

Advisory Council on Youth 2018-2019 Candidacy Motivation

Dear Youth Forum Members,

as a **22-year-old school student representative** I might not fit the usual profile of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe (AC). Yet I believe that my special profile as an activist in the field of secondary education gives me a special perspective that has been absent in the past years. Since I was 16 I have been active in different local, regional and national structures of school student representation. Currently I am in the board of the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (**OBESSU**). Having been a grassroots activist, youth trainer and European representative of school students in the past years has given me a deep understanding of the issues young people in the age of 14-21 are facing across Europe but also great experience in youth empowerment and representation in policy making.

Key areas of expertise and interest

1. OBESSU believes that **education, especially at a young age, is of fundamental importance in shaping youth participation**. I have been strongly involved in advocating for learner-centered school democracy since the beginning of my activist work and want to continue this in the AC. Practicing active citizenship through school democracy is a crucial part of youth participation. Empowering young people in decision-making should not only happen in schools, but include other educational institutions and public structures too. Yet, schools are a fundamental part of young people's lives and as such often lay the grounds for future participation. For the Youth Department's priority on youth participation and youth work, such an education perspective is of high value. Paying close attention to those excluded from opportunities to participate because of social or economic barriers, is close to my heart.
2. Therefore, improving **young people's access to rights** has been of priority for me in the past years. I have been working on the topic of social inclusion in education in my Austrian organisation AKS and OBESSU, always with a clear rights-based approach. Highly concerned with persisting rates of youth at risk of poverty and exclusion, I have not only sought solutions in the education system but always approached education as part of a wider social and economic system. In my opinion, youth cooperation and advocacy work are only effective if paying attention to the vulnerabilities of young people in all spheres of their lives, and in particular to those most excluded. **Economic rights** are too often left aside and young people blamed for their precarious (un)employment situations. I strongly believe in the role of youth organisations to challenge such harmful narratives that explain social and economic problems through young people's individual motivation instead of social and economic structures. In the AC I want to continue my work on young people's social and economic rights in particular with link to their right to quality education and employment.
3. Closely linked to the Youth Department's' goal of inclusive and peaceful societies, I have worked on the topic of **migrant and refugee education** and its role for inclusion in society. As a responsible for OBESSU's Seeds for Integration project where we work on peer empowerment for migrant and refugee inclusion in schools, I have gained experience and insights to the topic of migration and education from a youth perspective and would like to continue this work in the AC.

My role in the AC

OBESSU has had a long cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. I have experienced the work of the Youth Department both as a participant at a study session and as a preparatory team leader at a recent OBESSU study session on access to education and social inclusion.

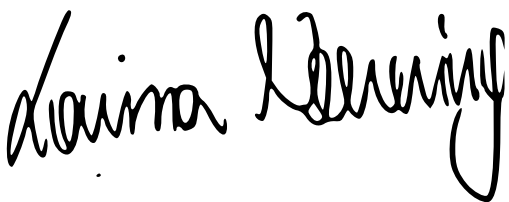
I believe a continuous communication and close cooperation between the AC, the YFJ board and its members organisations is key for a fruitful mandate. As a member of the AC I will always prioritize the interests of the members of the YFJ and contact specific organisations as well as the whole membership whenever relevant topics are discussed and addressed. Besides that, regular communication will help the member organisations to have a better understanding of the work within the AC and increase the legitimacy of the council. As there are many overlapping themes between the portfolios of the AC and the YFJ, frequent communication and consultation with the relevant Youth Forum board members are crucial for the cooperation.

I plan to make more use of the events of the YFJ such as the Council of Members and the General Assembly when it comes to communication between the AC and YFJ, for example by having spaces at each Youth Forum event where members of the AC can share their current work, and where member organisations can give inputs. This could improve the transparency and the communication.

The new YFJ expert groups can furthermore prove very useful for the AC as spaces for member-based inputs on the work in the AC. Close contact with these will improve the discussions and the work within the Youth Department. Overall, I want to be an AC member who follows principles of democratic participation not just in my advocacy but also in my practical approach to youth representation.

To conclude, besides my knowledge and experience on the topics of youth participation, young people's social and economic rights and social inclusion through education, my specific youth education perspective can bring much additional value to the work of the AC. I am highly committed to representing young people in a democratic and transparent way in the Advisory Council to ensure a united and strong voice for youth rights.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Larissa Nenning". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent 'L' and 'N'.

Larissa Nenning