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Higher Education Taking Action towards the Sustainable Development Goals:  
Perspectives from Asia and Europe

Opinion | Eman na Borg

## Mainstreaming Maltese Youths in Sustainable Development Policy

In 2017, Malta participated in the HLPF (High-Level Political Forum), an annual mechanism adopted by the United Nations. Simultaneously, the Voluntary National Review was also reviewing Malta's impact on SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). The results, as positive as they seem on paper, underline one missing link - Youth. In the youth Index published by the European Youth Forum, Malta did not even place. An international fact highlighting a local reality.

The Ministry for Sustainable Development and Climate Change has recently developed a policy for 2050. "Vision 2050" gives a detailed policy plan beyond 2030 and looks at how the Maltese society can holistically achieve the Global Goals. A quick glance one would see the lack of youth participation in setting up such a policy. A policy which is now dictating their future. A policy which will impact them the most as a generation who will have to implement and adhere to it.

As an organisation representing 25% of the Maltese population (between 13-35 years) the council works on promoting the work done by youth organisations and independent youth in achieving the SDGs. Resource mapping, goals mapping and understanding the barriers youths face in implementing the goals puts the Council in a position to lobby with different stakeholders on the importance of youth activism.

Having a seat at the table for youth is only the first step into ensuring that the full picture is being represented. The fact that there is a lack of youth conventions on an international sphere, is a barrier that youths all over the globe have to face. The lack of an international definition for youth rights has consequences on a local level as it means that youths are an afterthought when the policy is being discussed.

The constant discussion for the implementation of such policies will give youths space not only to voice their opinion but also to ensure that such a voice is heard, understood and freely pursued. Youth rights and the future of youths are currently not defined and so mainstreaming what youths believe in is a constant challenge. The reality is that for youths to move forward as a viable stakeholder, an understanding of what composites a youth needs to be held. Only then can we on a regional level be a legitimate player in policy discussion, writing and implementation. When youths are understood as youths, and when youths understand each other, can a collective voice move forward into mainstreaming their rights in every policy aspect.