

# Meaningful Inclusion of Youth in the Voluntary National Review Process: Lessons from the First VNR Youth Chapters

Recommendations for Governments, UN Youth  
Delegates and National Youth Councils

Jessica Gill and David Giles, UN Youth Delegates for Ireland for 2022/23



**Buan-Ionad na hÉireann  
chun na Náisiún Aontaithe**  
Permanent Mission of Ireland  
to the United Nations

**NYCI** National  
Youth  
Council  
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# Introduction



Ireland's second Voluntary National Review (VNR) features the joint-first stand-alone 'Youth Chapters' in a VNR from any Member State. Ireland's UN Youth Delegates, Jessica Gill and David Giles led a consultation that formed the basis of the youth chapter and the writing of the text.

To provide practical advice to Member States on facilitating a youth chapter in their upcoming VNRs, Ireland's UN Youth Delegates organised a High-Level Political Forum side-event entitled 'Meaningful Inclusion of Youth in the VNR Process: Lessons from the First VNR Youth Chapters'. This document contains the recommendations and best practices highlighted by the speakers at the event, namely, the UN Youth Delegates from Ireland and Iceland and a panel of international youth inclusion experts.

## **Why does a standalone youth chapter add value to a Voluntary National Review?**

Youth inclusion is critical for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and for achieving sustainable development for all. The inclusion of a standalone youth chapter in a VNR is a significant advancement in the empowerment of young people to participate in SDG accountability processes.

- As young people have different priorities and are impacted by certain issues disproportionately due to their age, a standalone youth chapter can center on the youth experience.
- A standalone youth chapter enables young people to be honest and critical in their assessments of SDG progress and provides full autonomy to focus on the areas that are most important to young people.
- It provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the SDGs among young people engaged in the consultation processes.
- While a youth section in a civil society chapter ensures the voice of youth is included in a VNR, it reflects the perspective of young people involved in civil society as opposed to youth as a whole who may be less aware or engaged with the SDGs.

# Recommendations

## **Jessica Gill and David Giles, UN Youth Delegates for Ireland for 2022/23**

- The relevant government department should begin involving youth in the VNR process as soon as a Member State has expressed interest to the UN in presenting its VNR.
- It is imperative that the youth chapter is fully youth-led with UN Youth Delegates and/or other youth representatives leading the drafting, consultation, and review processes for the youth chapter.
- Youth should be consulted widely with efforts to include the views of those more likely to be left behind.
- It is important to establish whether the responsibility for the organisation of the consultations falls upon the government department responsible for the VNR of the VNR, the youth council or the youth delegates and how the other actors in the process will support this.
- The government should encourage young people to be honest and critical in their assessments and recommendations.
- A Youth Advisory Group should be established to develop the consultation methodologies and engage in a draft and review process of the youth chapter to ensure that it is fully representative.
- Youth engagement in the VNR should be resourced with financial support for the consultation, outreach efforts and training for the youth writing the report to strengthen the communication of messages and recommendations.
- The youth chapter and its recommendations must be considered by decision-makers and followed with feedback.

## **Rebekka Karlsdóttir, UN Youth Delegate for Sustainable Development for Iceland**

- It is important to consult youth broadly and inclusively with voices from different regions, communities, and minority groups to represent the diverse opinions of all youth.
- Governments can support consultations by providing their time, funding, a clear indication of expectations and support to the youth writing the chapter.
- The penholders of the chapter need to be independent of the priorities of engaged stakeholders, yet receive logistical support and guidance from the youth council.
- The inclusion of a youth chapter must not be viewed as a one-time engagement with youth with follow up responses to the chapter published.

# Recommendations



## Panel of International Youth Inclusion Experts:

**Dr. Sameh Kamel, Organizing Partner of UN Major Group for Children and Youth**

**Dr. Mayada Adil, Young Leader for the SDGs for 2022-2024**

**Marcy Levy, Adolescent Development Manager at UNICEF**

**Daniele Taurino, European Youth Forum Board Member**

- Youth can further engage in the VNR process by collaborating with their governments on the priorities being addressed within the VNR as a whole.
- UN Youth Delegates can deliver comments during the VNR presentations at the High-Level Political Forum. Creativity and art can be used to communicate with and empower people, including youth, beyond borders to ensure inclusive decision-making.
- Youth participation must be a continuous process- before, during and after major conferences; considered a central practice rather than an ideal.
- The government must ensure that youth participation is safe and sensitive to risk by asking young people what support they require to participate safely and meaningfully and adequately planning and budgeting to respond to these requests.
- Sufficient logistic and admin support must be provided to the penholders during the consultation and writing process.
- The government should provide open, transparent and comprehensive feedback for all young people involved in the VNR process and reflect on whether the youth felt that their voices were heard and considered as this is the minimum threshold for meaningful youth inclusion.
- The government should collect better data disaggregated by age group to strengthen reporting on how youth are affected by issues.
- Youth organisations need sustainable, accessible funding adapted to their needs (long-term and structural) to ensure their meaningful participation in multilateral processes.