



**EYE
Forli**
17—19.05.24



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The External Action of the European Union: tackling the crisis in the Sahel

Local EYE May 17-19th, 2024

Rapporteur: Carola Gritella

Location: University of Bologna - Campus di Forlì & Zoom (Hybrid)

Date: 18/05, h.11-13.00 CEST, TH R.1 A ground floor, 296 seats

Registration link to participate remotely:

<https://site.unibo.it/eye-forli/en/agenda/debate-on-eu-external-action-the-crisis-in-the-sahel>

Concept Note

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Sahel region, spanning from Mauritania to Sudan, is grappling with escalating insecurity despite concerted local and international stabilisation efforts. This crisis, if left unchecked, could extend far beyond its local confines. With a population of 150 million, the region has witnessed conflict spread across porous borders, leading to a significant internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugee crisis. This situation has profound implications for young people in the region and in the diaspora. Acknowledging the severity of the situation, the European Union (EU) has substantially increased its engagement in the region over the last decades, adopting the 2017 EU Integrated Strategy.

This strategy combines security and development policy interventions to promote stability and socioeconomic growth. The EU's approach involves various initiatives, including Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, support for G5 Sahel's initiatives, bilateral development cooperation and addressing root causes of irregular migration. However, there is a recognized need for more engagement with local entities. Without meaningful involvement and empowerment of local communities, including youth, efforts to address instability may fall short of their intended goals.

Despite these efforts, young people in the Sahel continue to bear the brunt of conflicts due to economic challenges, governance issues, climate change effects and lack of opportunities. Their perspectives and agency in peace-building efforts are often sidelined, though they hold potential as significant agents of change. They can engage in various initiatives aimed at mitigating conflict, promoting peace and challenging existing narratives. Recognizing their role is essential, especially considering the United Nations Resolution on peace, women, youth and security, which showcases the lack of acknowledgement of youth as peace enablers.

Young African diaspora in the EU, often feeling excluded from peace-building efforts, could play a crucial role in reinforcing the EU's actions in the Sahel. However, their sense of non-belonging and perceptions of colonial legacies hinder their involvement. This de-rooting brings them to embrace views according to which the coup d'états currently happening in the Sahel region represent a welcome struggle against neo-colonialism. Addressing conflicts in the Sahel also affects young diaspora communities in Europe, prompting opportunities for them to contribute to conflict resolution initiatives.



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Given these complexities, organising a dialogue between young Africans, young Europeans and key AU/EU policymakers is essential. The young people can leverage their unique position interacting with diverse stakeholders, raise awareness about the situation in the Sahel within their host countries, and mobilise resources for conflict resolution initiatives. This forum aims to facilitate dialogue, exchange perspectives, and generate actionable recommendations for addressing instability, ensuring youth voices and aspirations are central to policy making.

Ultimately, the aim is to promote integration, inclusion, and stability, ensuring that the voices and aspirations of young people are central to the policymaking process.

2. MAIN OBJECTIVE

The main objective is to amplify the voices and perspectives of youth in shaping the European Union's external actions towards addressing the crisis in the Sahel region of Africa. It seeks to harness their innovative ideas, experiences and energy to influence policy decisions, thereby ensuring more effective, inclusive, and sustainable solutions. This initiative aligns with the EU's commitment to 'engage, connect and empower' young individuals, a cornerstone of its Youth Strategy 2019-2027.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. The session aims **to promote youth empowerment and inclusion** by increasing their involvement in policy-making processes at all levels, ensuring their unique perspectives are incorporated into strategies addressing the crisis in the Sahel region. It highlights young people as agents of change and peace enablers, aiming to make their aspirations central to future initiatives.
2. **To facilitate dialogue and understanding** by creating a platform for interaction between the young African diaspora and key AU/EU stakeholders and fostering an understanding of differing perspectives on political instability in the Sahel region and its impact on youth.
3. **To foster networking and exchange opportunities** among young people within and outside the Sahel region. This objective would encourage collaborative efforts towards resolving the crisis.
4. **To generate actionable recommendations** for addressing the challenges posed by political instability in the Sahel region. By involving both youth and policymakers in the discussion, the session seeks to identify practical steps and policies that can promote integration, inclusion and stability, with a focus on engaging local entities.

3. TARGET AUDIENCE

Our aim is to reach youth-led CSOs and young people in Europe and Africa, in particular people from the diaspora, who have a genuine interest in African-European relations and want to actively be involved within decision-making processes.



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4. MAIN CONTRIBUTORS

- One Hour for Europe (OHFE) & Youth Intra Dialogue on Europe and Africa (Y-IDEA)
- Youth Core Group (YCG)
- AU/EU representatives
- ICOYACA (AfCFTA Youth Advisory Council)
- BRICS University South Africa SA
- YEW Global

5. AGENDA

***Online**

Time (CEST, CAT)	Topic	Speaker*	Remarks
11:00-11:10	Moderator welcome and intro	Mimi Amaichigh (OHFE/Y-IDEA)	Event background, context and objectives
11:10-12:15	Panel discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>H.E. Prof. Emanuela C. Del Re, EU Special Representative for the Sahel (EUSR Sahel)* - Keynote speaker</i> - <i>Esther Shakela, Trade, Office of the President - Republic of Namibia</i> - <i>Hon. Daniel Obal, Senior Presidential Aide Incharge Youth Affairs - Republic of Uganda, and Global Peace Chain</i> - <i>Mahamadou Almoctar Hassane, Niger Danish Refugee Council</i> - <i>Awa Leye, Development and Cooperation Student, Pan African activist*</i> - <i>Selma Bichbich, Founder of Together for Blue and Green and Co-founder of MENA Youth Network*</i> 	Approx. 10 min each



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12:15-12:30	Q&A		Questions/interactions with the audience (Share code with people on screen for sending recommendations)
12:30-13:00	Recommendations		The speakers on site/moderators help the audience to write recommendations

6. PROMOTION

This event will be promoted by the Y-IDEA & OHFE Social Media Department (posts on Instagram and the Website, email campaign, print material), as well as other organisations involved in the organisation of this event.

7. OUTREACH METHODS

We will reach out to speakers for our event through connections within our organisations first and follow this up by researching other fitting speakers and contacting them through their provided mails. Connect with the youth representatives of the University of Bologna to reach out to the youth diaspora and invite them to the event.

8. POST-EVENT VIEWING

Interesting clips of the webinar will be shared through our social media channels. Use the roll ups to make pictures and share online.

Official hashtags for EYE Forli:

Facebook: Punto Europa di Forli; Instagram: @puntoeuropa; X: @PuntoEuropa;

Official hashtags: #EYEForli | #UseYourVote | #Usaituovoto | #EUelections2024 | #EU2024

<https://www.onehourforeurope.it/en>

https://www.instagram.com/onehourforeurope_it/

<https://www.instagram.com/euroafricayouth/>