

RAREȘ VOICU

CANDIDATE FOR THE BOARD OF THE YFJ

Hello, everyone! My name is Rares Voicu, I'm a Board member of OBESSU and I am running for the position of Board Member of the European Youth Forum, nominated by OBESSU!

I have been a part of the youth movement for over 5 years, working at a range of levels - from the local level, starting as a student representative in my high school, to the national level, as president of the National School Students' Council in Romania, and currently at the international level, as a Board Member of OBESSU and a member of the European Commission Working Group on Pathways to School Success.

In the work I have done so far, my priorities have included meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes, access to education as a human right and good governance of youth organisations.

In my candidacy for the European Youth Forum, my motto is - Nothing for young people, without young people! - as I believe that youth should have a central role in decision making processes, regardless of the field; all decisions affect us, young people, which is why we have to claim our spot as key actors in these decisions.

The main issues I would like to address during my mandate, if you grant me your trust, include:

- **Quality education and learners' rights**

Almost half of the European population aged 25-34 has finished some form of tertiary education; this means that half of young Europeans are enrolled in some form of education for most of their young lives. Be it in formal or non-formal education, most young people are learners, which is why I believe it is necessary for the Youth Forum to reintroduce education as one of its wider priorities, coordinating with the members who are already working on this topic.

This is not just a priority that the YFJ should take up - it represents one step towards a holistic approach of the youth forum, as all of the main topics which are currently on the EU agenda - such as the digital and green transition and revitalising democracy, cannot happen without education.

Education, however, does not only happen in schools. Non-formal education and training represents a means through which young people can self organise and engage in mutual learning processes. Youth work represents a core element of NFE, which is why I believe that youth workers must have strong competencies in their field of practice, which are recognised and given due weight.

I believe that the YFJ must:

- Advocate for recognition of non-formal learning;
- Advocate for a clear competencies framework for youth workers;
- Support member organisations in fostering NFE at a national level;
- **Strong members - strong representation of young people**

I believe that the relevance of the Youth Forum stems from the fact that, at the base of the European youth movement there are strong, representative members, as well as grassroots-based organisations. The Forum should play a double role - firstly, it should act as a platform for collaboration between the MOs, enabling an exchange of ideas and good practices which can further the work of the youth sector overall.

Secondly, it must provide support (including financial support, through mechanisms such as sub-granting) to its members, in order to ensure that member organisations who do not work at full capacity due to lack of funding or know-how can ramp up their work.

Therefore, I believe that the YFJ must:

- Provide a solid platform for Youth Organisations to work together, share good practices and to foster dialogue even outside of statutory events;
- Provide technical/financial support for organisations which are logistically incapacitated, in order to ensure that they can continue pursuing their objectives;
- **A membership-led, board-managed European Youth Forum**

According to the Statutes of the European Youth Forum, the membership represents, through the statutory events, the highest decision-making authority of the organisation. This entails, in my view, that the membership needs to be at the core of all decisional processes, even outside of statutory events, through constant consultations.

In absence of this constant dialogue between the Board and the membership, our MOs become disengaged and are, consequently, no longer interested in/able to take part in the work of the YFJ, which harms the ability of the organisation to function properly and to lead a grassroots-based representation of young people.

Therefore, I believe that the YFJ Board must:

- Engage with individual MOs, through bi-monthly meetings with the allocated board member, in order to maintain a healthy, constant and open dialogue between the membership and the board;
- Launch membership-wide consultations before engaging in significant advocacy/fundraising activities;

- **Young people as indispensable stakeholders in EU policymaking**

As the European Year of Youth comes to an end, we must ask ourselves whether going forward, we truly want youth participation to look like it did this year - in a quasi-tokenistic way, with no real, long-term impact for young people all over Europe.

However, I believe that this year has generated momentum on which the YFJ can build more youth participation at an EU level, through mechanisms such as the Youth Test, which must represent an advocacy priority in the next mandate. Moreover, young people need to be represented in a constant manner at the European level, through permanent representatives/observers on committees within the Parliament and through constant dialogue with high-level Commission policymakers.

Albeit complex, this change will enable the YFJ to further its advocacy priorities in regards with youth participation and will also constitute youth participation in and of itself.

Therefore, I believe that the YFJ Board must:

- Further and strengthen its advocacy work in achieving the Youth Test across all EU policies - and, eventually, with the help of our members, to implement it in different states as well;
- To pursue the implementation of constant youth representation in high EU decision-making bodies, building on the results of the Conference on the Future of Europe;



For all these reasons, I believe that the experience that I have gained over the years will help me bring a great contribution towards the work of the platform.

I will run a campaign and mandate during which the input of the members will be at the centre of my work. I would love to start this by discussing my priorities - how can I make YOUR voice heard?

Get in touch with me at rares@obessu.org or on my Instagram or Facebook and let's start chatting!

Together, for **#YouthRights**.

