OUTCOME REPORT

ITUEvents

Generation Connect
European digital youth jam

*Contributing to
the European Year of Youth*

**Online meeting
4 April 2022
10:00 - 14:00 CET**

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Generation
Connect

Generation Connect Digital Youth Jam

4 April 2022

International Telecommunication Union

Version 1.1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The *European Digital Youth Jam* was organized by the Generation Connect Europe Youth Gorup with close support of the ITU Office for Europe. This event took place on Zoom on 4 April 2022 from 10:00 to 14:00 CEST.

The aim of the Digital Youth Jam has been to bring together young European leaders from different organizations to create meaningful engagement by lifting young voices to regional level discussions. 2022 being the European Year of Youth as declared by the European Commission, this event provided a platform to allow Europe young leaders to discuss on meaningful youth engagement in the policy and decision-making processes, to be part of the discussion table with stakeholders and not just a nice-to-have.

The outcomes of the discussion will form the foundations for the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for Europe and Central Asia, to be held on the 6-7 April, as well as to the regional celebrations of the International Girls in ICTs Day, taking place on the 28 April.

The event's agenda covered the following topics:

- **Session 1**: Meaningful youth engagement within the European Year of Youth
- **Session 2**: Youth voices in quality of education towards a digital future
- **Session 3**: Youth actions towards gender equality and girl's young women empowerment in the ICTs field.

The main outcomes of the briefing are outlined in this report, which structures the key points that emerged during each session of the event.

Figure 1 Virtual Group Photo

PARTICIPATION

The session was an open event, taking place through Zoom, targeting European youth, youth organizations active in the digital transformation field, as well as companies in the private sector and academia. Thirteen outstanding youth speakers discussed during the sessions sharing their insights and experience on meaningful youth engagement, quality of education and gender equality in STEM field. Details about the agenda and speakers can be found on the event's website.

Over 90 registered participants took part in the event, while over 90 followed the event streaming via YouTube and Twitter.

DOCUMENTATION

All relevant documentation of the European Digital Youth Jam, including the present outcome report will be made available through the event's webpage accessible here.

Video recordings of the workshop are also made available on the website:

- Event recordings

OPENING SEGMENT

Opening addresses

Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of the International Telecommunication Union Office for Europe, started by welcoming the audience and thanking Her Excellency Ms. Agnė Vaiciukevičiūtė, Deputy Minister of Transports & Communications of the Republic of Lithuania for contributing to the event. Mr. Ponder acknowledged the relevance that meaningful youth engagement and contribution has within the ITU Youth Strategy. He recognized the high-quality work that has been done and that is being done by the 48 Youth Envoys, coming from 21 different European countries, that make up the Generation Connect Europe Youth Group. He addressed the Youth Declaration produced by the group back in 2020, which has been used as an input to several UN meetings and which, soon, will be updated to continue to serve as a model, representing youth voices. Mr. Ponder highlighted as well, the impact of the event as a contribution to the SDGs process, the WSIS process, the European Year of Youth and to the Generation Connect Global Initiative and thanked the CEPT for its support.

Mr. Ponder stressed that the European Digital Youth Jam represents another step towards the Generation Connect Global Youth Summit, to be held from 2-4 June in Kigali, Rwanda, where the main outcomes of the Digital Youth Jam will be presented.

Following Mr. Ponder's opening speech, **Her Excellency Ms. Agnė Vaiciukevičiūtė**, Deputy Minister of Transports & Communications of the Republic of Lithuania delivered her opening remarks, highlighting the relevance of the organization of events by youth for youth, creating grassroots platforms to brainstorm, co-create and act on digital policy for the digital future, addressing challenges such the lack of connectivity and digital literacy in underserved communities. Finally, she encourages young people to take action and become part of Generation Connect.
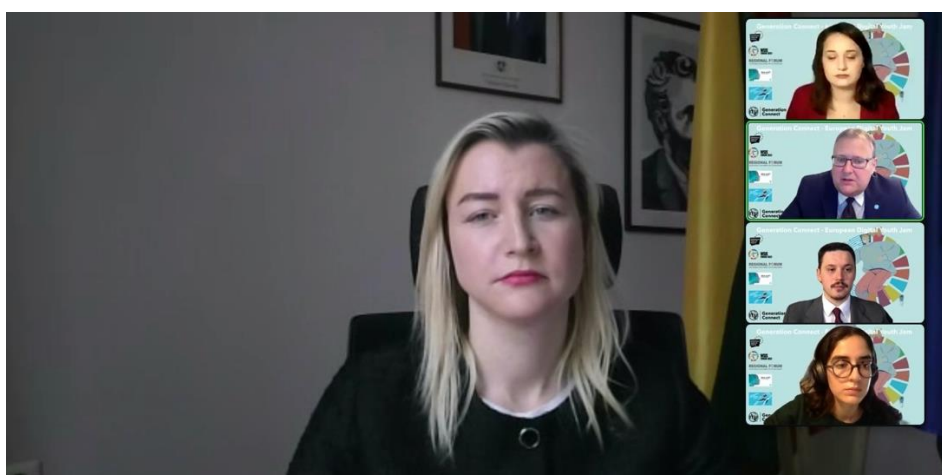
Figure 2 Her Excellency. Ms. Agnė Vaiciukevičiūtė, Deputy Minister of Transports & Communications of the Republic of Lithuania

Following Her Excellency Ms. Agnė Vaiciukevičiūtė remarks, an inspiring video from **Mr. Sabin Sărmaș,** Member of the Romanian Parliament and Designated President to Plenipotentiary Conference 2022 of ITU, was displayed, where he congratulates the Generation Connect Europe Youth Group for meaningful engagement and pro-activity and encourages those young people that are still hesitating to join the process and be part of tomorrow's digital future, by taking part at the Generation Connect Global Youth Summit, an event affecting digital at a global level.

Figure 3Mr. Sabin Sărmaș, Member of the Romanian Parliament and Designated President to Plenipotentiary Conference 2022 of The International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

To conclude the Opening Remarks, the video of **Her Excellency. Ms. Mariya Gabriel,** European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education, Youth and Sport, was displayed, where she highlights the urgency for youth to get involved in policymaking at a regional level, especially during the European Year of Youth 2022, where more initiatives, projects and actions than ever are taking place.

Figure 4 Ms. Mariya Gabriel EU Commissioner

Conference Sessions

Session 1: Meaningful youth engagement within the European Year of Youth 2022

Figure 4 Ms. Andreea Barbu, Mr. Ivan Martinovic, Ms. Veronica Piccolo, Ms. Luisa Franco Machado, Mr. Aleksandar Karatosho (from left to right)

Focus: Meaningful youth engagement is key in policy and strategy making, to raise their voices at a regional level and beyond. In this panel, effective mechanisms to achieve meaningful youth engagement from both sides, the youth willing to take action and the stakeholders, willing to welcome youth as equal stakeholders have been discussed.

Moderator: Ms. Andreea Barbu, Youth Envoy for the Generation Connect Europe Youth Group

Speakers: Mr. Ivan Martinovic, PhD student and researcher of AI in medicine; **Ms. Veronica Piccolo**, Chair at the Youth Standing Group (Youth SG); **Ms. Luísa Franco Machado**, Fellow at the Dialog of Internet Governance (YOUth DIG); **Mr. Aleksandar Karatosho**, Young European Ambassador from the Western Balkans and President of Youth Empowerment Association.

Key Points:

- A bridge needs to be established between decision makers and youth, to promote and achieve meaningful and real cooperation. On the one hand, a willing from senior stakeholders needs to exist to promote this bi-lateral communication and, on the other hand, is required for youth to be field experts, to contribute in an active and meaningful way to the policy and decision-making process.
- A proposed mechanism to effectively achieve youth engagement is to advocate for inter-generational panels with round tables where high-level stakeholders form the governments and private sector are represented, as well as outstanding youth, to promote an equal dialog. An example of this initiative could be represented by the Internet Governance Forum, where a space for youth to express their concerns and ideas to the stakeholders is created.
- Youth should be contributing to building systems not only for youth but for everyone, as they have the skills and knowledge to do so. Young people are digital natives and have demonstrated across the globe that they have the passion and interest to contribute meaningfully to shape a better, more inclusive, and sustainable digital future.

- Youth need to climb in what is known as the ladder of participation, which is divided into 8 layers. Starting at the first level, characterized by ignorance, where youth are in danger of being used as an instrument for stakeholders or organizations, rising to higher levels when information and critical thinking comes into place, and youth are not vulnerable anymore as they are aware of the current situation and the power they have. Representing the highest levels youth lead organizations and meaningful dialogue between youth and stakeholders, where youth ideas are listened to and implemented together.
- When it comes to inclusiveness and progressive digital policies, it is crucial that the backgrounds and features of the different communities that will be affected are considered, as one individual cannot be representative of a region or country. Gathering leaders with diverse backgrounds, acknowledging, and embracing diversity is a proposal to achieve more inclusive policies, involving youth in the process, as they are very much aware of this diversity due to globalization that social platforms provide.
- There is a barrier for youth to enter the policy making field, as they are usually considered as non-experienced or non-interested. Statistics show that between 80-90% of young people in Macedonia have never taken part of any social organization, and what is more, 85% of the youth has never been consulted by their national bodies. This data reflects one of the main challenges on achieving meaningful youth engagement, local authorities might perceive a lack of enthusiasm from youth, whereas youth perceive a lack of interest from the institutions in their opinions. Therefore, the creation of platforms where both groups can be reconciled is urgently needed, as a first step to make the youth an equal stakeholder in policy and decision-making.
- The decision-making process is not inclusive, as it might seem challenging for young people to get involved. The first step highlighted by the speakers to address this issue, is to be aware of it, give visibility and then, the same youth that is already involved in the policy and decision-making process needs to speak up and raise their voices to include other colleagues, aiming to create diverse and inclusive ecosystems.

Session 2: Youth voices in quality of education towards a digital future

Figure 5 Mr. Andrei Dodea, Ms. Athena Vassilopoulus, Ms. Sabrina Vorbau, Ms. Lella Violet Halloum, Ms. Xhoana Shehu, Mr. Daniel Kalemi, Mr. Miquel Castillo Torres (from left to right)

Focus: Ms. Athéna Vassilopoulos, Youth Envoy for the Generation Connect Europe Youth Group , provided a special statement from the youth regarding her contribution to the in the '*Cross-cutting session: Digital transformation beyond the COVID-19 pandemic*', held on April 1 as side event of the [Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for Europe and Central Asia](#), outlining the main outcomes on "Quality of Education" (SDG4) and "Gender Equality" (SDG5).

Following her intervention, the focus of the session is to address the main challenges in achieving quality education in Europe aligned with the expectations of the digital future for young people, and which actions are being taken in that regard.

Moderator: Mr. Andrei Dodea, Youth Envoy for the Generation Connect Europe Youth Group

Speakers: Ms. Sabrina Vorbau, Project Manager at European SchoolNet; **Ms. Lella Violet Halloum**, IBM StudentX and Diana Award Winner; **Ms. Xhoana Shehu**, Policy Officer at ETNO Association; **Mr. Daniel Kalemi**, learning researcher at Squishy Robotics and Youth Envoy for the Generation Connect European Group; **Mr. Miquel Castillo Torres**, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Key Points:

- Having young people around the table is necessary and not just a nice-to-have. To achieve this goal, youth need to have access to a quality education that, in our current society, involves digital skills. Therefore, the main issue that needs to be overcome is connectivity, granting quality access to the Internet to kids all over the globe, even those living in marginalized communities, as this represents the number one barrier preventing digital development in schools. For this purpose, investing in the implementation of technological infrastructure is critical.
- In such a digitalized society, not only the youth have to embrace technology, but also the trainers, teachers, and family, to gain a meaningful insight on digital transformation and introduce the youngsters to technology in a safe and conscious way, so they are aware of the dangers that they are being exposed to, as well as of the great advantages that technology can bring to them.

- Quality education also implies providing youth with the necessary tools and opportunities to experiment, where not only hard skills need to be addressed but also soft skills, to prepare young people to face the digital future from a critic and advance perspective. Actions that can be undertaken in that regard are the creation of innovation hubs and ecosystems, using as a model some US universities, where these ecosystems create the grassroots platforms for youth to undertake their own projects, experiment with entrepreneurship, extend their contact networks and get to master soft skills that are more difficult to teach in average courses.
- Technology is evolving fast, sometimes too fast for society and education to keep up to date. Therefore, the digital CV in schools and universities needs to be constantly updated, to ensure the quality of education that youth is receiving. In addition, youth need to see the purpose of this technological development, how this is reinvested in society, and how they can contribute to the process of putting technology at the service of society to help them move towards the digital future. Thus, initiatives such as Generation Connect should enter in the classroom, and be promoted among students, to make them understand how they can become part of the change.
- Globalization and experiencing other cultures at first hand, are a key step for young people to develop an inclusive mindset and is also part of the quality of education. Social media allow youth to be connected all over the globe from the comfort of their smart phones. However, when young people travel and discover new countries physically, their perspective might change, empathy might become stronger, and their actions might evolve towards inclusiveness and sustainability.

Session 3: Youth actions towards gender equality & young women empowerment in ICTs

Figure 6 Ms. Antonia Baskakov, Ms Mauricia Abdol Tshilunda, Ms Priya Burci, Ms Lady Mariéme Jamme, Ms Giselle Frederick (from left to right)

Focus: Highlight the actions undertaken by youth to empower women and girls in the tech field. A relevant panel composed of four female leaders in the ICT sector, both at the private level as well as at the international level, will provide with insightful experience and recommendations that will conform the basis for the contributions to the regional celebration of the International Day of Girls in ICT to be held on 28 April 2022.

Moderator: **Ms Antonia Baskakov**, Youth Envoy for the Generation Connect Europe Youth Group

Speakers: Ms. Mauricia Abdol Tshilunda: CEO of Data Works Communications (DWC), **Ms. Priya Burci**, COO at AIME Health startup and Lead of Powercoders Madrid; **Ms. Lady Mariéme Jamme**, Chief Sustainability Officer & Founder of iamtheCODE; **Ms. Giselle Frederick**, Impact Tech Founder & UN Commission on the Status of Women

Key Points:

- In the African continent, as explained by DWC CEO Ms. Mauricia Abdol Thilunda, the main challenges associated with the digital education and gender digital divide for women and girls in ICT are Geographical location (infrastructure); balancing household & relational responsibilities with education (ii); physical mobility (iii); time constraints (iv); hegemonic norms & values (v).
- Some proposed solutions to address these challenges are to develop innovative education systems and platforms that can go where women are, such as zero-rated online classes from a table or mobile phone (i); raise awareness & skill transfer on existing zero-rated content (ii); connection to a quality network that provides necessary information on opportunities for mentorship and/or career development (iii); clear schedules and programs to ensure successful completion; accommodation of mothers.
- In the tech world, regarding entrepreneurship, it has been proven that men are more likely to be fundraised than women. Not to mention that sometimes additional factors such as a difficult socio-economic background, lack of access to quality digital education, make it more difficult for women to fully access and benefit from the tech world.

- To effectively tackle these problems, it is therefore essential to build the necessary structures that support the entrance and the path of women in the technological field and empower and enable them and their communities to develop successful social entrepreneurship projects.
- It is important to shift from a raising-awareness momentum to an actual creation catalyst and take actions for what concerns the empowerment of women in the field of ICT. The focus should be on those girls and young women that find themselves in marginalized communities, that they experiment a lack of resources and comforts, and who, without our help, will not be able to progress.
- In the field of ICT, it is key to rethink the systems in place and re-design them to allow everyone to leverage the power of the digital economy both from an economic and from a work-related standpoint. It has been seen that through digital transformation and development, new jobs have appeared during the last decades. However, those opportunities are only accessible for members in connected communities, with the appropriate infrastructure, leaving behind those less privileged. A common effort needs to be undertaken, to address and empower girls leaving in those situations to grant them the access to the digital world.
- Over the last years the presence of women in technological fields has shifted, but we are yet there where we should be. More needs to be done and it is crucial to raise attention on this topic, present young leader women as role models, and contribute towards achieving real equality and inclusion in this ecosystem, encouraging girls to start their path in STEM and ICTs.

CLOSING REMARKS

Figure 8 Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder and Ms. Celia Falcón (left to right)

Speakers: Mr Jaroslaw Ponder, Head, ITU Office for Europe; **Ms Celia Falcon,** Youth Facilitator

Mr Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of the ITU Office for Europe, thanked the speakers and the audience for joining the European Digital Youth Jam. He stated that as 2022 is the European Year of Youth, the ITU Office for Europe is committed to support the youth to raise their voices to a regional level and use this platform for youth's active participation in the field of ICT and digital governance.

Mr Ponder also thanked Her Excellency Ms Agne Vaiciukeviciute, Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania, for joining the event and for highlighting the importance of youth engagement in policy discussions, as well as for reminding the audience that the young people of today will be the leaders of tomorrow.

Sincere thanks were also conveyed for the interventions of Mr. Sabin Sărmaş, designated Chairman of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2022 and Member of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, as well as to Ms. Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education, Youth and Sport.

Mr Ponder continued then by summarizing the main takeaways of the three sessions, which addressed the topics of Meaningful youth engagement; Youth voices in quality of education towards a digital future; and Youth actions towards gender equality and young women empowerment in ICTs. As far as the first session is concerned, he underlined the different mechanisms that can be and are being implemented for achieving a meaningful youth involvement in policymaking. Mr Ponder then highlighted that having youth at the round table of decision making, should be a must and not just a nice to have. He also noted, in relation to the second session, the importance of quality education and the relevant role ICTs should play to build a cohesive and inclusive digital future where ICT is leveraged for the benefit of everyone. To achieve the level of connectivity needed to allow young people to have access to a high-quality education, a solid communication infrastructure is needed, together with well-prepared teachers and trainers. Finally, Mr Ponder showed appreciations for the opportunity to have heard insightful contributions from successful female leaders in the private sector as well as at an international level that have brought concrete results in the technological field. Though, over the last years the growth of women in tech has been positive, there is still a long way to go. It is therefore crucial to raise attention on this topic, present more female role models in the digital world, and contribute towards achieving real equality and inclusion in this ecosystem, encouraging, and supporting girls that eager to start their path in STEM and ICTs fields.

Finally, Mr Ponder extended his thanks to all the speakers and the moderators for their contributions. The motivation and commitment expressed today by this roundtable resonate strong in ITU and demonstrate once more that the engagement of the youth at the high-level discussion and decision-making process is more necessary than ever before and that actions are being undertaken to address this challenge and turn it into a reality.

A special thank was also addressed to the Generation Connect Europe Youth Group for organizing this second European Digital Youth Jam; to the session moderators as well as to the ITU technical team, I.e technical moderator **Ms. Rose Maalouli** and for **ITU's Youth Facilitator Ms. Celia Falcon** for leading the interactive discussion.