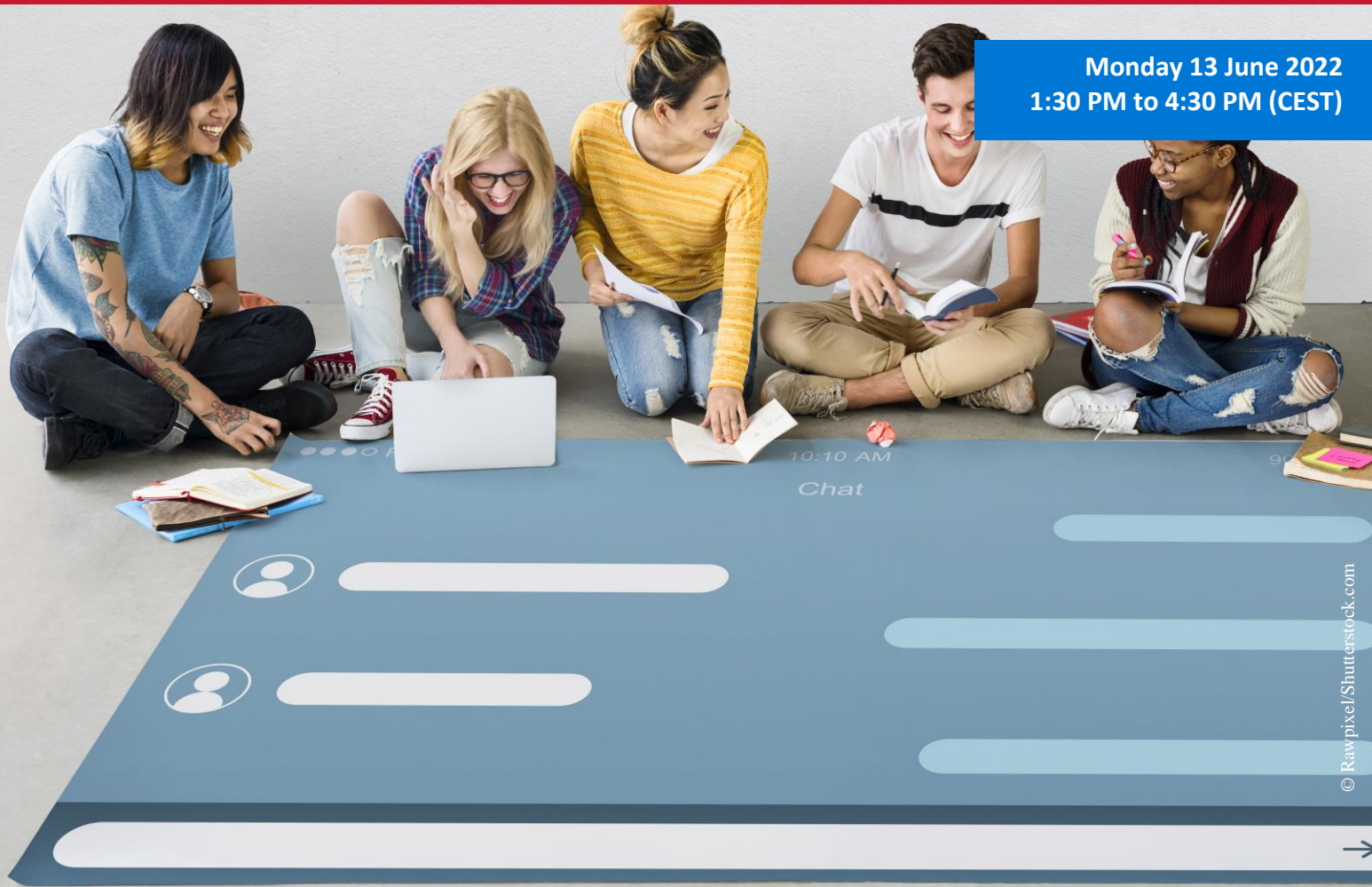


Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII) Youth Forum: Achieving SDG4 with and for youth

Monday 13 June 2022
1:30 PM to 4:30 PM (CEST)



CONFINTEA VII overview

The **Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII)** will take place in a hybrid format from 15 to 17 June 2022, hosted by UNESCO in cooperation with the Government of Morocco. Under the theme of *'Adult learning and education for sustainable development – a transformative agenda'*, CONFINTEA VII brings together over 1,000 conference participants to examine and discuss the challenges and achievements that have taken place in adult learning and education (ALE) since CONFINTEA VI in 2009. The event will also be an opportunity to explore effective ALE policies within a lifelong learning perspective and within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this context, the **Youth Forum** will take place online on **Monday 13 June 2022** from **1:30 PM to 4:30 PM (CEST)**, as a critical side event in advance of CONFINTEA VII.

Objective

The Youth Forum will provide a platform for young people, in the post-COVID 19 context, to engage in a dialogue with intergenerational actors on their needs, priorities, and aspirations regarding their overall state of education. The session will also create the space to share best experiences and educational challenges young people face in a rapidly changing world, both currently and in the coming years. In leveraging the diverse SDG4Youth network, this session will identify solutions to support youth in education and lifelong learning, with the outcomes of the Youth Forum intended to inform the following plenaries at CONFINTEA VII.

Background

Young people today constitute the largest generation of youth in history. In alignment with the United Nations statistical definition of youth – as persons between the ages of 15 to 24¹ – there are currently over 1.2 billion young people inhabiting the earth, representing 15.5% of the global population.² In the context of CONFINTEA VII, UNESCO’s Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL) defines ‘adult’ learners as those aged 15 years and above, thus, placing young learners as a core demographic in the adult education and learning (ALE) agenda. More so, with several regions experiencing a ‘youth bulge’, such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the high population growth is driving a significant increase in the proportion of young people, creating a need for a continued, rapid expansion of education, learning, and training systems, along with job creation on a massive scale.

Even prior to the pandemic, at least 773 million young people and adults lacked basic literacy skills, and some 617 million children and young people were failing to acquire desired skills in reading and mathematics. Unfortunately, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the predicament of young people, as they are among the hardest hit by the wide-reaching effects on education and lifelong learning systems. At its peak, the crisis affected more than 1.6 billion children and young people worldwide, resulting in significant disruption of both formal and non-formal education, learning losses and increased dropouts. Even as schools reopened, millions of students remain at risk of not returning, especially those from poorer and more marginalized communities, and girls and young women.

Young people are not only entitled to their right to education but should also be *meaningfully engaged* in the process of transforming education to help build just, equitable, and sustainable futures. Broadening the spaces for youth voices to shape the decisions made about their education and learning is vital, especially as they lead the discussions on reimagining and transforming education in the fight against climate change, various form of discrimination and oppression, health issues, gender norms, and for the diversity of cultures and indigenous self-determination. Young people must not only be listened to or consulted, but also mobilized and supported in the construction of transformed education systems, as per the UNESCO Report entitled “Reimagining our Futures together: A new social contract for Education”. As such, formal representation of youth and student voices will be at the forefront and center of achieving SDG4, and present at this Youth Forum through leveraging the newly designed SDG4Youth Network³. The multidimensional nature of the challenges faced by humanity means that lifelong learning for youth must cover a broad spectrum of knowledge and skills. Within these unique circumstances, the following thematic areas have been identified as priorities for this Youth Forum.

¹ For the purpose of this Youth Forum, UNESCO activities will apply the United Nations statistical definition of youth (15-24 years), as appropriate. Please note that this definition of youth varies by respective country or regional entities.

² United Nations, World Youth Report, 2020.

³ The SDG4Youth Network initiative was launched in November 2021 in close cooperation with the Office of the Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Generation Unlimited, and other partners. The network is youth and student-led with an Interim Council made up of youth and student leaders nominated by partner organizations, intended to support youth in shaping global education policies and decision-making.

Fostering youth employment, literacy and skills development

Even in the best of times, prior to the pandemic, over 68 million young people were unemployed and were around three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. The number of young people **not in employment, education, or training** (NEETs) was remarkably high in 2019, totaling 267 million⁴ - equivalent to 31% of young women and 14% of young men. Too many youths were also trapped in vulnerable employment in low-skilled jobs or settling for jobs for which they were overqualified and underpaid. As a result, 12% of young people in employment were living in extreme poverty (below US\$ 1.90 a day), twice the rate of adults. The COVID-19 crisis severely exacerbated existing inequalities, as schools, training centers, and workplaces experiences closures around the world, disproportionately affecting young people. The number of young people in employment fell by 39 million in 2020, or 8.7%— compared with 3.7% for adults⁵ - and over 17% of young workers stopped working during the pandemic.⁶ As a result, youth worldwide were uniquely vulnerable to the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19. The transition from school to work is becoming increasingly difficult, with the latest ILO data putting the global youth unemployment rate at 13.6% in 2020.⁷

The rapid structural transformation of the nature of work and the changes taking place in the labor market have made continuous skills development, upskilling, and reskilling central elements of learning throughout life. New skills are constantly emerging, and uncertainty is becoming the norm, a phenomenon reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Rapid **technological change**, driven by the expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), automation, the fifth generation of mobile communication technology (5G), is transforming the workplace: reducing the need to human intervention in many work processes, and simultaneously creating a demand for lifelong learning as populations attempt to adapt to new technologies. Education systems need to be well equipped to anticipate and respond to skills gaps based on the needs of the labor market. An emphasis on developing ICT skills, including digital literacy, has also become increasingly important as it helps young learners take full advantage of digital devices, the internet and online resources for learning. These opportunities include using mobile technologies for basic literacy, obtaining tertiary qualifications online and at distance, utilizing virtual and augmented reality for safer and more effective vocational education and training on relevant skills courses and career guidance. However, there is an urgent need to focus on marginalized youth populations with low levels of literacy to ensure that they not left behind in the digital divide.

Green skills for climate change

The world is not on track to mitigate climate change, stop the loss of biodiversity, restore ecosystems, or reduce pollution. To focus on climate change, CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere nearly reached 420 ppm in 2021, a 50% rise compared with pre-industrial times (280 ppm).⁸ According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), limiting global temperature increase to 1.5°C as expected by the Paris Agreement will require CO₂ emissions to decline by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050.⁹ Preventing environmental collapse and ensuring the survival of modern societies has become a top priority for humanity and demands new models of adult education geared towards learning to care for oneself, for the others and for the planet.

To the extent countries engage towards zero-emission economies, the green transition will have an impact on technologies, production, goods and services. This will result in an increased demand for

⁴ILO, "COVID-19 and the World of Work," May 2020.

⁵ ILO, "COVID-19 and the world of work," 2021.

⁶ Decent Jobs for Youth, "Youth and COVID-19," August 2020.

⁷ ILO, "Youth aspirations and the future of work," September 2020.

⁸ University of California San Diego, "The Keeling curve."

⁹ IPCC, Global Warming of 1.5°C, available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

workers with new technical and generic skills needed in the **greener jobs and sectors**. Recently, there is a growing call for education to enable individuals, as agents of change, to acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that lead to the sustainable green transition of our societies, as called for in the Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 framework as well as enshrined in SDG Target 4.7. This can be a source of empowerment for local communities of young people by building capacities to identify and address local issues caused by climate change, while also giving them the resources and knowledge they need to lobby effectively for change. Such opportunities can also raise awareness of climate-related risks and changes in the local environment, as well as helping people use local resources sustainably. Young people are already driving the lead in finding innovative solutions, advocating for climate action, and taking action to preserve the well-being of humanity and the planet, yet more intergenerational support is needed to empower them to achieve their fullest potential.

Embracing active and global citizenship

Societies are facing challenges regarding political representation, institutions and governance. Political disengagement, social unrest, tensions caused by hate speech, fake news, prejudice or discrimination are challenging existing political regimes. Human-induced climate change, limited resources, rising temperatures and sea levels, and environmentally unsustainable economic structures will increasingly represent a threat to the stability and resilience of societies. The uncertainty surrounding our society calls for lifelong learning for civic competencies and active citizenship. Considering this, the thematic part of the 5th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 5) – to be launched at CONFINTEA VII – places a significant emphasis on citizenship education and the need for a radical shift in how we perceive each other and our place in nature. While countries lack a common definition of **citizenship education**, it is broadly understood to reflect elements including civic education, critical thinking, environmental protection, human rights, and social media literacy.

Citizenship education can be a source of empowerment for local communities by building capacities to identify and address local issues while also giving them the resources and knowledge they need to lobby effectively for change. Young people are already contributing to an inclusive society by leaving no one behind in the COVID-19 response through launching calls for transparency and accountability in COVID-19 response; raising awareness of preventive measures; bringing the voices of the most marginalized to policy deliberations; providing psychosocial trainings, etc. Youth, learning neighborhoods, families, study circles, businesses, learning institutions and civil society organizations are key actors in cross-sectoral lifelong learning at the local level, and the collective mobilization of their resources will be critical to communities' responses to local and global issues. ALE must be a part of this transformation, equipping citizens with knowledge and means to make informed choices through an enhanced awareness of the issues pertaining to sustainable development, as well as acting in a responsible manner both personally and in the public sphere.

Ways forward

The COVID-19 crisis, technological change and the transition to sustainable development will lead to job destruction and creation, to the disruption of existing activity sectors and the emergence of new industries, in ways that are difficult to predict. Countries will need to work together to align their skills agenda with economic transitions and labor market needs. The **role of young people** – not only as beneficiaries of ALE, but also as meaningful contributors and provisioners – is, thus, central in expressing skills needs, offering work-based learning, investing in skills, recognizing, certifying and valuing the skills acquired. This sub-session hopes to explore the various mechanisms and/or approaches in young people's ability to provide ALE, further identifying best practices. It will also include a discussion surrounding what cooperation is needed to advance this critical agenda for lifelong learning and propose key recommendations in moving forward, which will feed into the CONFINTEA VII Framework for Action.

Expected outcomes

The Youth Forum will:

- Provide a platform for young people, in the post-COVID 19 context, to engage in a dialogue with intergenerational actors on their needs, priorities, and aspirations regarding their overall state of education.
- Share best experiences and educational challenges young people face in a rapidly changing world, both currently and in the coming years.
- Identify innovative solutions that can help empower young people to achieve their fullest learning potential and to act as agents of change to improve adult learning and education, along with immediate and longer-term action areas.
- Explore appropriate governance and partnerships that enable young people to contribute to improving and transforming education.
- Produce a **summary report** identifying key takeaways, innovative solutions, and recommendations from the Youth Forum to feed into CONFINTEA VII opening plenary discussions and the Framework for Action.

Participants

Formal representation of youth and student voices is critical for the achievement of SDG 4, which is why UNESCO is positioning students and youth at the forefront and center of SDG 4 by leveraging the newly designed and diverse SDG4 Youth Network. The Youth Forum will also bring together young people from wide and diverse backgrounds and countries from around the world. They will be representing formal and informal youth entities, organizations, and groups from all regions. A particular emphasis will be given to representatives of marginalized and vulnerable youth communities. The Forum will also reflect the diversity of youth organizations working at the grassroots, national, regional, and international levels. Other participants will include high-level representatives, governments, multilateral and regional organizations, civil society, NGOs, the private sector, researchers and experts.

Agenda

The Youth Forum will be held in a **virtual format** using the **Zoom platform**. Translation will be offered in the following four languages: **Arabic, English, French, and Spanish**. Total: **3 hours (180 mins)**.

Youth Forum – Monday, 13 June 2022	
13:30 – 13:40	Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Daniel Baril, Director General, Institute for Cooperation for Adult Education; Chair of the UIL Governing Board• Ms Doris Mwikali, African Representative, UNESCO SDG4Youth Executive Committee
13:40 – 14:20	Session 1: Youth Employment, Literacy & Skills Development <p><i>Moderator:</i> Mr Rafik Amrani, Founder, Beyond Tekhmamek</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Max Amanu, Programme Officer, Northwind Foundation; Research Team Lead for East and Southern Africa Region, UNESCO Youth Researchers• Ms Tania Rosas, Founder, Fundacion El Origen• Mr Nicholas Kee, Youth Advisory Board Member, Solutions 4 Youth Employment Network

14:20 – 15:00	<p>Q&A</p> <p>Session 2: Green Skills for Climate Change</p> <p><i>Moderator: Ms Ola Gomaa, Education for Sustainable Development Youth Leaders, UNESCO</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Temilade Salami, Environmentalist, Author, Founder, Ecochampions • Mr Vladislav Kaim, Contact Point, YOUNGO Green Jobs Working Group; Member, United Nations Secretary-General’s Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change • Mr Alexis Sebote, Founder, SALOM
15:00 – 15:40	<p>Q&A</p> <p>Session 3: Embracing Active & Global Citizenship</p> <p><i>Moderator: Ms Amanda Bennett Rivera, Youth Coordinator, Earth Charter International Youth Network</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Maria Nguyen, International Education Officer, Family Planning New South Wales • Mr Martin Karadzhev, Executive Board Member, ILGA World • Ms Nidaa Aljabbarin, Syrian Refugee, Poet, Narratio Fellow, Carry the Future Board of Directors
15:40 – 16:20	<p>Q&A</p> <p>Session 4: Ways Forward</p> <p><i>Moderator: Ms Sofia Bermudez, Member, The Argentine Youth Organisation for the United Nations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Moazzam Shah Bukhari Syed, Founder, The Walkway School • Ms Yusra Assali, Representative for Middle East and North Africa, WorldSkills Champions Trust • Mr Isaac Makinya, Youth Representative, World Organisation of the Scout Movement
16:20 – 16:30	<p>Q&A</p> <p>Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director of the Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO

Youth forum participants and attendees are also invited to attend the one-hour virtual ‘**Marketplace**’ taking place the following day, **Tuesday 14 June** from **4:30PM to 5:30PM (CEST)**¹⁰, which aims to showcase innovative private sector learning solutions and facilitate dialogue on partnership and collaboration opportunities.

¹⁰ Separate ‘Marketplace’ concept note available.