



# STATEMENT

**OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH MEETING  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2011.**

## Introduction

Young people from around Europe and the world gathered from 19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> July 2011 to participate at the European Youth Meeting on Sustainable Development (EYM2011) held in Tallinn. The meeting was part of the build up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to be held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro.

This document is a record of the discussion that took place during the meeting and forms part of the process of developing a global youth position ahead of Rio+20. Participants were representatives of youth organisations and young individuals from all fields of work and life. This statement is intended as a clear and strong message to mobilise young people across the globe ahead of Rio+20.

The participants focused on the first theme of Rio+20: '*Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication*'. They worked on the following seven topics:

- Natural resources
- Education for sustainable development
- Urban development
- Agriculture
- Renewable energy
- Waste management
- Social wellbeing

This document contains the key challenges and the ways forward from each topic. Best practices were also explored and have been made available separately.

The meeting recognises that all these topics are inter-related with particular synergies between Natural Resources, Urban Development, Agriculture, Renewable Energy and Waste Management. The meeting also particularly noted that Social Wellbeing and Education have a crosscutting application and should be attached to all areas of sustainable development. Furthermore, in synthesising the discussions, common areas and shared ways forward have been clustered under the most relevant topic. No area should be seen in isolation, and overlapping topics have been cross-referenced.

## 1. Natural resources

### Key challenges

#### **Lack of distribution of information**

Transforming our mind-sets to use natural resources more sustainably in our daily lives is one of the key challenges of our century. Informed, educated and aware people are more conscious and more likely to respect natural resources. A circular rather than a linear approach should be brought into people's utilization and behaviour of natural resource management. We borrow from nature rather than own it.

#### **Mismanagement of natural resources**

Natural resource use is currently oriented to a short-term perspective. Long-term vision must be instated to ensure the availability of natural resources for current and future generations. Young people have the responsibility to ensure that governments, institutions as well as the private sector commit to manage natural resources in a sustainable way, as we will be inheriting any mismanagement and associated problems.

#### **Access to natural resources**

Unequal distribution of natural resources is a fact, however, it is civil society's responsibility to cooperate and ensure that they are equally accessible to everyone. Natural resources essential to life should be available to and protected for everyone regardless of their location, economic situation or socio-cultural background, in particular indigenous peoples.

#### **Transfer of knowledge and technology**

Although the technology to manage natural resources sustainably is available, it is accessible only to a restricted number of actors. Moving towards global green economy, information sharing and mutual exchange needs to be largely developed and improved. Moreover, human know-how and infrastructure are essential for a successful implementation of knowledge transfer.

#### **The link between trade and natural resources**

A fair and green economy is essential for sustainable development. It is a challenge as well as a solution to link trade and natural resources, as the trade of natural resources determines their management. The Doha Development Round as well as other global platforms has to include a strong sustainability perspective.

### Ways forward

#### **Changing mind-sets**

States, youth-led organisations, and young individuals should aim to raise awareness on the sustainable use of natural resources among youth by different media & networking on topics such as: spreading best practices of sustainable behaviour, promoting integrated educational systems, changing the focus on material consumption to valuing natural resources as a global commons rather than a commercial amenity.

### **Good governance of natural resources**

In order to attain a long-term vision on sustainable management of resources, research and development needs to be improved, exchanged and made accessible to decision makers. A strategic approach has to be followed by all institutions and the decision-making process needs to adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to ensure accountability and participation.

### **Multi-lateral process for fair and secure access to natural resources**

In order to improve fair and secure universal access to basic natural resources, we have to ensure commitments to international treaties by member states through ratification and implementation by 2030. The establishment of a monitoring body is suggested to prevent land grabbing and penalize unfair large-scale corporate land acquisition.

### **Enabling transfer of knowledge and technology**

Transfer of knowledge and technology requires national and international finance mechanisms. Technological innovation should be encouraged through research and development and made accessible to all stakeholders. New knowledge and technology that is highly effective in the protection of natural resources or in the provision of access to the most vulnerable persons should not be withheld, patented or privatized.

### **Introducing sustainable resource management into current trade systems**

Multilateralism and multi-stakeholder approaches are essential to avoid contradiction between environmental agreements and trade policies. The international trading system must be transparent and equitable. The conclusion of the Doha Development Round as well as Rio+20 must link trade and natural resources. Local sourcing of natural resources should be actively encouraged.

## 2. Education for sustainable development (ESD)

### Key challenges

#### **Lack of engagement outside the formal education system**

Only a small proportion of youth is engaged in ESD. The challenge is to reach people in the first place, as well as to inspire and educate them. Without this process youth are inhibited from becoming agents of change for a more sustainable world.

#### **Lack of support for non-formal ESD**

There is a lack of funding for non-formal ESD, as well as a lack of effective partnership and collaboration between government and civil society organisations (CSOs) working to implement ESD. There is also a lack of political will to increase the quality of non-formal ESD.

#### **Implementation of ESD**

It is a challenge to implement ESD at all levels of the formal educational system, including kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and higher education, as well as driving schools and professional training centres. Part of this challenge is not only to include ESD in the curricula but to take a multidisciplinary approach, providing equal gender access and integrating ESD across all subjects.

#### **Inadequate teacher training**

There is a need for more quantity of and quality in teacher training in the area of ESD. This teacher training is essential in order to engage more people in ESD and have a larger impact.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation**

There is a need for methods and indicators to measure the impact of ESD in both formal and non-formal education, in order to improve its implementation and ensure that it reaches the targeted groups.

### Ways forward

#### **Simple, short and attractive campaigns**

Run by CSOs (including youth-led groups), these campaigns will target youth to encourage debate on sustainable development. The funding should come from the *national body*\* according to the *national ESD strategy* (\*explained later on in the document). The experiences and materials of existing simple, short and attractive campaigns should be exchanged.

#### **Creating more networking opportunities**

To give CSOs access to knowledge, experience sharing, support for their projects, creating new and merging existing ideas and projects, an open source based network is required. There is a need to create or improve umbrella networks such as youth councils and forums for youth CSOs, that act as national and regional representatives for the CSOs. These CSOs should meet regularly for sharing experiences, new ideas and create policy proposals for youth activity in ESD, from grassroots to the top.

#### **Creation of a national body and a national ESD strategy**

A national body, including representatives of youth organisations, should be created for the allocation of funds for ESD projects, in line with national SD, regional and global policies. More cooperation and

collaboration between research organisations and other Civil Society groups should be encouraged to present new ideas and emphasize existing national policies on ESD.

### **ESD implementation and integration into the curricula on all levels of education**

Governments should ensure the efficient implementation and integration of ESD in all levels of the education system and in all subjects by 2015, the final year of the MDGs. To achieve long-term and high impact change in society, the teacher training institutions should also include specialised and integrated training on sustainable development. Schools should be transformed into comprehensive learning environments, where sustainable lifestyles are promoted daily, hence imparting practical skills on sustainable living.

### **Global partnership for ESD**

Effective partnership between developing and developed countries should be promoted through open coordination methods. This should be implemented on regional and global level by 2015 and beyond, using existing experience from international platforms of UNESCO and regional cooperation organisations.

### **Evaluation and monitoring**

An online form is created where all people who participate in formal or non-formal ESD will be registered. After participating in SD projects or activities, they will register the activity online. Registration of participation can be done either by the person themselves or by the direct educator or project manager. This is an effective way of measuring approaches, success and the long-term effects of ESD on people's attitudes and behaviour.



### 3. Urban development

#### Key challenges

##### **City planning**

City planning is not being done with the appropriate independence of city planners, but under the influence of interest groups, technical and financial difficulties. Implementation of already existing best practices, know-how and case studies in the future planning is not ensured. There is a lack of a holistic approach in terms of changing citizen behaviour, mentality and attitudes. There is no transparency in environmental budgeting and expenditures.

##### **Transportation**

Intensive urbanisation and daily migration lead to mobility inefficiency. Public transport coverage cannot meet the needs of the rapid dynamic of cities. Lack of eco-friendly transportation leads to pollution and health hazards. Modern technologies such as GPS and GIS are not used enough in order to improve the mobility efficiency.

##### **Housing, work and services**

Cities are occupying new spaces instead of re-adjusting and re-using existing ones. Jobs and services such as health, education, culture and recreation are not in close proximity of residential zones. There is a lack of symbiotic planning in cities as an organic entity at the neighbourhood scale, where all the needs of the population are at a reachable distance. This would reduce movements and therefore general traffic issues.

##### **Waste management, water and energy distribution**

Public services cannot meet the needs of growing population. Out-dated network systems lead to great loss of resources.

##### **Green architecture**

Green architecture still is not a standard, rather an option. Planning policies and architectural practices neither require, nor encourage the development of cities according to principles of sustainability.

#### Ways forward

##### **City planning**

Urban spaces should be re-designed and adjusted into new multifunctional contents. City planning must not endanger the social and cultural heritage of cities and should be co-ordinated with rural development. We encourage cities to implement already existing good practices and methodologies, as well as certification and confirmation of cities' efforts toward sustainable urban development. We call for participatory decision-making approaches in order to build trust between cities and their inhabitants.

##### **Transport**

Cities should focus on fast, frequent, effective and renewable energy powered transport that is affordable and accessible for different social groups in all city areas. Authorities should be exemplary and supportive in using more eco-friendly means of transport in cities such as bicycles, electric and hybrid cars,

carpooling, park and ride, and increase awareness among the population. Satellite technologies must be used for route optimising and monitoring systems.

### **Housing, work and services**

Policymakers should develop residential areas with locally provided services contributing to social cohesion. In these areas local businesses, manufacturing of goods and urban farming should be integrated. This will reduce the need for commuting and create a closer link between the urban population and the products they consume.

### **Water, energy and waste management**

Public funding programmes should aim at raising efficiency and modernisation of supply networks and households. Also, awareness on sustainable consumption and saving technologies should be raised through information campaigns. Furthermore, the cities must secure re-use of resources, primary waste separation, waste collection coverage and ensure adequate treatment.

### **Green architecture**

Governments should promote the introduction of innovative and sustainable technologies in architecture through financial incentives and technical standards. These standards should include national criteria, indicators and benchmarks that will serve as the base of sustainable green architecture along with a pool of available green features.



#### **4. Waste management**

##### Key challenges

##### **Lack of awareness of waste creation and ways to minimize it**

People are unaware of the actual amount of waste they produce in their everyday life and therefore they have no intention to reduce waste.

##### **Imbalanced culture of consumerism, which leads to increased waste production**

Present consumption externalizes the costs of the full production cycle, thus producing too many short lifecycle products. Consumers remain unaware of waste production during this process.

##### **Long-term thinking and investments is overshadowed by short-term profit**

Investment is often focused on short-term profit rather than sustainable profit. This prevents infrastructural development in waste management systems.

##### **Lack of responsibility for resource lifecycle**

The responsibility of manufacturers to the production of waste is often limited and ends after the sale of goods. Consumers have little access and no legal responsibilities to reduce, reuse and recycle.

##### **Few economic incentives for waste reduction**

Economic and legal frameworks do not encourage sustainable production. Cradle-to-cradle design and production is often provided with less incentive than cradle-to-grave.

##### Ways forward:

##### **Raising awareness to minimise waste**

Awareness of methods for waste prevention and reduction should be raised using multiplying effects. Governments should finance more studies and research on waste management. Zero-waste-school programs should be established at a national level and implemented at a local level. Companies and workplaces should invest in strategies to decrease their waste production, including information towards and participation of employees.

##### **Balancing consumerism and production cycles**

The production process should be made more transparent by introducing uniform global standards and labelling systems for the whole product lifecycle. The lifecycle of resources and products should be extended by increasing the quality of products and by creating re-use centres, where broken products can be repaired, recycled and resold. At these centres, craftsmanship professions would be revived and the centres would eventually become self-financing.

##### **Promoting long-term and sustainable investment**

A higher tax rate on disposable single-use products should eventually lead to a shift towards manufacturing of more reusable products. An international program should enable capacity building and sharing of knowledge and skills to countries with a lack of sufficient infrastructure for recycling. An online database for secondary resource exchange could foster local cooperation and resource management between businesses.

### **Foster responsibility regarding the lifecycle of products**

A legal framework for extended product lifecycle should be created in order to increase responsibility of manufacturers and consumers. It should lead to a larger scale production of versatile products and product components such as universal chargers. Products must have a spare parts catalogue available, where the price of spare parts must be cheaper than the product itself. Re-use or use of recycled products should be promoted and disposable products should be phased out.

### **Increasing economic incentives for resource management**

Government should implement sanctions for excessive packaging and non-biodegradable packaging. Tax breaks should be granted to manufacturers that use recycled sources for the production of their goods. Separate food waste collection in every urban area at a very favourable price should be organised. Local government should ensure material flow (resources) rather than final disposal (landfill in general) by increasing landfill taxes and banning waste export.

## 5. Agriculture

### Key challenges

#### **Oil dependency**

The agriculture industry is heavily dependent on oil for the production of fertilisers, transportation of products, and the heating of greenhouses. In the time after peak oil, this will pose an increasing challenge to productivity and profitability.

#### **Socio-economic inequalities**

Small-scale farmers have to compete with agro-multinationals. Food prices are determined on the international market in a game of supply and demand, but with huge differences in negotiation power among producers and between producers and buyers.

#### **Price structures**

There is a lack of transparency as to what causes the large and sudden jumps in food prices. Also, externalities such as the ecological cost of long-distance transportation are not fully taken into account in the price.

#### **Biodiversity and the challenges of biotechnology**

Deforestation for agriculture leads to a loss of biodiversity. The increasing use of GMOs also decreases biodiversity, as well as the fact that the funds invested in the development of GMOs are therefore excluded from other endeavours.

#### **Depletion of water food resources**

Many commercial fisheries are getting depleted. There is a need for an international regulation of fishing rights in coastal and international waters.

#### **Soil and fresh water management**

Over 70% of global fresh water is used for agriculture, often in unsustainable ways. The increasing use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides lead to degradation of soil quality. Deforestation often leads to erosion of the soil, further reducing the fertility of the land.

#### **Land use competition**

The use of land for production of food crops conflicts with many other interests, especially the production of agrofuel crops, feed crops for livestock, cash crops for export and the preservation of natural environments.

### Ways forward

**To promote the sustainable use of natural resources in agriculture and food systems** Greater efforts should be made to improve awareness of resource utilisation in land and water ecosystems. Furthermore, appropriate policies and economic incentives must be designed and implemented to ensure that the sustainable use of natural resources is achieved.

### **To plan and implement a worldwide transition to systems of sustainable post-oil agriculture**

Appropriate policies and economic incentives must be designed and implemented to deliver a transition from conventional monoculture-based and input-intensive agriculture to agro-ecological, biodiverse farming systems. This should include but not be limited to decentralised, small-scale, organic, permaculture, and urban systems of agriculture.

### **To empower disadvantaged rural people and their communities**

Appropriate policies and regulations must be designed to empower small-scale and subsistence farmers. These must promote rural development by ensuring social inclusion, universal access to tools and vocational training, and more equal power distribution between producers and buyers.

### **To ensure inclusive governance and decision-making processes**

Meaningful participation of vulnerable stakeholders, such as women, indigenous peoples, landless rural workers, and small-scale farmers should be increased in agri-food governance, policy-and decision-making processes, from a local to a global level.

### **To strengthen the global partnership that supports adaptation to climate change**

Increase availability of existing knowledge and technology to farming communities in regions vulnerable to the effects of present and projected climate change such as decreasing rainfall, rising temperatures and more frequent natural disasters.

## 6. Social Wellbeing

### Key challenges

#### **Lack of widespread access to quality and affordable health care**

Health is presently focused on the physical aspect and often excludes mental and social wellbeing. The main challenges are the effect of human activity and climate change on human health. The current symptomatic rather than preventative approach, the lack of awareness and education on health related issues as well as lack of widespread access to quality and affordable healthcare are also challenges to tackle.

#### **Lack of social cohesion and solidarity**

Cohesion and solidarity between different groups in society, while essential to social wellbeing, is often neglected. The gaps between rich and poor, men and women, and different ethnic groups are large. These social divisions encourage misunderstanding, lack of cooperation, and even cause conflicts.

#### **Lack of individual participation in civil society, politics, and the media**

Many people do not feel empowered to make decisions that affect them. Areas that lack participation include the labour market, politics, volunteering and media. Barriers to participation include poverty, lack of access or opportunity, apathy, and lack of awareness. Participation between different groups and sectors of society is also lacking, for example between individuals, and corporate and civil sectors.

#### **Lack of appropriate education**

Education is currently considered in a limited context, instead of being lifelong and encompassing both formal and non-formal methods. Education is not updated to reflect local cultures and evolving ways of learning, is not universal or affordable, and local learning opportunities are often mismatched to the local employment market.

#### **Lack of respect for cultural and individual diversity**

Equality is seen as a human right, but many people are discriminated for such things as their sexuality, gender, race, religion and culture. Diversity and equality are endangered by competition for resources, fear of the unknown, political manipulation, feelings of superiority and a lack of interaction between different groups.

#### **Unemployment and related discrimination**

The right to work, financial autonomy, adequate working conditions and a healthy work-life balance are crucial to social wellbeing, yet are unachieved by many. It is difficult to connect basic work rights for people within an international consensus. The relation between work, unemployment and human rights is still unclear. The ILO is a tool to tackle these issues, but it is still not used to its full potential.

## Ways forward

### **Health: Pollution and awareness**

All polluters must pay and repair the damage they create, as measured by independent agencies. This money should be used for victim compensation and research and development. An international court on pollution should be created. Awareness campaigns should spread information on pollution and its sources, nutrition and healthy lifestyle, hygiene, HIV/AIDS prevention, and other local issues.

### **Promoting and establishing social cohesion**

Governments should increase support for organisations and activities that promote solidarity through grants, interest free loans, or tax incentives. Primary school programs can teach children about other cultures and groups to inspire feelings of solidarity and responsibility towards others. Moreover, governments should enable mobility within and between countries in order to facilitate meeting others of different backgrounds.

### **Participation in society, politics, and the information society**

Civil society should be able to meet governments and take part in co-decision making on matters that affect them. In the interest of this, youth forums should be strengthened and where they do not exist established; in order for youth to meet, discuss issues and come up with a unified position. Youth forums should be demographically representative and should emphasize a frequent renewing of participants.

### **Education and personal development**

Incorporate youth into the design and management of the education system in order to adapt to new ways of learning. Increase the cooperation with professionals and provide quality information on career and internship opportunities. Promote non-formal educational methods and social participation by including volunteering and/or entrepreneurship as a part of school curricula.

### **Exchanges for cultural and individual diversity and equality**

Governments should arrange and finance exchanges in order to develop and promote diversity and equality. These exchanges can be realised on an individual, group or social media level. Interacting and seeing life through the other person's eyes will increase cross-cultural awareness, understanding of social contexts and solidarity.

### **Employability and sustainable values in companies**

Corporate actions and policies must reflect sustainable values. Relevant topics such as entrepreneurship, diversity and corporate social responsibility should be reflected in educational curricula and professional training. Furthermore, companies should have inter-generational and intercultural transmission of knowledge based on educational approaches *inter alia* peer-to-peer learning, non-formal education, and mentorship.



## 7. Renewable energy

### Key challenges

#### **Overconsumption**

Current energy consumption in industrialised countries has increased to an unsustainable level. Technologies to reduce energy consumption have not yet been implemented successfully. In addition, there is a lack of awareness on sustainable way of usage.

#### **Profitability of renewable energy**

Subsidies of fossil fuels do not enable energy resources to be compatible. New technologies for renewable energy and upscaling plans for current renewable energy are not sufficiently supported.

#### **Decentralisation**

The market is dominated by a limited number of players, leading to centralised energy supply. Energy production on household level is not actively encouraged, disincentivising small-scale renewable energy initiatives.

#### **Different countries realities**

The effectiveness of the renewable energy resource varies in different local circumstances. There is a current lack of locally suitable implementation plans for renewable energy.

### Ways forward

#### **Reducing our energy footprint**

In order to achieve a carbon neutral world by 2050, major steps need to be taken within the next ten years. More economically developed countries have to take a higher burden of reducing their energy consumption. We must achieve 80% of all energy to come from renewable sources by 2050. The EU should unilaterally increase its emission reductions targets from 20-30% by 2020.

#### **Activating the private energy production sector**

Governments should give economic incentives to the private sector to encourage investment in renewable energy, such as tax exemptions, low interest loans, seed funding, and Feed-In Tariffs. Subsidies and tax exemptions to the fossil fuel sector should be phased out. Research and development should be supported, and the resulting knowledge and technology shared with developing economies.

#### **Investing in the implementation of a smart electricity grid**

In order to enable the transition towards local renewable production of electricity, investments have to be made in the development and implementation of a smart grid allowing efficient production coordination and two-way electricity transport. Following the German policy of Feed-In Tariffs, the guaranteed access of net-producing systems to the grid should be regulated.

#### **Taking into account and taking advantage of country specifics**

All countries have specific realities, which need to be taken into account when investing in renewable energy technology and infrastructure. All countries need to research the potential they have for renewable energy, and start supporting the investments into these areas. The unleashed potential of solar energy in the south of Europe and wind energy in the north of Europe should be utilised to its full potential. Networks between countries to support the transfer of technology, knowledge and energy infrastructure need to be implemented.

### **Researching and addressing the possible negative aspects of renewable energies**

The negative side effects of the production of each renewable energy source should be researched in order to benchmark and fully assess the sustainability of each source. Social and environmental aspects should be taken into account in the development, advancement and implementation of renewable energy technologies. Rio+20 should decide on international ethical guidelines and regulations for production of agrofuels and the usage of biomass as an energy source.