



Asian-Pacific Students and Youth Association | Asian Youth Council | Caribbean Federation of Youth | FLAJ – Latin American Youth Forum | Pacific Youth Council | PYU - Pan-African Youth Union | YFJ – European Youth Forum | AIESEC | CPLP Youth Forum | Espacio Iberoamericano de Juventud | FIMCAP | Global Young Greens | International Trade Union Confederation | IFLRY – International Federation of Liberal Youth | IFM/SEI – International Falcon Movement – Socialist Educational International | IFMSA | IFRC – International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies | IMCS – International Movement of Catholic Students - Pax Romana | IUSY – International Union of Socialist Youth | IYCS – International Young Catholic Students | IYDU – International Young Democrat Union | MIJARC | WAGGGS | World Esperanto Youth Organisation | WFDY – World Federation of Democratic Youth | WFD – World Federation of the Deaf | World Organization of Scout Movement | World Student Christian Federation | YMCA | YWCA

Background and history of ICMYO

Based on the questions below, the ICMYO Task force conducted interviews with three of the key figures involved in establishing the ICMYO. The purpose is to revisit the rationale behind the creation of this network and support a forward thinking process for improved cooperation among youth organisations.

- 1. How the ICMYO was founded and why was it important for organizations to get involved with this idea?*
- 2. How was the idea developed and what process was used to establish the group?*
- 3. Why does the ICMYO have the shape of an informal network? What was the rationale behind this?*
- 4. What was your expectation of what the ICMYO would achieve in the future?*

In the year 2000 representatives of the European Youth Forum – YFJ - (Henrik Söderman) and (Kevin Ahern) discussed the possibility of bringing together youth organisations with strong backgrounds in youth advocacy. This was inspired by the lack of such coordination since the end of the 70's when the last register of such a “platform” was founded.

The first “Task-Force” was comprised by YFJ, Pax Romana and WOSM and they promoted the first meetings to enlarge the number of organisations around this new group.

The main goal was about creating coordination, communication and organized action around issues of importance for young people around the world. An added aspect presented by Guiseppe Pocarro was the need of representation on different levels.

The strategic importance of the ICMYO for the organisations, expressed by Jenny Fretheim, was to join forces to speak on behalf of youth especially for organisations that were lacking a profile in the area such as the YMCA at that time. The ease of networking facilitated by the ICMYO was also highlighted as a key benefit.

In addition, Jenny stressed the importance of geographical coverage. Since the offices of some organisations were in strategic places, it proved effective to leverage these organisations for

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representation; nevertheless, this was sometimes a negative aspect, because only a few organisations would be in places like Geneva, where many of those events and activities were taking place.

The configuration of the ICMYO as an informal network had at its roots the driver to create a structure that was easy to deal with and inclusive for all. *“It was never the idea to transform the ICMYO into a platform or a consultative body on youth issues”* stated Giuseppe Porcaro. Kevin Ahern mentioned that the idea was not to create an organisation but to create an opportunity for focusing on an agenda of solidarity and only discussing what really mattered to the organisations. *“We wanted to have a practical approach and a sense of solidarity for the ICMYO... not an organization with its natural “heavy” statements, politics and procedures”*

The negative aspects of being informal were present since the beginning as well. *“it was hard sometimes to transform the personal commitment to organizational commitment”*, Says Jenny.

Regarding expectations all seemed to agree on the need to create higher levels of coordination and impact on the youth agenda expanding the organisation’s influence in other high level political arenas and empowering youth organizations. Giuseppe mentioned the importance of continuous flexibility in order to keep in tune and to be able to include organisations from different parts of the world.

None of those interviewed mentioned the rationale behind “membership”. The explanation may be the international nature of the agenda and to “limit” the number of organisations making the management of the network easier and maintaining its informal structure. The regional youth platforms would bring a regional perspective and represent youth organisations at a national level. Furthermore, the international youth organisations would add a global dimension given their presence in several regions.

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