secondly, because it is an illusion that representation is possible at all: Young people are as diverse as numerous.

**Without radical new structures and a cultural shift, the SD risks to remain limited to a playground for youth elite and wannabe politicians and fail to bring policy-makers in contact with the rich, diverse and distinct worlds of young people and the voices of those young people that have too few ways to be heard, will not be heard at all.**

The upcoming cycle of the structured Dialogue is different in nature from the previous one. It is more focussed and more technical. This has implications for the involvement of young people with less knowledge of the policies. It means that just bringing in young people from the bus stop and have them discuss the concrete policies is not inclusive participation. But it does not mean consultations should not go beyond the establishment: the policies are to address all young people and when believing in participation, a role for all young people needs to be found.

- The European Commission has expressed the ambition for an inclusive structured dialogue, but has to make this possible. Not only by financial means, but also by
  1. Focus and clarify questions for consultation: Only then young people can be consulted properly and are the results usable at the EU level and thus not only a waste of money;
  2. Not only make consultation possible, also demand true inclusive consultation from the youth organisations;
  3. Diversify goals and working methods: As people are different, a one-size-fits-all approach will work. Meet the pro's formally and take their role as civil society partners seriously, give different spaces to normal young people;
  4. Include specialists on youth participation in the design of methods, and make a proper evaluation possible.
- The “youth establishment” has to take it's responsibility too. To establish, strengthen and safeguard their role as advocates on youth issues and for youth participation, self-acknowledgement of our elitism is vital. Because when they continue to falsely claim to speak on behalf of all youth, they risk not to be recognised as specific, valuable partners, but be side-tracked instead by institutions that also want to interact with the “normal” youth.

*“In addition to the risk of tokenism, involving a few youth as representatives of larger groups may result in exclusivity, whereby only the most privileged or skilled youth are chosen to participate. [providing an alternative] means building structures, practices, and cultures that support the participation of youth who may not come from privileged backgrounds or may not yet have the skills to participate effectively.*

*Creating inclusive participation also means overcoming the idea of representativeness.[...] young people engage with the public world as individuals, not as representatives of all youth.”*

(O'Donoghue c.s. 2002: 21)

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### **Thank you....**

I wish to thank all the people that I discussed this issue with in the past two years during meetings, over beers, over the phone and through articles. I specifically wish to thank **Wieger Bakker (utrecht University)** for saying “do you really think you get away with this?” and thereby pushing me into better thinking, **Alison Woodward (Free University, Brussels)** for saying “It was the same when I was in youth politics long time ago”, **Leo Rutjes (Alexander foundation)** for saying “I think you have found a trail”, **Pink Hilverdink (Dutch Youth Institute/ Dutch YIA Agency)** for saying “too bad you are leaving, someone needs to shake things up”, **Folmer Speerstra (SG Dutch NYC)** for saying “Concrete policies may require an elite, but the elite is too much disconnected from the grass-roots” when I started to have doubts because the technical level of the new cycle; and all the participants of “Dubrovnik” for their feedback. And off course my colleague **Christel de Lange**, who never freaked when I was outraged/angry/sad again about this issue and who will have to live with the mess I'll leave behind.

## INTRODUCTION

When young boys become adolescents, they develop new interests. After reaching a certain level of physical development, all of a sudden they realise they are surrounded by girls, and feel a sudden urge to interact with them. Citizens are for the EU what hot girls are for adolescent boys: they are all around them, but talking to them in a way that triggers their attention seems a mission impossible. The “no” against the constitutional treaty triggered all of sudden an interest in the citizen. With a “plan D” the Commission tries to interact with this special species. And the EU struggles to learn how that should be done.

Special attention is paid to young people. Young people are not organised in the traditional interest organisations and political parties, and don't fit in the normal policy-making structures. Therefore, a special structure, the structured dialogue was invented. Structured from the grassroots towards seminars where young people from all over Europe and policy-makers meet.

As the Dutch Youth Representative European Affairs of the Dutch National Youth Council, I attended some of these events and followed the development of this dialogue for more than two years. And I met constantly the same people: the small world of “EU- professional youth”. Highly educated young people (with a tendency to be not very young) that share a high interest in politics. Young people that just love abstract problems, new all about the constitution, speak policy language and at night dream to become a MEP. In short: people like me.

Besides that I highly doubt the effectiveness of these events, more and more I started to worry about the structural lack of diversity. More and more, I began to see the processes that cause this elitist nature of these events. And more and more I got intrigued by the question: *why is the structured dialogue excluding most of young people?*

In the forthcoming, I will argue that the elitist profile of participants is caused by barriers for “normal” young people, and that these barriers are not only in the structures but are rooted in the culture. And where the literature often makes a distinction between adults on the one side vs young people on the other, perhaps the discourse should be more about insiders - both adults and professional youth - who maintain the mechanisms that keep outsiders excluded.

It is based on my experiences and many many discussions with peers and experts and much reflections.

I do not claim to have found the universal truth, but with my participatory observations I hope to contribute a new story, my own story, to both the scientific and the political discourse. It is also not attempt to urinate my own nest right before I will leave it. The structured dialogue is new and has by nature to bridge the huge distance from young people to Brussels. In a short timespan, the EU has surpassed many of the member states in involving young people. Also, the professional youth that keeps the normal youth out, does so with good intentions. I don't intent to blame individuals for not having found the solution. Youth participation is by nature 'explorative or frivolous' (Hart 1992:4) . But the lack of reflection and evaluation, as well as lack of more radical thinking is a danger to the development of a truly inclusive structured dialogue. Therefore, it is my goal to steer up debate. Now, with a new cycle of the Structured dialogue with young people about to start (EC/EAC 2008a), there is the opportunity for improvement. The EC has expressed the will for an improved dialogue. With this paper I hope hope to give some suggestions how I believe that could be achieved. The institutions have an important role for ensuring and facilitating diversification, but I also call upon the “included” youth.

Besides that, this spring, much of the EU-youth discussions were about “the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities” in society, including the structured dialogue. I hope that with this paper, the discourse shifts from “disadvantaged youth vs normal youth” towards “disadvantaged and normal youth vs 'professional' youth”.

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1 “Professional Youth” is a literal translation of the word “beroepsjongere”, commonly used in the Netherlands (see for instance Cornelissen 2000:59)

# THE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE EU

Structured dialogue means that governments and administrations, including EU institutions, discuss with young people, according to a prepared scheme, in order to have a substantial debate about important themes with results useful for policy-makers.

(ec.europa.eu)

## background: Stakeholders in Youth policy & Plan D

The European Commission (EC<sup>2</sup>) has a tradition of involving stake- and shareholders, often in the form of civil society interest groups, in designing and implementing its policies. With the introduction of the White Paper on youth policy (COM(2001) 681 ) the EU engaged in youth issues, later complemented with the “youth pact” (COM(2005) 206 ). Therefore it is logical youth form an interest with whom a dialogue should be started on youth issues.

Secondly, the EU aims to increase civil participation and European citizenship. This was notably boosted with the reaction of the EC to the no votes in France and The Netherlands on the constitutional treaty (COM(2005) 494final). Plan D includes the aims to tighten the relation with citizens, and young people are an explicit target audience (see p3, p10; see also YFJ 2005).

Thirdly, youth participation is a trend in policy making since the 1960's in many countries (see for instance 137) and it therefore is no more than logical it also found its way to the EU.

Eventhough these motivations not automatically lead to the same tools (dialogue with interest (youth) groups vs “listening to specific target groups, such as young people” (COM(2005) 494final: 3) vs taking decisions together with young people on issues affecting them), in 2005 the council invited the EC to start a structured dialogue with young people:

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL, [...]

EMPHASISE THAT [...]

6. Young people and their organisations should be consulted on and closely involved in the development, implementation and follow-up of policy actions affecting them, thereby also contributing to a greater sense of active citizenship among young people.

[...]

INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

1. develop structured dialogue with young people at European level on policy actions affecting them, for example by making innovative use of information technology and holding regular conferences between young people, their organisations, researchers in the youth field and policy-makers;

(2005/C 292/03)

## how it is supposed to work

The Commission also launched a *genuine* dialogue with young people, structured from the local through to the European level which needs to be fully implemented.

The European Youth Summit "Your Europe" held in Rome in March 2007, the European Youth Week and regular Presidency Youth events are positive steps towards such a structured dialogue with young people.

(COM(2007) 498 final (emphasis added ))

The SD reaches the EU level at the Presidency Youth events, organised every half year by the presidency and with participants selected by NYC's and the bi-annual centralised event of the Youth Week, where member states and the national agencies of the YIA programme . Besides that, twice a year an informal forum between the YFJ and representatives from governments and NYCs of the Presidency troika's.

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2 A list of abbreviations can be found in the back.

NYCs, together with governments and national agents are responsible for organising local, regional and national debates. This can be financed through action 5.1 of the YIA, which is open to all organisations. How input from the national level should be operated is not made clear (li24).

## **INCLUSION: THE AIM**

Inclusion, not only through representation but also through by direct participation is an aim of the SD:

### **Dialogue with all young people**

Structured dialogue aims to address *all* young people, including those with fewer opportunities or not formally organised. This is being done, above all, through youth organisations at all levels. The main partner of the EU institutions is the European Youth Forum.

Measures will be taken to ensure that a large range of young people and a broad spectrum of youth organisations will be represented at European youth events. In the centralised event of the European Youth Week, a significant percentage of the participants are recruited through projects supported by the Youth in Action programme, which prioritises youth with fewer opportunities.  
(ec.europa.eu)

The Inclusion Strategy elaborates:

#### 6.2.5.Action 5 [...]

The Commission, the responsible national youth authorities and National Agencies will ensure that participants in the above mentioned activities [central events and national debates] also include young people with fewer opportunities and those who are not formally organised in youth organisations, youth councils etc., and to provide appropriate support to them. The objective must be that they can fully participate in the structured dialogue and voice their wishes and concerns.

## **More than young people with fewer opportunities**

With inclusion, there is often a reference to “young people with fewer opportunities”. Under the Slovenian presidency, the promotion of their “full participation in society” (invitation Slovenian youth event) was the main topic for the Youth event and Council. Even though the definition of “fewer opportunities” (EC/EAC 2007: 3) is so broad that is hard to find a young person not meeting one of the criteria, I emphasize I do not only mean “disadvantaged” youth when I talk about young people not included in the events. I mean all young people that are not “highly advanced” or do not have “exceptional opportunities”. Just to name an example: only 16.5% of all pupils is enrolled in higher- or university education (ISCED level 5-6) (Eurostat 2005), yet it is my impression a vast majority of participants of youth events has university education.

## **EXCLUSION: THE PRACTISE**

Despite the policy goals, I am under the impression that the Events part of the structured dialogue are not inclusive, but that they mainly involve the “professional youth”. In the following, I will theorise why that is and why there is the risk the status quo will not change.

## **Method: Observations at events & reflections**

The following is based upon my two years of experience with the structured dialogue. I mostly base my theory on - and actively refer to - the 3 events I attended out of the 4 events that the European Commission considers part of the structured dialogue in 2007 (2005/C 292/03): the Rome Youth Seminar (and it's preparatory meeting, I was also responsible for the National consultation) (“Rome”), the Youth Weeks central event (“Brussel”) and the Portuguese presidency Youth Event (“Lisbon”). In addition, I also attended the Euro-Africa Youth seminar and its preparatory meeting

in Europe (2007) and the Finnish presidency event (2006). I was also involved with the Dutch delegation to the German (2007) and Slovenian (2008) presidency event.

During and around these events I spoke with many of the participants about issues of barriers for participation. Also in the structure of the European Youth Forum, much attention was paid to the issue of "inclusion and representation", including an interest group during a council of members I co-hosted, a booklet published on the issue by the YFJ (Youth Opinion 2007/2), in which I published an article.

In the preparation of this article I spoke with some experts in the field of participation.

However, I do not claim to have constructed an objective reconstruction of the truth. Not only do I believe an objective review of this social construction cannot be given, my observations have by no means been value-free. From the beginning I have also been an activist, with the desire for different structures based on prior beliefs. Eventhough I have tried to support my arguments with original documents and to find contra-arguments, the reader should be aware of this. Furthermore, objective information about the profile of participants (organisation, social background, education, political affiliation, etc), is non-existent. I acknowledge that the for proving the very problem addressed here, no empirical data other than my own impression can be provided.

## **Structural barriers for participation**

I identify 5 structural barriers for young people to participate.

### 1. Working methods: standard policy making

All 3 seminars had more or less identical ways of working: a large scale conference where smaller working-groups prepared chapters of a final declaration that was put together by rapporteurs (in none of the 3 cases it was voted upon plenary) and then handed to politicians in a ceremony. The increased informalisation and egalisation in youth-adult relations (Winter 1995: 174) has not landed fully in the working methods.

### **Formal plenary, open workinggroups**

First of all the programmes are very similar to traditional adult seminars.

The plenary sessions are mostly very formal: a panel on stage, and the participants in the audience can mostly listen. Speeches are then given by politicians and "youth officials": board members of the YFJ and the presidents of receiving youth councils. Space for questions is often very limited, and because of the setting I understand if people not confident of the protocol or used to speak in public are scared to ask a question. At the Rome youth summit, besides policy-makers, speeches were delivered by Jeremy Rifkin and a Professor of Philosophy and Political sciences.

In all cases working groups were moderated by trained young facilitators, had a lot of breaks and, except for Rome, had a variety of working methods: post-its, flipovers, etc and were often held in even smaller sub-groups, thus providing a non intimidating and often open atmosphere.

In all cases a social programme was made around the gathering with "getting-to-know" each other games and parties to create a good atmosphere.

### **Who makes a resolution at home?**

Speeches in conference halls, panel discussions and formal discussions are typical adult methods. Eventhough the working groups are not very formal and protocolair, in all cases the outcome of the event was a formal document. Public authorities produce endless miles of paper, but many young people are less used to write formal documents. This forms a first barrier.

### **Variety**

Two nuances need to be mentioned. First, differences between events are big. The Rome youth Summit consisted mainly off very formal and ceremonial moments (where participants could only listen) and very little time for discussion. The Portuguese event had much more room for interaction and working-groups.

Also, in both the Portuguese event and the Rome summit a dinner was organised where young people and policymakers were mixed at small tables to allow informal discussions. In the Youth

Week, participants and policy-makers didn't meet informally, but policy-makers attended working groups.

## 2. Topics: Hot in Brussels; boring for young people

The topics at the events are all very much related to (EU) policies. In all of them, an aspect of the reform treaty and the “socio-economic” were discussed. Other topics were for example “the role of the EU in a globalised world” or “non-formal education”. The constitution, and social-economic models may be very “hot” amongst policy-makers and students of law or economics, but I dare to say that if you would ask young people on the street what they would like to talk about, only a few would name the issues (see annex 2 for topics). This therefore is more likely to attract young people that are occupied by topics that are hot in Brussels.

Does that mean young people are not interested in discussing issues related to democracy, youth work, economy, environment, and so on? I do not believe so. What I do believe, is that they out themselves would not frame them the way it is done at these events (see also Henn c.s. 2002). This barrier is therefore very close related to the following barrier:

## 3 discourse: to young people, “flexicurity” does not mean “employment” but “bla bla bla”

Not only the topics, the whole discourse of the meetings is framed in “policy-language”. The documents are framed in policy language, and so are the outcome documents, the speeches of many of the speakers and (thus) the discussions in general.

For example “the social-economic model” is not just a discussion about the job market and welfare. It is rooted in the ongoing debate on where the “neo-liberal” EU should go and the debate on reform of the welfare-state that goes on in many countries (the tension between the Rhineland model, the Anglo-saxon model and the Scandinavian model) (see Gillingham, 2006), is filled with Euro-speak jargon and buzz words like “flexicurity” (Conclusions Portugal), “youthpact” (Conclusions Youthweek) and “the management of demographic change” (Rome Youth Declaration).

For young people who do not speak political language and the Euro jargon – not to forget that they have to speak English: policy English – and are highly involved in these discussions, I see huge barriers to participate in these events because of the discourse.

## 4. hardly any preparation

To a certain extent, jargon can be learned. If you know “flexicurity” means “A more flexible job-market that on the one hand fights unemployment and complaints of employers that it is tough to fire people by making it easier to fire people and on the other hand gives workers some/other protection and more opportunities to find new jobs”, You are already helped a lot. If you also understand a bit of where the discussion comes from and some of the policies, it gets possible to take part in the discussions.

However, possibilities for preparations have been marginal. The YFJ has drawn background papers for Rome. These give a brief oversight of the themes and past developments, but require already some knowledge of “euro-lingo” (it used the word flexicurity bluntly for instance) with references to official policy documents it was based on<sup>3</sup>. For Brussels, simple explanations were provided on the website for the working groups, framing the questions in very understandable ways, but again providing only policy documents as reference material<sup>4</sup>. For Lisbon, information per working group was a marginal half page with very little content.

Where the Dutch National Youth debate comprises of a full preparation weekend, for these events it is totally left to national sending organisations, and not structural. For young people without much experience, to me it is not enough to overcome the barriers, notably not regarding the high abstract level of discussions in terms of language, technicalities and topics.

## 5. invitations

To face the previous barriers, first of all one should be invited to the events. The selection of candidates for Rome, Brussels and Lisbon was done through NYCs and INGYO's affiliated with the YFJ. For Brussels, participants were also partly selected through the national agencies of the Youth

3 <http://www.youthforum.org/en/youthsummit/presummit.htm>

4 [http://www.youthweek.eu/get-influence-working-groups\\_en.html](http://www.youthweek.eu/get-influence-working-groups_en.html)

in Action Programme.

The Lisbon event was mainly aimed, after much pressure from amongst others the YFJ, to recruit participants from National Youth Councils and INGYO's. from the invitation letter of the organisation:

The Portuguese National Youth Council and the Portuguese Government are pleased to invite you to participate in the Youth Event, nominating two representatives from your organisation, respecting gender balance. Participants must be aged between 18 and 30 years and fluent in English.  
(invitation Portuguese youth event)

This is a clear a choice, and a deliberate barrier for participation of many. But the other events were meant to be open to all youth of Europe. One of the goals of Rome was:

Involve young people from different social, economic, educational, cultural, ethnical and religious backgrounds and who are not necessarily members of youth organisations.  
(youthforum.org)

However, how participants should have been found was not made completely clear. Also, no feedback was needed to explain what has been done with the invitations and how participants were recruited. Often, deadlines are very tight and it still resulted in many usual suspects. Thus it remains to be seen how young people that are not part of an "inside network" are recruited. At least information on that is lacking.

## Conclusion

Together, these structural barriers form a culture that of "a lack of connection with the world of young people" (Cornelissen 2000:59). The events are in many ways not much more than bringing young people into traditional policy making mechanisms, requiring the interest in "adult politics" and the skills to function in that world, without providing the opportunities to acquire those skills.

## **Cultural barriers**

Even more importantly than these structural barriers forming an exclusive culture, I believe these structures are the result of an exclusive culture. The identification of these barriers in norms, values, beliefs and habits of individuals and groups involved is even harder than the structural barriers, as in many cases they are implicit. Yet I believe the origins of exclusion are here to be found.

### 1. policymakers: tokenism & propaganda

Do policy-makers honestly want inclusive events? For the presidencies I do not dare to answer. For the European Commission DG EAC, I believe they do. They have been working hard on the structured dialogue and their officials I spoke to have a very positive attitude. As stated above, inclusion of all young people in the dialogue is an important part of the policies. In the run up to the new cycle, to national youth councils and ministries an invitation has been sent for a joint meeting aimed to ensure national consultations (EC/EAC 2008c).

Therefore, I do not believe that a negative image of young people by policy-makers, as indicated by Cornelissen (2000), is the main obstacle for true participation for DG EAC. But I believe that at least 3 other goals of these events are an obstacle:

#### **1.1 decoration & tokenism**

Notably Rome and Brussels also had clear promotional goals: to show the media commissionaires surrounded by smiling young people. During the youth week journalists were actively invited and the commissionaire took more time for them than for the youth. The Rome summit was part of the celebrations of 50 years EU<sup>5</sup>. Many journalists were invited and it was all very much orchestrated to look good. This aim of using young people as "decoration" (Hart 1992: 9) is in conflict with, or at least taking away attention from inclusion. I wonder that experts of inclusion would advise big

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5 See further [http://europa.eu/50/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/50/index_en.htm)

shiny events

But even when policy-makers seem honest in their ambitions, somehow they seem not able to construct an inclusive event. They also seem to lack a critical attitude to what they organised.

*In Brussels, an EC official was very proud of the inclusion of disadvantaged youth: "Look at him in the wheelchair, he is clearly disadvantaged", while pointing to someone who indeed needed a ramp to enter a building, but in the working group kept going about the legal and philosophical implications of some words we used in the declaration.*

Hart notes that "Tokenism" is "common in the western world because progressive ideas about child-rearing which are often recognized, but not truly understood"(1992: 9). No evaluations are known, no clear and measurable goals are known.

At the same time, 3 working groups used creative methods and tools (as music, photos and videos) to achieve results and to involve young delegates, whose experience in participating in debates may be limited.  
(youthweek.eu-B)

This quote shows that the organisers don't know how to make events inclusive and instead for people that cannot adapt to their methods turn to methods that are obviously tokenism: singing a song about participation cannot be regarded as participation to the maximum of their capacities

### **1.2 many agenda's**

Also, the speeches they made me listen to are not always about youth interest. Because the camera's are snoring and because other political key figures are in the room, messages are sometimes very political.

*In the case of the Youth week, the panel member of the EESC engaged a heated debate with the commission. I got the feeling they wouldn't have noted if we walked away. At least they were more interested in giving messages to each other, then to the young people.*

**In conclusion, ambitions to include young people may be honest, but systematic and conscious realisation does not seem part of the culture and conflicting with other goals.**

## 2. the inside young people

It is not only at "adult" level that cultural barriers exist. They also, or even more importantly, exist at youth level. The website of Brussels posed low-barrier questions. The resolution however is filled with jargon, with difficult answers. In all cases, most participants were selected by NYCs. Still the same people came all the time. And the reason I know, is that I was there too all the time. I would in many cases summarise the stance of many policy-makers as "If I knew a better way...". Some young people however are explicitly resistant to more inclusive practises.

I theorise the following cultural barriers in the youth world:

### **2.1 we are comfortable here**

"Wow, Rome... Sun, interesting seminar and good champagne". I have to admit, that is also what I thought at first. If you are in the position, who would not take the opportunity to be part of these nice weekends, with friends from all over Europe? Who of us would be so noble to give up his/her place to someone else?

### **2.2 pressing your agenda**

However, I believe for most of us, there are much more sincere reasons to go to these events. All of us are highly active in societal organisations because we have ideals. We are not satisfied with the situation as it is. Some honestly believe we have a window of opportunity for the cause we are working for so hard. Nobody becomes politically active with the goal to promote that others can have a say, but to have a say yourself.

*"How about we try to get the word 'federal' in the draft-declaration", someone asked me at the*

*Rome pre-summit. I was under assumption we were there to prepare questions for the national debates preceding the event. For him, it was clearly his chance for this ideal. My answer ("No off course not. I don't think Dutch youth, who voted more clearly against the constitution, would support that") did not receive much understanding. And when I explained I didn't care about the resolution at all because the whole event would be tokenism anyway, I got as reply: "It is handed to the heads of state. Off course they will listen to it, we'll make them do!".*

It is not solely pressing for their own preferences. Their proposed policies are often what they believe "is best for the youth". 'Representing young people' is thereby easily replaced by an implicit normative discourse. Winter (1995) describes how our society has a 'care' or 'nursing' ("zorgzaamheid", p166) perspective on young people. I believe this patriarchal "knowing what is good for them" also often applies to the professional youth.

### **2.3 Concerned about the EU agenda, pressing the youth Agenda**

The young people that attend these vents, are often students of political science and/or active in (student/youth/legislative) politics. And most of them share a high interest in EU issues: don't even start counting those that have an access badge to the EP (assistants, lobbyists). Therefore, issues like the institutional configuration of the EU and other issues that are hot in Brussels are of utmost importance to them. They live the Eurojargon more then street jargon. As do their peers Besides the hot EU issues, these events are used by the Professional youth to (again) draw attention to discussions and concerns within "the youth world". For instance the struggle to get recognition for skill young people obtain in youth organisations (Non Formal Learning) or problems young people from outside the EU face to obtain a Schengen Visa.

*A participant to the Slovenian presidency told me: "They had a whole piece about how difficult it is to get Visa for the EU. I don't think that is the biggest problem young people with disadvantages face to participate in society (as was the topic of the event). If you get visa problems, you already overcame many many obstacles. It sounded more that those were their own problems."*

### **2.4 "if you want to reach something, you need to speak their language"**

Even if you are concerned about the "hot EU issues" or the "youth world issues", why can't you phrase that in a language everybody understands? Not only are they more acquainted with the Brussels discourse then street language. Many professional young people believe that the most effective way to influence policy, is to align closely with policy-makers. If you adapt the most to the existing political debate, using the influence methods that are common and use the discourse you have the highest change for success: if you want to win a game of chess, use the proven techniques to win, and certainly don't start playing soccer or tennis. Therefore, there is resistance from the professional young people to use a discourse non-professionals cannot follow, because they believe that would decrease influence.

*In Rome, in the committee on "where to go with the constitution", I proposed to make our part of the declaration in youthful language, without using legal terms and Euro-lingo. This was not adopted. One participant argued: "I don't speak Spanish to you, because you wouldn't understand me. This declaration is addressing policy-makers. Therefore, we should speak their language".*

In the same line they also believe a formal conference has more impact then an informal one and that the more high names are there – the more official it gets – the better.

### **2.5 believe youth organisations are the most representative**

Concerning the role of individual young people who do not represent a broader constituency, the European Youth Forum reiterates its concern on the impact and added value such participation has, especially as past experience suggests such exercises often simply result in the marginalisation of the representative youth structures (particularly National Youth Councils) from the policy development process.

(YFJ 2007: 3)

Also explicitly, there is resistance to - and even a lobby against - more inclusive events by the youth elite. Youth participation should be a dialogue between policy-makers and youth organisations, is the dominant view within the YFJ (the umbrella of organisations). The arguments are twofold:

Firstly, those from youth organisations are more equipped to use the methods that are used – which are the methods they favour themselves – and because they know the issues and discourse which is most effective for a continuous lobby on the “youth world issues”.

*According to some, the Cologne youth event was really bad, because all the people that “had no clue what it was about”*

Secondly, and even more explicit, represents from youth organisations are seen as more democratic: they represent a constituency that consist of their members, while individuals only represent themselves.

*During a meeting of the YFJ, the Flanders and Dutch NYCs proposed to replace “youth organisations” by “young people and their organisations” in a text. The bureau of the YFJ did not support the amendment: “Youth organisations are struggling to get recognition as partners in the civil society dialogue with institutions”*

It is my impression this normative model for participation the “youth establishment” holds, is based upon common EU ideas of interest representation. They should find recognition as partners in institutionalised civil society dialogues besides gender-, sexuality-, minority- and other umbrella organisations (as described by Woodward 2007). In many cases, the civil society dialogues of the EU are through umbrella organisations. Woodward has raised the issue of grassroots representation in these organisations: ideas of emancipation conveyed by the women's lobby are often to progressive for a majority of women. Yet convincing the EC that you are representative for the whole societal group will help you buy your way into the dialogue: Representativeness is used as an argument to obtain a platform for your ideas.

This notion seems more guiding then normative models of inclusive youth participation.

### **in short...**

Because other issues are higher on their agenda, but also because they deem more inclusive methods less effective or even undemocratic, there is resistance from within the youth world for more inclusive methods. They take the system for granted as the only effective system and hold a patriarchal view (Or perhaps better, because of their care perspective: matriarchal) instead of a participatory: The professional youth knows best what is good for their peers and is better able to strive for that. It is therefore that there is an active lobby against other methods. The frame of reference for these people is more the existing framework of interest representation in civil society dialogues then progressive, normative models of youth participation.

*In Lisbon, we discussed these issues in a working group. Two participants, including me, were complaining about the lack of inclusiveness. As the discussion got more heated, the other complainer was told “If you don't like what we are doing here, why are you still here?”*

The agreement with exclusive methods also leads to a vicious circle: the system attracts only those that can and want to function in the system, and that keeps the system like it is.

In a theoretical sense, my conclusion is that much of the barriers authors described for policy-makers, I also – more or less – attribute to the youth establishment. This notion means that the theoretical deviance some authors make (for instance O'Donoghue c.s. 2002) needs to be shifted: not adults vs. young people, but insiders (young and old) vs outsiders.

## **So, IT IS EXCLUSIVE. BUT...**

So, I argue these events are exclusive. But is that a problem?

Youth participation is closely linked to education and citizenship building. Where the approach that participation is to create social cohesion and better citizens is often dominant (see for instance Winter 1995), I want to leave this aside and take a policy approach: why would it be a problem from a policy perspective?

Firstly it is a problem from an evaluative point of view. The policy is that all young people should be part of structured dialogue. When that is not the case, the policy did not succeed.

Moreover, it is a problem from a moral/philosophical point of view. Youth participation, defined as “a constellation of activities that empower adolescents to take part in and influence decision making that affects their lives and to take action on issues they care about” (O’Donoghue c.s. 2002: 16), should be there for those that otherwise would not be enabled to take part in decision making: those that participate now, have all possibilities to participate in traditional “adult” structures. There are studies (for instance Henn c.s. 2002) that claim that many young people are interested in political issues, but are disengaged from formal politics. Young people don’t have less interest in political issues, but a different interest. Youth participation should therefore aim to bridge that gap, and not address mainly those that can and want to function in traditional politics but only happen to be young.

Some people deny that the events are exclusive:

*In Lisbon, we discussed these issues in a working group. A participant from a NYC stated that “using special methods for young people is degrading to young people, they are perfectly capable of participating in adult policy making”*

But most of them do not deny these barriers exist. And even if that is seen as a problem, there are arguments that compensate that:

### **...there is a bottom up structure, so everybody’s opinion is included**

If a proper bottom up structure exist, the “youth professionals” represent the view of all young people and with their professionalism bridge the gap between the grass-roots and policy-makers.

I don’t believe this is the case.

### **A: Consultations are non-existent or a complete farce**

There have been no proper consultations. For Brussels and Lisbon, no specific and coordinated consultations were foreseen. In the running up to Rome, it was the goal to consultate. Less than 2 months prior to the seminar youth organisations had a pre-conference in Brussels where they were informed they should have a “national consultation”. No money was made available for that.

As outlined in the concept, one of the objectives of the national debates is to “involve young people from different social, economic, educational, cultural, ethnical and religious backgrounds and who are not necessarily members of youth organisations”. National Youth Councils are invited to ensure the broadest participation possible from their Member Organisations (and beyond if feasible) within the short timeframe provided.  
(YFJ 2007a)

The result was that some consultations were not much more than a poll on a website (Great Britain) or a meeting with youth-organisations (amongst others Germany)<sup>6</sup>.

But even in countries where national consultations were also aimed at non-professional youth (for instance Bulgaria, Slovakia and – very modestly – our own), the result was completely useless: Instead of formulating clear questions, in the pre-conference a draft declaration was formulated. There were some guiding questions on the side (YFJ 2007b), but the outcome was not very useful. The participants of the pre-conference were mainly interested in pre-cooking the perfect resolution, the participants of Rome did not much refer to the consultation. They couldn’t, because there were no clear focused, well coordinated consultations that resulted in clear positions for national delegations to take on pre-defined issues.

### **B: youth organisations are not as representative as they believe themselves**

Many young people are not organised in youth organisations. Advocacy organisations (notably political organisations) mostly exist of privileged young people. Many young people do not belong to organisations that are organised in NYC’s / INGYO’s. Notably those that are not organised, notably those with the most difficulties to get their voices heard (the unorganised don’t have a lobby office in Brussels), are left out in this way.

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<sup>6</sup> Reports of national consultations are available at <http://www.youthforum.org/Downloads/youthsummit/conclusions/>

*A common way of arguing for organisations is "[...] has 600.000 members, so I speak on behalf of 600.000 young people."*

But even if they are organised, that doesn't say anything about their political preferences. Young people that join a political youth organisation, do so because of a shared set of values. But you join the scouting because you want to sail a boat. Or the trade union because you want your wages and position in the labour market defended. Or the young templars because you want to advocate for an alcohol free Europe. In none of the cases, you join because you are in favour of the European constitution or against the accession of Turkey. Young people are like normal people: politically divided. There is not much more that unites them a priori than their age.

Of course youth organisations have an extensive and incomparable knowledge of young people. But in my believe they should be more treated as important interest groups/advocacy NGO's and not pretend to be the voice of all young people or claim to speak on behalf of all of them. Between both roles a tension exists (Lecture Woodward 2008).

### **...it is so new, it has to settle**

The Structured Dialogue is very new. Youth participation is by nature 'explorative or frivolous' (Hart 1992:4). The addition of action 5.1 to the youth in action programme (for national consultations) (EC/EAC 2008a), is one example. The increased attention to consultation by the EC is another. Also the attention paid by the YFJ on this issue (see Youth Opinion 2007/2) is promising. And the new cycle is already much more focussed then the previous. But the lack of reflection and evaluation, as well as lack of more radical thinking is a danger to the development of a truly inclusive structured dialogue. The cultures within the European Commission and, moreover, the youth establishment are exclusive to such a large extend, that it is my conviction that time alone is not enough to solve the problems

### **...the abstract EU policies are only suited for professionals**

I believe that to a large extend this holds true. There is a big difference between involving young people in their direct environment and the EU. The local youth centre and the European Youth Pact are not the same. Most examples found in literature are local institutions as municipalities and schools (for instance Winter 1995; Hart 1992), sometime stretching to the national level (ROB 2000; Cornelissen 2000). Very technical discussions about the concrete policies and it's implementation are therefore – in my believe – the role of the professional youth. They are the professionals on that. Just like the technicalities of the local youth centre are for the architect. But the outlines can also be drawn by young people who know nothing about constructions. It is asking the right questions to young people: the main issues in a general outline. Moreover, it is a challenge to pose the questions differently. Studies show that young people are interested in European issues (for example Henn c.s. 2002), but in a different way. And there are methods that by focussing the issue and working intensively with people (see for instance the concept of deliberative polling: Yilmaz cs 2006; or the Dutch National Youth debate: jeugdraad.nl). Notably the new cycle of the structured dialogue (EC/EAC 2008a) inevitable requires abstract and complicated answers. Concrete policies call for experts and more traditional advocacy groups. However, the policies are there to address the needs of all young people and if the

Young people are invited to participate in the debate on the future challenges for young people. Youth organisations are invited to reach out to a great number and a large variety of young people with different backgrounds.  
(EC/EAC 2008a: 3)

## **CONCLUSION**

I believe the centralised events of the Structured Dialogue with young people of the European Union are excluding most young people: Not only youth with fewer opportunities, but most young people. It is exclusive because of the way it is structured. But because of values, believes and

processes behind that, because of the culture, these exclusive structures are maintained, sometimes because of ignorance, sometimes deliberately. That is a problem. Not because there should not be a big role for youth organisations or professional youth. Arguments for that are sound. But because now a lot of young people, I would say most of them, are left out totally. They cannot participate directly, nor is that compensated by effective consultations or representation because of their membership of an organisation. These events are too much advocacy from elitist youth organisations, not inclusive participation for all, and these organisations are not responsive enough to criticism. Inclusion of all young people is the goal of the policies. And of youth participation. It is also a problem that the gap between Brussels and the street is not bridged. The bridge that is laid, is for those that have no problem swimming to the other side, or for whom adult politics is their natural habitat already. Not those who need the bridge so desperately. If your goal is to understand young people, this is even a barrier. The culture prevents that a true youth perspective is taken and that young people that are disentangled from politics can discuss what they feel is important in their own discourse. Therefore a shift in structures and in cultures is needed. Both young people and the youth movement have to take their respective roles in tackling this problem.

The upcoming cycle of the structured Dialogue is different in nature from the previous one. It is more focussed and more technical. This has implications for the involvement of young people with less knowledge of the policies. It means that just bringing in young people from the bus stop and have them discuss the concrete policies is inclusive participation. But it does not mean that because it is technical, consultations should not go beyond the establishment: the policies are to address all young people and when believing in participation, a role for all young people needs to be found.

## 5 IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT FOR POLICY-MAKERS

### **Myth 1: [...]**

inserting a few youth in an adult driven process runs the risk of tokenism or decorations[...]. An authentic process is not one that is determined solely by adults. Rather, youth need multiple spaces for engagement.

### **Myth 2: Youth participation means that adults surrender their roles as guides and educators**

### **Myth 3: Adults are ready for youth participation**

(O'Donoghue c.s. 2002: 20-22)

### Be honest and ambitious in your goals for inclusion.

Too often inclusion is undermined by having also other goals in events, like propaganda, and lack of flexibility. As long as events aim to make the participants and the media feel good about Europe, as long as ministers/commissionaires are more interested in talking than listening, as long as officials feel more comfortable on a stage than on an equal level as young people, as long as topics are not initiated by young people, as long as methods are not initiated by young people inclusion is pushed to a second rank. Be aware of that: put inclusion first and always challenge what is common.

### Diversify goals and working methods.

Young people are diverse as numerous. Participation is a one-size-fits-all approach: Only one method (classical seminars with speeches and resolutions). At one event, a broad variety of topics – from specific youth issues to general issues – needs to be tackled by youth with different interests

“Professional youth” that have enormous amounts of expertise on youth issues and participation deserve to be acknowledged as experts as such. They do not deserve phoney shiny events with bands and clowns: meet them around the policy table in equal discussions on the highest technical level. As long as events not exclusively for them are their main opportunity to be taken seriously, they will keep hijacking them.

For “normal” young people there can be much more accessible events. And think of methods beyond traditional events: there is internet and it might be better to go to the youth instead of bringing the youth to Brussels.

### **Concretely:**

1. Continue and enforce DG EAC round tables with NYC's. They are much more equal than events. Continue and enforce meetings with the Council troika. These structures can also exist for INGYO's.
2. Make the Youth Week “low barrier”: select a broad range of participants (through National Agencies together with NYC's), prepare them (by NYC's) and install a “jargon police”: using jargon is forbidden.
3. Allow one presidency event for a broad range of pro's. Skip the ceremonial speeches and invent more ways for interaction than paper only.

### Focus and clarify questions for consultation.

Consultations can be good and needed. Notably in this technical cycle. The Rome consultation was a farce. Resources now exist (YIA 5.1) but it also needs to be clear what is asked to young people. You cannot synthesise “what is important for young people?” at the EU level. Also, giving them a complicated draft resolution and ask them “what do you think?” is not a consultation. Topics need to be focussed and questions clear: what are the decision-points?

Also, there needs to be time for NYC's to construct national consultations, translate the questions to local realities, find media- institutional- and other partners, inform the participants and process the results, etc.

In the ideal case, content, topics and methods of the SD should be “youth initiated, shared decided with policy-makers” (compare Hart 1992: 14). Youth organisations, notably NYC's should be given and allowed the lead in designing and implementing consultations.

Not only make consultation possible, also demand true inclusive consultation from the youth organisations.

If you make proper consultations possible, you can also require NYC's to fulfil their responsibility. Having only a very technical meeting with youth organisations is not a consultation and should not be accepted as such (it can be an important part, but not all). Youth organisations should lower as many barriers as possible and can be asked to account for that. Nobody has the recipe or the perfect consultation, but ambition should be showed.

### **Concretely:**

1. The YFJ is working on a “framework for consultations” facilitating improving their effectiveness and make benchmarking possible and thereby making accountability possible, yet keeping the initiative within their own structures (YFJ 2007c). The EC should use this tool for the accountability of NYC's.
2. Besides ex-post accountability, inclusion can be stimulated ex-ante by only granting applicants for YIA 5.1 funds when fulfilling the criteria from the Inclusion Strategy (6.2.5, EC/EAC 2007: 9).
3. Even so, youth organisations should be enabled to complain about National Agencies and ministries that are obstructing their efforts at the EC

Include specialists on youth participation in the design of methods, and make a proper evaluation possible.

Policy-makers are not necessarily experts of youth-participation. Youth participation is a profession, an art, a difficult search. Therefore, experts from the field of youth participation should be involved in designing structures. Foremost young people, notably youth organisations. But also scholars and others.

Secondly, youth-events cost a lot of money. Ambitions are high. But evaluations are lacking. The structured dialogue (events and consultations) should be evaluated independently. Are aims of inclusion fulfilled?

## **1 IDEA FOR IMPROVEMENT FOR THE YOUTH ESTABLISHMENT**

“Live up to your reason d'etat, or loose it all”

The established youth is struggling for recognition as partners in the civil society dialogue. To establish, strengthen and safeguard our role as advocates on youth issues and for youth participation, self-acknowledgement of our elitism is vital. The European Commission has discovered there exist also unorganised youth. As long as we continue to falsely claim to speak on behalf of all youth, they risk not to be recognised as specific, valuable partners, but be side-tracked instead by institutions that also want to interact with the “normal” youth.

This is notably for NYC's: many INGYO's are normative towards young people (for instance environmental-, health-, and religious organisations) or are special interest representations (rural, religious, LGBTQ, etc), but NYCs should function as the voice from young people.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

YFJ – Youth Forum / Forum Jeunesse. The European Youthforum is the umbrella organisation of European National Youth Councils and European (umbrella's of) youth organisations.

INGYO – International Non Governmental Youth Organisations

NYC – National Youth Council

ROME – The Rome Youth Summit 2007

LISBON- Portuguese presidency Youth Event 2007

BRUSSELS – Centralised event of the European Youth Week

EAC (DG) – Directorate General for Education, Culture, Sports and Youth of the European Commission: DG that deals with youth

EC – European Commission

YIA – Youth In Action programme (2007- 2012): programme of the EC with various grants for young people, youth organisations and youth related issues.

SD – The Structured Dialogue with young people

National agencies - agencies in member states that are responsible for the national parts of the YIA

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## ANNEX:

### annex1: working methods

Working methods of events		
Rome	Brussels	Lisbon
<u>outcome</u>		
Formal document	Formal document rap song artistic video photo series	Formal document
<u>Programme of youth events</u>		
<p>12.00 Registration</p> <p>12:30 – 14:00 Buffet lunch</p> <p>14:00 – 14:30 Welcome and ice-breaker</p> <p>Preparation meeting for the young delegates</p> <p>14:30 – 15:30 Presentation of results from the national debates by Mr Ernest Urtasun, general rapporteur</p> <p>Questions and answers</p> <p>15:30 – 16:00 Exchange of views with Mr Giacomo Filibeck, chairperson of the Presidium of the Youth Convention 2002</p> <p>16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break</p> <p>16:30 – 18:00 Statements by participants and debate</p> <p>20:00 Gala dinner</p> <p>Guest speaker: Mr Cristian Carrara, President of the Italian Youth Council</p> <p>Welcome speeches by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament</li> <li>• Ms Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission</li> <li>• Mr Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth</li> <li>• Mr Michel Delebarre, President of the Committee of the Regions</li> <li>• Ms Jillian Van Turnhout, Vice-President of</li> </ul>	(not found)	<p>Friday, 14 September 2007</p> <p>Reception at the airport and transfer to Hotel Vila Galé Ópera .</p> <p>20:00 Welcome Dinner</p> <p>21:30 Get to know each other [very informal and relaxed]</p> <p>Saturday, 15 September 2007</p> <p>10:00 Opening session</p> <p>10:30 Working groups</p> <p>13:30 Lunch</p> <p>14:30 Working groups</p> <p>16:30 Coffee break</p> <p>19.30 Wind-up of the days work</p> <p>20:30 Dinner</p> <p>22:00 Welcome party (concert with bands)</p> <p>23:00 DJ Session</p> <p>Sunday, 16 September 2007</p> <p>10:00 Working groups</p> <p>13:30 Lunch</p> <p>14:30 Get-together with Commissioners</p> <p>15:00 Message to Youth Event participants by European Commissioners Jan Figel, Vladimir Spidla and Minister of the Presidency of the Cabinet Pedro Silva Pereira [very formal,</p> <p>16:30 Working groups</p> <p>19.00 Wind-up of the day * s work</p> <p>20:00 Dinner</p>

the European Economic  
and Social  
Committee

08:30 Registration  
09:00 – 10:00 Official  
opening of the Youth Summit  
• Master of  
ceremony: Ms Audinga  
Besusparyte

Speakers:  
• Opening  
speech: Ms Margot Wallström,  
Vice-President of the  
European  
Commission

• Mr Romano  
Prodi, Prime-Minister of Italy  
• Mr Alejo Vidal-  
Quadras, Vice-President of the  
European Parliament  
• Ms Ursula von  
der Leyen, German Federal  
Minister for Family

Affairs, Senior  
Citizens, Women and Youth  
• Mr Ján Figel',  
European Commissioner for  
Education, Training,  
Culture and  
Youth

• Ms Bettina  
Schwarzmayr, President of the  
European Youth Forum

10:00 – 10:30 Coffee  
break & Press point

10:30 – 11:30 Key note  
speeches by:

• Ms Ágnes  
Heller, Professor of Philosophy  
and Political Science,  
Budapest and  
New York Universities

Venue: University Roma Tre,  
Faculty of Political Science, Via  
Gabriello Chiabrera 199

12:00 – 13:00 Working  
Groups

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00 Working  
groups (continued)

• Rapporteurs  
report back

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee  
Break

16:30 – 18:00 Working  
Groups (continued)

• Finalisation of  
main messages

Monday, 17 September 2007

10:00 Plenary session with  
presentation of working  
groups conclusions

11:30 Presentation of the  
conclusions of the Youth Event  
to the Directors-General

13:00 Lunch

20:00	Buffet dinner Welcome speeches by Mr Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth and Ms Giovanna Melandri, Italian Minister for Youth
08:30	Registration
08:45	Start of Web Streaming, address: europa.eu/50/index_en
09:00 – 09:15	Welcome speech by Mr Jean Léonard Touadi, delegate for youth affairs, municipality of Rome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Master of ceremony: Ms Juliane Bir</li></ul>
09:15 – 10:15	Plenary debate and adoption of the Rome Youth Declaration and messages
10:15 – 10:45	Coffee Break
10:45 – 12:00	Keynote speech by Mr Jeremy Rifkin, author and economist
12:00 – 12:10	Handover of the Rome Youth Declaration to the European Institutions
12:10 – 13:25	Panel debate Moderator: Mr Pat Cox, President of the European Movement
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mr Alejo Vidal- Quadras, Vice-President of the European Parliament</li><li>• Ms Margot Wallström, Vice-President of European Commission</li><li>• Mr Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth</li><li>• Ms Bettina Schwarzmayr, President of European Youth Forum</li><li>• Mr Ernest Urtasun, general rapporteur of the Youth Summit</li></ul>
13:25 – 13:30	Closing of the Youth Summit by Ms Bettina Schwarzmayr, President of the European Youth Forum

13:30	Lunch		
<b>outcome</b>			
Formal document	Formal document rap song artistic video	Formal document	

## Annex 2: topics discussed

Rome	Brussels	Lisbon
<p>The future of the EU: what with the Constitutional Treaty?</p> <p>A Social and Economic Model for Europe.</p> <p>Sustainable Development.</p> <p>Europe's role in a globalised world.</p> <p>Building democracy and civil society in Europe.</p> <p>Youth and Education in the EU. (youthforum.org)</p>	<p>My future and the future of Europe [...] constitution, enlargement, socio-economic model, democracy, demography, neighborhood policy, Europe's role in the world and many others with the special focus on social inclusion and diversity,</p> <p><u>Active Citizenship - For a more cohesive society</u></p> <p>Intercultural dialogue and diversity – Europe – that's all of us</p> <p>Equal opportunities and anti-discrimination – Count me in</p> <p>Employment and social inclusion – Doing it our way</p> <p>Volunteering as a tool for inclusion – back on board through volunteering?</p> <p>Between commitment and job – recognition – The missing link</p> <p><b>creative working groups</b> Photo, music and video (youthweek.eu-A)</p>	<p>he Role of Young People in the European Construction</p> <p>Employment and Entrepreneurship</p> <p>Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities for All</p> <p>Youth Participation and Structured Dialogue</p> <p>non-formal education</p> <p>Volunteering</p>