

## **International Forum for the Development of China-Europe Youth Organisations Situation Report**

From 19 to 25 July 2009, the All-China Youth Federation and European Youth Forum co-organised the International China-Europe Youth Development Forum. A total of 34 representatives from European youth organisations such as the European Union Youth Federation, the World Organisation of the Scout Movement and the International Falcon Movement – Socialist Education International attended the forum. The forum took on the theme "How youth organisations attract and cover youth today". We shared experiences in starting grass-roots youth work, as well as discussed how the various youth organisations in China and Europe perform their functions and achieve development in the current situation. The representatives felt that the issue of how to attract, assimilate and lead the youth is a common issue which youth organisations in China and Europe currently face.

### 1. Content of meeting and summary of viewpoints

During the forum, participants discussed and exchanged thoughts about four topics: "how political youth organisations can represent and protect the rights and interests of youth", "how to enhance the ideological guidance of youth", "how grass-root youth organisations can attract and mobilise youth" and "how youth organisations serve the needs of youth". The participants agreed that the issue of how to attract, assimilate and lead the youth is a common issue which youth organisations in China and Europe currently face. They shared experiences on guiding youth in thinking, youth participation and enthusiasm in politics, capacity building of youth organisations, the use of new media, etc.

#### (i) Ways in which youth organisations attract and mobilise youth

Regardless of whether the youth organisations are international, regional, political or national organisations, it is believed that the philosophy of the youth organisation is one of the most important factors for attracting members. Political youth organisations should be committed to a clear belief, youth organisations with social education models should attract youths by developing ideas. The representatives felt that the values of the youth organisation are an important prerequisite for attracting and uniting the youths. To build trust and a positive social image are also important foundations of a youth organisation. The main focus is to fight for the rights and interests of youths, self-development and meeting social needs. Self-construction is a basic requirement of a youth organisation. |

#### (ii) Encourage youths to participate

Political youth organisations should represent youths in participating in political activities to provide platforms for information and participating in decision-making, establish the system of seeking youth's opinions before any public affairs decision-making, allowing youth to participate in public decision-making at a certain level to achieve a fair intergenerational dialogue. Youth organisations should gradually improve the system for

the disclosure of information and youth participation. The decision-making process of youth organisations should be public and transparent.

(iii) Represent and protect legal rights of youths

A way to protect the rights and interests of youth is to reflect their opinions in various policies. During this process, youth organisations should make use of the communication platform for youth policies. Youth organisations can make use of other organisations to hear the youth's opinions on various issues and provide these opinions to policy makers. Youth organisations can only win the support of youth by sounding the voices of the youth in policies concerning their rights and interests, as well as by protecting their rights and interests during the process of implementing these policies. The United Kingdom representative of the International Falcon Movement - Socialist Education International, Lloyd Russell-Moyle, pointed out that ensuring youth's participation is the core of protecting the rights and interests of youth. The International Falcon Movement's philosophy is to help youth be aware of their own rights through peer education, education of interests and experiential education.

(iv) The wide application of new technologies and their impact

The use of new technologies such as the Internet and mobile communications in youth organisations was a hot topic during this forum. Representatives mentioned that the development of information and communication technologies have brought about many changes in the ways of thinking, mobilisation, behaviour and communication methods among youth organisations. The Young European Federalists is a youth organisation under the Union of European Federalists, and its grass-root networks are widely distributed. In order to expand its influence, the organisation makes use of modern technological means to disseminate news, organise events and call meetings. For example, using online tools to organise web conferences, setting up wiki platforms to allow members to view and edit resolutions, using text messages to disseminate news, etc. The European Youth Forum and the International Federation of Liberal Youth have made very good use of social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter to widen the organisations' scope of influence get closer to and attract youth, as well as to disseminate news and allow interaction. The representatives also commented that traditional means of interacting and communicating with youth face-to-face should still be the focus of youth organisations. Although new communication technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones can reach and impact youth at a larger scale, it is still difficult for youth organisations with large structures to accomplish everything using the Internet. The European representatives felt that the side effects of Internet use such as social detachment, deflated sense of responsibility and information overload could have a negative impact on the reputation and image of youth organisations.

## 2. Inspecting and observing the situation

After the forum concluded, the European representatives visited the China Youth University for Political Studies and its historical gallery. During the visit, the representatives showed great interest in how Chinese youth organisations developed young leaders. While the representatives were observing youth working in Shandong,

they visited the Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Information Centre in Shandong, examined the activity venues for youth outside the school compound and interacted with the youth workers. At the Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Information Centre, the participants paid close attention to the performance of youth organisations in helping youth in employment and entrepreneurship efforts and were full of praise for the youth organisations in areas such as promoting youth employment policies, raising awareness of youth entrepreneurship and passion for entrepreneurship, supporting youth entrepreneurship projects as well as raising awareness of the protection of youth rights. At the outdoor activity venue (Shanqing World), delegates got to experience picking fruit and vegetable and took part in the team development training. The International Youth Organisation trainer said that the scale of youth activity venues in China, their diversity and activities left a strong impression and that European youth lack similar venues. Shanqing World's concept of leasing small pieces of land to make profits for subsidising public welfare activities was an eye-opener. Participants felt that raising awareness of youth participation and team work through the introduction of science, systems, safe sports and team sports in the activity venue to improve the trust and friendship among youth is also an effective method for youth organisations to attract youth.

### 3. Future action plan

When the vice chairman of the All-China Youth Federation Lu Yongzheng visited Europe in October 2009, he held discussions with the European Youth Forum about the current situation as well as follow-up plans and heard from the 10 European representatives regarding their views and feedback on the forum. The delegates concluded the results of the forum and provided suggestions about the content and format of the forum. Both parties agreed to make the China-Europa Forum a long-term, organised event and to continue to cooperate with the European Youth Forum in organising the second International Forum for the Development of China & Europe Youth Organisations in 2010.

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