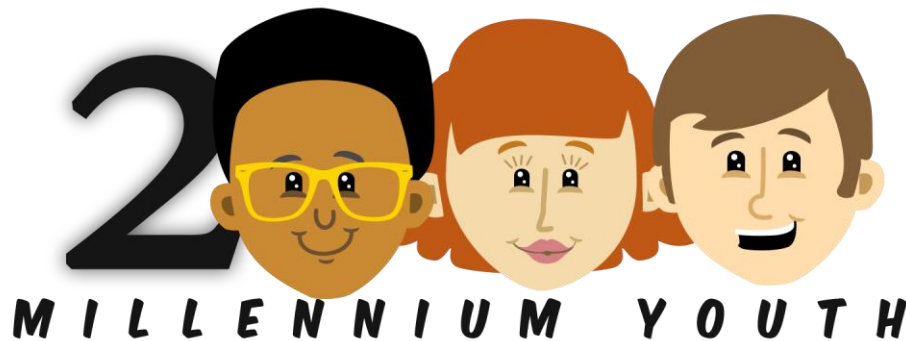


Millennium Youth

Young people engaging in the universal sustainable development agenda 2015-2030 European Development Days

High-level Auditorium Panel organised by World Vision Brussels & EU Representation in partnership with SOS Children's Villages International and the European Youth Forum



Summary & Recommendations

One of the highlights of the European Year for Development (EYD) was the European Development Days (EDDs) that took place June 3-4 in Brussels. Europe's leading forum on global development and cooperation brought together 5 000 participants to find practical solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems. The EDDs came at a critical juncture for the future of the planet, with key decisions on the follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be taken at the Financing for Development Conference in July, the United Nations General Assembly in September and ambitious new goals to combat global warming expected in December.

World Vision EU & Brussels Representation organised a High-Level Auditorium Panel "Millennium Youth": Young people engaging in the universal sustainable development agenda 2015-2030 under the Citizenship thematic cluster. The panel was organized in partnership with SOS Children's Village International, European Youth Forum, Ireland- National NGDO Platform "Dochas", National Youth Council of Ireland, Latvia-National NGO Platform "LAPAS" and the Baltic Regional Fund-Anna Lindh Foundation. It brought together 11 young people from 5 different continents (Maruba-Zambia; Nour-Lebanon; Mairita, Edgars, Olga and Ralfs-Latvia; Emily, Ellen and Stephan-Ireland; Migena-Albania and Edgleison-Brazil) and three senior officials: United Nations Envoy on Youth, Mr Ahmad Alhendawi, Prime Minister of Latvia, Laimdota Straujuma, and Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the Development Committee, Mrs Linda McAvan, who discussed issues affecting children and youth and their generation around global citizenship, inclusion and inequality as well as growth and poverty eradication.

Recommendations to UN and EU decision makers, national governments and local authorities:

1. Governments should invest in women's empowerment and change discriminatory legislation towards girls and women. Empowering vulnerable groups leads to economic development within the society.
2. UN together with the national governments need to ensure the development of indicators to measure the sustainable goals and facilitate with monitoring and evaluation of their implementation.
3. To help reduce poverty, local communities affected by poverty should be included in any decision-making process at local, national and global level.
4. People should be empowered and offered opportunities and systems put in place for monitoring government's commitments.
5. Children and young people have the right to participate in decision making processes that affect them and all decision-makers need to ensure they create the suitable environment for their participation as well as opportunities to engage.
6. EU, UN and local decision makers need to find new ways to engage young people in conferences, in democracy, in governance structure and decision-making, in general. Modern ways to include children and young people need to be found and designed in order to empower the new generation.

7. Governments need to push for a legislation change in regards to promoting vocational education as a method to develop business and encourage entrepreneurship. The educational system needs to be adapted to the growing needs of the young people and technological advancements. This will also facilitate a change in mentality and a shift in educational approaches.

8. Governments need to invest more in social capital as this is the road for a developed, strong and innovative society, especially investing in youth association and groups.

9. UN, EU and national governments need to put mental health high on their agenda and engage in public discussions with young people. This also requires also a financial commitment.

10. UN, EU and national governments need to revise their positions and existing policies and include an understanding of young people as peacebuilders and not trouble makers. Programs need to put in place to counter the negative narrative against young people in these countries.

European Year for Development 2015

2015 is a special year for development. It is the first ever **European Year** to deal with the European Union's external action and Europe's role in the world. For development organisations all over Europe it is an unparalleled opportunity to showcase Europe's commitment to eradicating poverty worldwide and to inspire more Europeans to get engaged and involved in development. 2015 is also the year in which the Millennium Development Goals that the world agreed to reach in 2000, and in which the international community will agree on the future global framework for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Four years after the adoption of the European Union's Communication on the *Agenda for Change*, 2015 is also a good time for the EU to communicate the concrete results of the reform of development policy which that represented. The aim of the EYD2015 is to inform EU citizens about EU development cooperation, highlighting what



the European Union can already achieve as the biggest aid donor in the world and how it could do even more with the combined strength of its Member States and its institutions.

The EYD2015 seeks to stimulate the active interest of European citizens in development cooperation and foster a sense of responsibility and opportunity as regards their participation in policy formulation and implementation.

In 2015, **World Vision** in partnership with EU institutions and civil society organisations joined efforts to explain to European citizens how EU development aid works and to demonstrate that it **makes a real and lasting difference**. We have devoted our financial and human resources to this goal, especially reflecting on how our work has positively impacted and empowered the most vulnerable and their communities around the world that are mired in poverty through no fault of their own.

Throughout the year, the EYD features 12 thematic months and partners are encouraged to fit their projects, public engagements and stories on the theme discussed every month. World Vision has managed to cover so far, all the themes making sure that our work was in alignment with the EYD topics. For more information please contact: Deirdre de Burca at Deirdre_deburca@wvi.org

More information on the EYD can be found [here](#) and you can also read our blogs and have a look to [World Vision's EYD partner page](#) as part of the official EU's EYD page.

European Development Days

One of the highlights of the European Year for Development (EYD) was the European Development Days (EDDs) that took place June 3-4 in Brussels. Europe's leading forum on global development and cooperation brought together 5 000 participants to find practical solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems. The EDDs came at a critical juncture for the future of the planet, with key decisions on the follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be taken at the Financing for Development Conference in July, the United Nations General Assembly in September and ambitious new goals to combat global warming expected in December.



EDDs is the flagship event of the EYD, whose motto – **'our world, our dignity, our future'** - is reflected in the main themes of the Brussels forum.

Following the opening ceremony of EDD15 on June 3, Melinda Gates joined EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, and other global leaders to announce new measures to address the global challenge of malnutrition. On 4 June, Commissioner Mimica also signed a partnership to deepen regional integration with five regional organisations from Eastern and Southern Africa. Participants from over 140 countries, representing 1 200 organisations had a chance to discuss how to create sustainable growth, develop a shared vision of universal and

fundamental rights and show that smart policies can improve the lives of millions of people.

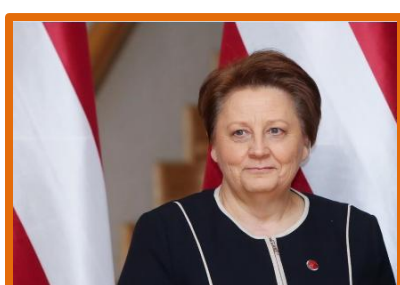
15 young adults from all over the world were selected to take part in different sessions at the event, as part of the Future Leaders competition that gave young experts a platform to express their views on how future development policy should look. **World Vision's young delegate from Brazil, Edgleison Rodrigues**, 21 years old, was one of the selected youth. Edgleison's outstanding work on preventing violence and promoting the right to live of children and young people in the region qualified him for an expert speaker on corruption and good governance. In addition, EDD15 showcased over 50 examples of best practice in the field of international cooperation.



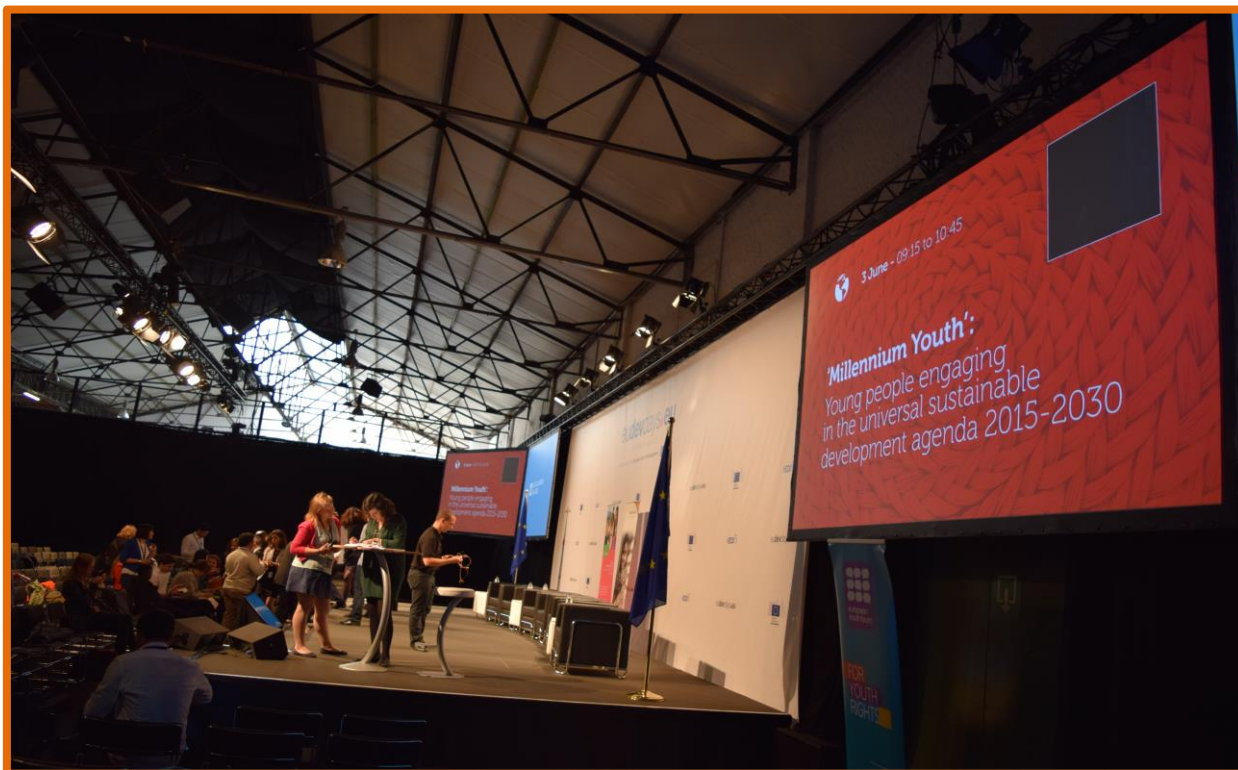
World Vision during EDDs

Background information

World Vision EU & Brussels Representation has also managed to secure a High-Level Auditorium Panel “Millennium Youth”: Young people engaging in the universal sustainable development agenda 2015-2030 under the Citizenship thematic cluster. The panel was organized in partnership with SOS Children's Village International, European Youth Forum, Ireland- National NGDO Platform “Dochas”, National Youth Council of Ireland, Latvia-National NGO Platform “LAPAS” and the Baltic Regional Fund-Anna Lindh Foundation. It brought together 11 young people from 5 different continents and three senior officials: **United Nations Envoy on Youth, Mr Ahmad Alhendawi, Prime Minister of Latvia, Laimdota Straujuma, and Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the Development Committee, Mrs Linda McAvan**, who discussed issues affecting children and youth and their generation around global citizenship, inclusion and inequality as well as growth and poverty eradication.



The two hour long event was the first high-level panel that opened the EDDs session and gave the opportunity to young people to interact and engage in a direct dialogue with leaders from the UN institutions, EU institutions and member state governments, not only expressing their hopes, demands and recommendations but also demonstrating their proven capacity and ability to be effective agents of change in issues that affect them. The event fell under the EYD2015 inspired theme, "Our Dignity" and one which lead the content discussion. Giving children and young people a sense of dignity is about treating them as important stakeholders in a process that will impact most upon their futures and not as



beneficiaries of inconsistent policy and actions which hit the target but miss the point.

Children and young people have proven time and time again that they are perfectly capable to articulate their opinions, recommendations and demands especially about matters that impact on them. In this auditorium eleven young people who grew up during this new millennium represented the voice of young people as they formulate in clear language what matters to them when a new post-2015 framework is concluded. They can hold their own in direct open dialogue with leaders from the UN institutions, EU institutions and member state governments, not only expressing their hopes, demands and recommendations but also demonstrating their proven capacity and ability to be effective agents of change in issues that affect them.

The children and young people participating as speakers at the event covered a diverse set of questions which reflected their personal needs and the priorities of their peers and communities. The event was structured in 3 sessions where the young delegates discussed the issues they identified as priority with the senior officials present and held them accountable for their commitments as well as asked them about the future and the implementation of their key asks. Children and young people have raised the following points that were brought to the attention of decision-makers during the event and throughout the series of conferences organised:

- Young people are disproportionately affected by global problems such as hunger, armed conflict, unemployment and poverty, yet they have little voice in how these issues are tackled.
- Gender equality is fundamentally important to sustainable development and would help improve the lives of both men and women.
- The best way to fight poverty in Africa and elsewhere is by improving health and education.
- Young people can and should play an important role in raising awareness about climate change and demanding action.



Maruba, Child Delegate from Zambia - 'Poverty levels in my country and in Africa in general are very high. To help reduce poverty, decision-makers should listen to the views of people in poverty and take people's opinions into account.'



Edgars, Young Delegate from Latvia - 'Quality education is an important goal. A lot of people think that a diploma is a sheet of paper even though it indicates a profession!'



Emily, Young Delegate from Ireland - 'To reduce suicide rates we have to remove the stigma attached to mental health. Mental health should be considered part of general well-being.'

Stephan, Young Delegate from Ireland - 'Youth organizations are constantly undervalued and undermined. I have spent more than half my life as a member of multiple youth groups. Without them I would not be here. They helped me develop my talents and skills.'



Nour, Young Delegate from Lebanon – ‘Early marriage is forbidden in Lebanon, but yet many girls in the Arab worlds are forced to leave school and get married at the age of 12 to 13. Many of my friends got married at that age.’



Ralfs, Young Delegate from Latvia - ‘Now we are facing a trend where young people get their education to get their grade, but then have a huge problem finding a job. We have to address that immediately because otherwise we risk losing a whole generation.’

Ellen, Young Delegate from Ireland - ‘Many people don't believe that climate change is real, but it is. Changing public opinion and people's views is not easy and will not happen over night.’



Olga, Young Delegate from Latvia - ‘Young people fear for their lives because things are getting worse in many countries. How can we ensure that young people will live in peace and safety?’



Migena, Young Delegate from Albania - ‘In my country, parental unemployment is at a very high level. Because of that, children run the risk of losing parental care and parents find themselves unable to care for their families.’





Mairita, Young Delegate from Latvia - 'I believe we have to update the system on gender equality. How do we reform education systems so that boys and girls have a choice and feel free and good about their choice?'



Edgleison, 21, Brazil - 'What do developed nations do to mobilize against youth mortality rates? Given the high mortality rate of young people in Brazil, even the most basic right to life is not self-evident.'

Millennium Youth Panel – preparations and the event



Before the event on the 3rd of June, all children and young people together with staff members took part in the preparatory workshop for two days. The workshop included a series of sessions ranging from learning about the post-2015 process and the Millennium Development Goals including public speaking skills, using social media for advocacy as well as the EU context and key players. Led by World Vision expert on child participation, Patricio Cuevas-Parra and Mario Stephano, children engaged in activities and

sessions where they had the opportunity to decide by themselves the goals and key themes part of the SDGs that are most relevant for themselves and their peers.

In an open, transparent and youth-led process, the young delegates decided for the following themes:

gender equality, decent work for all, poverty, quality education, access to education, maintaining peace, climate change and well being. This formed the basis of their questions to the decision-makers they interacted with during the event.

Each young delegate had the opportunity to decide on the specific thematic they want to address as well as which of the speaker is best suited to take action based on their concerns and recommendations. They used the EDD2015 platform to voice their opinions and concerns regarding the development and implementation of the new SDGs. As a consequence, **the decision makers and stakeholders understood, recognized and respected the importance of inclusion and participation of children and young people in implementing the SDG framework, as a universal development agenda.** Also, based on what they have identified during the preparatory two day workshop, as the most important and relevant elements in the SDG framework, children and young people delivered key messages with regard to their own role, responsibility and ability to bring about real change in implementing the post-2015 SDGs, together with assuring the commitment required from UN, EU and national leaders to follow up on these proposals.



Children and young delegates as well as the senior officials raised awareness of the fact that **young people are disproportionately affected by problems such as unemployment, hunger, poverty and armed conflict, yet they are heavily underrepresented when it comes to taking decisions on tackling these issues. Half of the world's population is under 25, but less than 6 % of parliamentarians are under 30. Not only is it morally right that young people participate more, but it will help ensure that responses to the problems are more effective.**

The event examined three specific themes – social inclusion and gender equality, quality of education and personal well-being. These topics were set within the context of the SDGs – due to be agreed upon at a high-level UN meeting in New York in September – and how young people can be involved in monitoring implementation of the agreed goals.

In discussing the first theme, one speaker raised the issue of gender inequality in Arab regions, where women can be pressured into early marriage and suffer domestic violence, but be rejected by society if they divorce. In Lebanon, only four of the country's 128 parliamentarians are women and there are no female ministers in the government. Many agreed that gender equality worldwide is of fundamental importance for sustainable development and would provide better lives not just for women, but also for men. The world has made progress over the past 20 years or so, however, no country can claim to have achieved total gender equality.



Today, 63 million children of secondary school age do not go to school, and half of them live in conflict zones. Many agreed that the best way to fight poverty in Africa and elsewhere is by improving health and education; education is the 'backbone' of development.

A spot poll of the audience showed that over 65 % felt that

access to education is more important than the quality of education. For one young panelist, however, education needs to be tailored to the economic needs of society so that young people leaving school can find work more easily. Another drew attention to a lack of funding for the non-formal education sector, such as youth groups and organisations, which encourage participation and help create awareness of issues.

Young people can and should play an important role in raising awareness about climate change. As voters, they can influence politicians, as consumers they can influence companies, and as innovators they can come up with aids to sustainable development.

Nour from Lebanon has represented Middle East's young generation and SDG 5 on gender equality was a top priority for her and her peers. Women in Arab countries face different challenges from nationality and family name to early marriage, divorce, domestic violence and lack of women's participation in politics. Referencing UN legal protection framework such as the Child Rights Convention, Nour questions what UN can do to increase the gender quality in Middle East and empower females to be equal?

Mr Alhendawi positively responded to Nour's concern calling on a shift of perspectives and the urgency of reversing the problems women face. Half of the world is under the age of 25, so it is a question of legitimacy when we are not consulting these big age group. Women's empowerment is the same with community empowerment and leads to economic development within the society and it is an investment worth making.

The same positive response was received by MEP Linda McAvam who stated that when we have gender equality these problems disappear.

Migena from Albania focused on decent work for all (8th SDG) especially on parental and young unemployment. Relating to the story of children and families in her community that often confront themselves with the situation of family separation due to the impossibility to support their families financially, Migena's question was: How will this SDG in particular cover groups at risks and families who are at risk of separation? Migena was also concerned about the future implementation of the sustainable goals and raised the concern on developing indicators and a monitoring and evaluation system as well as including children and young people in this process.

All panellists' responses boiled down to two main aspects: education and participation. "You should measure what you treasure", said Mr Alhendawi. He also expressed his personal concern on the development of indicators but ensured that the UN is pushing for all the right indicators needed to be able to measure all the goals to be agreed upon by states. UN is still calling for more indicators but the power to bring positive change lays in their hands – to lobby your governments.

Maruba from Zambia raised the most pressing issue - eradicating poverty through social accountability. By introducing the Citizens Voice and Action which is a social accountability approach promoted by World Vision that was used in his community, Maruba put on the table the following recommendations:

- To help reduce poverty local communities affected by poverty should be included in any decision-making process.
- People should be empowered and offered opportunities and systems put in place for monitoring government's commitments.
- Children and young people have the right to participate in decision making processes that affect them.

He also was eager to know from Mr Alhendawi what could be done to make sure children's voices are heard and taken into account to improve quality services and thereby, reduce poverty?

As Mr Alhendawi rightfully said, this was a 1.8 billion dollar question because this is how many young people are on the planet. The most pressing issue and valid observation made is that we cannot afford "business as usual" and we need to find new ways to engage young people in conferences, in democracy, governance and decision-making. The challenge from now on is to find modern ways to include children and young people and empower them.

Edgars also coming from Latvia touch on the inter-linkages of the SDGs and highlighted that addressing only a selective few of the goals will not solve any problem in order to reach sustainable development. Based on his personal experience in country as well as those of the neighbouring Baltic countries, he shared the views of the perceptions people have of vocational schools. Discussing about the negative stereotypes around this type of education he wanted to know from the Latvia government whether it is possible to change the stereotypes of young people in respect to vocational school? And if yes, how?

Ralfs from Latvia raised the question of quality of education as a student himself. For Ralfs and his peers, improving the quality of education is a top priority as the current education system is only partially preparing young people for the job market. High rates of youth unemployment are the proof of this existing problem. His main recommendation was to invest in life-long learning but more needs to be done in country. His question, therefore, was addressed to Mrs Straujuma: What had the Latvian government done in the last few years to prepare young people for the job market?

In response to both Edgars and Ralfs's comments on education and changing perception and mentalities on vocational and lifelong education, the Prime Minister of Latvia congratulated their comments as they align with the current discussion under her Cabinet. She guaranteed the young delegates that allocation of funds for the education sector will be based on a rigorous evaluation that takes into account performance indicators and especially the quality of education. She also assured them there is going to be a legislation change in regards to promoting vocational education as a method to develop business and encourage entrepreneurship.

The UN Youth Envoy has continued explaining that we are still facing big challenges to access education and shift the way we understand providing education which needs to be adaptable to the 21st millennium challenges. Innovation, technology and focus on critical thinking and non absorption of knowledge should be the main areas for improving the educational system.

Stephen from Ireland has spent more than half of his life getting involved in youth organizations, informal groups but he is worried because decision-makers are not prioritizing informal education and these types of associations are undermined and underfunded. So, his logical question comes to address the solution of this issue: How do we expect young people get involved in the SDGs process when these empowering groups are not receiving the recognition they deserve? How can we value and support the non-formal education sector?

Mr Alhendawi also commented on Stephan's very well-articulated question and acknowledged that youth organisations are the least funded groups. They are seen as passionate but not professional therefore, if governments want to involve young people and empower them with the knowledge and skills to become active and responsible citizens in the society. This requires a change of mentality of the benefits of life-learning. Everything, according to the UN Youth Envoy, boils down to a simple thing – if you have millions of young people unemployed, we need to change the way we did “business as usual” in terms of how societies educate their children. So, governments should focus on promoting young entrepreneurship and provide them the environment suitable for learning these skills.

Mrs McAveney added that governments need to invest more in social capital as this is the road for a developed, strong and innovative society.

Mairita from Latvia also raised the issue of gender equality, particularly in the education sector relating it to stereotypes on the job market. Girls are affected by limited career-path choices they are allowed to pursue being encouraged to follow softer skills and what is considered “women suitable jobs”. Mairita wanted to know how the Latvian government plans to educate people about gender equality, so that girls and boys feel free and good about their career choice?

According to the Prime Minister of Latvia, the young generation in Latvia is amongst the lucky generations of youth who faces discrimination based on gender, but Mrs Straujuma recognised that progress must be made in addressing the gender based discrimination on the job markets and more attention will be dedicated to this in the upcoming years.

Emily from Ireland raised the issue of mental health given the high suicide rates in Ireland amongst young people. She also challenged people’s mentality against mental health which is not an illness but of state of well-being. She shared her advocacy at local level in her community encouraging a healthy lifestyle. She believes she needs also EU’s support to tackle this problem and wanted to know what the EU could do to promote mental health and break the stigma against depression and mental health problems?

The UN Youth Envoy reminded the audience and the panellists that the UN focused on mental health last year for the International Youth Day. 1 out of 5 young people have a mental issue which amounts to 20% of the young generation. This issue needs to be elevated on the political agenda and add it to our understanding of mental health. This requires also a financial commitment from the local governments.

Mrs Linda McAam also highlighted the focus on mental health in the European Parliament through an awareness raising campaign. But, admittedly mental health has not been funded on the same level as other health issues. However, EU cannot do too much on this as EU does not fund itself the health systems but national governments are responsible for this.

Olga from Latvia shared with the audience that the fear of more than 70% of the young people she interviewed, was fear of war. In light of this worrying fact, she wanted to know how this problem can be solved and how to ensure the generation lives in peace and safety?

Mrs McAam’s response was based on Winston Churchill’s words, “jaw jaw jaw and not war war war” calling for peace in the region and echoing young people’s concerns, In the same fashion of understanding, Mr Alhendawi explained that the UN is prioritising the safety and well-being of children and young people affected by conflict. Currently there are 600 million young people living in conflict areas or affected by disasters. However, the world is responding to these growing concerns and for the first time in UN’s history, there was a UN Security Council debate on young people and peace(building) as well as the Amman Forum to happen later this summer 2015. It is crystal clear that development cannot be achieved without peace and security in our societies. Most importantly, thou is understanding young people as peacebuilders and not trouble makers. We need to counter the negative narrative against young people in these countries.

Ellen from Ireland brought to everyone's attention the impact of climate change which she considers to be one of the biggest difficulties in the world. Ellen trust that we need to change public opinion and people's views on this issue and acknowledge that earth is not a renewable source. Instead, climate change is a real issue and has led to terrific effects and countries we have the responsibility to protect and save the lives of those affected by disasters. Her question to the other panellists was: How can we include awareness in our schools and education systems? How can we make a strong message to resonate with young people?

Mr. McAvam's response was very clear, "there is not a scientific debate about climate change and those who deny this are corporations with vested interests and we should do more to address this, especially in the public debate". The responsibility ahead of the Paris Climate Conference (COP21) lays with governments, the EU as they are the only people with decision-making power during COP21. All citizens have the power to put pressure on their leaders and held them accountable for the decision taken in Paris.

Edgleison from Brazil shared the stories of million of children and young people in Latin America who do not reach to have the right to experience and live the future. Through different youth organisations, he fights for children's rights for their well being and right to live. For this reason he believes it is crucial for children and young people to be included in the decision making that affects them. Participation of youth is the only solution to protecting the future generation.

Children and young people have proved once more they are active, capable participants in the decision-making process and that they are aware of their needs and priorities. A detailed interview with the young participants can be found [here](#). You can also visit [World Vision's website](#) to stay in touch with their activities and engagements ahead of the SDGs agreement and until the end of the EYD2015.

