



United Nations Association of Germany

Youth Work of the United Nations Association of Germany





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I. About the United Nations Association of Germany (UNA Germany)

1. Overview

The Association

The United Nations Association of Germany - UNA Germany ("Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Vereinten Nationen - DGVN") was founded in 1952. It is a registered, membership-based, not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation. UNA Germany consists of a national chapter as well as regional chapters.



(Members of UNA Regional Chapter Bavaria)



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Aims

According to its constitution UNA Germany strives to inform the German public in an impartial and critical manner of the aims, institutions and activities of the United Nations. It intends to increase interest in and awareness of current events in foreign and development policy, in cultural and world economic policy as well as in international relations and developments in general. UNA Germany encourages debate on these topics. Emphasis also lies on the critical discussion of German UN policy.

Members

In 2007, the UNA had approximately 1.400 members in all, the number of members having risen dramatically over the past three years. The annual membership fee is at € 80 for adults and at € 30 for university students/ persons under 27. In order to prevent young people from leaving the UNA due to financial reasons during their transit period to full employment, UNA members earning less than € 1.000 per month continue to pay a membership fee of € 30 annually. All members receive the two-monthly journal "Vereinte Nationen" (United Nations) and are invited to participate in the lectures, conferences and events.

International Cooperations



UNA Germany is a member of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA). One of the UNA's former board members, Prof. Dr. Klaus Hübner is Honorary President of WFUNA, the UNA's Secretary-General Dr. Beate Wagner is currently Vice-President of WFUNA. Furthermore, UNA Germany regularly participates in networking meetings with other European UNAs.



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2. UNA Germany National Chapter

Board

The board of UNA Germany is elected by the members of the organisation at their biannual General Meeting. Positions are open to all members of UNA Germany. Board members in the past have been Members of Parliament, diplomats and International Law and Politics academics. In 2007 for the first time a university student, formerly active in the UNYA, was elected on the board. Board meetings are held every two months. The board mainly helps the Secretariat plan its activities and makes decisions on behalf of the members of the organisation.

Secretariat/Activities

The National Chapter of the United Nations Association of Germany is seated in Berlin. It is supported by a General Secretariat, made up of 8 regular employees: the Secretary-General, three staff members working on publications and a UN Information and Documentation Centre, two staff members working on events, lectures, conferences, public relations and educational work, and two staff members working on secretarial and bookkeeping matters.

Youth Consultant

Since 2006, the General Secretariat has one Youth Consultant working on a part-time basis (10 to 15 hours a week). As the Youth Consultant is a university student, he or she changes every one or two years. The Youth Consultant coordinates the youth activities of the National Chapter of the UNA, with particular emphasis on the National UN Youth Delegate Programme.

Funding

The National Chapter of UNA Germany is largely funded by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



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3. UNA Germany Regional Chapters

Chapters

There are 8 UNA Regional Chapters, of which 5 were only founded in recent years. The Regional Chapters cover Baden- Württemberg (seated in Stuttgart), Bavaria (seated in Munich), Berlin and Brandenburg (seated in Berlin), Hamburg, Hessen (seated in Frankfurt), North Rhine-Westphalia (seated in Bonn), Osnabrück as well as Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia (seated in Leipzig). The regional branches are likewise membership-based, registered associations.

Boards

The members of each chapter come together at biannual, General Meetings in order to discuss the developments of their organisations and to elect their board members. The board members of Regional chapters are generally younger than the board members of the National Chapter. Some of the member organisations of the United Nations Youth Association Germany (UNYA) are represented on the boards of the UNA Regional Chapters through their presidents or former presidents.

Activities

The activities of the Regional Chapters are mainly conducted by the board members themselves, some boards are supported by a small secretariat. The main activities of the Regional Chapters are UN-related events and lectures, small publications and school or university projects with particular emphasis on Model United Nations.

Funding

Unless projects are conducted in collaboration with the National Chapter, the Regional Chapters largely acquire external funding for their activities.



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II. Youth Activities of UNA Germany (National Chapter)

“The United Nations Association of Germany is highly appreciative of the spirit and hard work of its young members. Our recent youth work has provided the organisation with a new, solid basis of development for decades to come.”

History of Youth Activities

The youth activities of UNA Germany are fairly new to the organisation. Before 2003 the National Chapter of UNA Germany did not engage in youth activities. It is important to note that all of the youth activities taken up since 2003 were started without exception upon the suggestion of young UNA members still at university. Not only were all the organisation's youth activities initiated by young people, they are also carried out by young UNA members themselves.

Support by the UNA Secretariat

The General Secretariat of the UNA provides support where it can, particularly through its Youth Consultant, but the large majority of the youth work relies on young volunteers. In a first step, the young UNA members (or other young people who have not yet formally joined the UNA) usually approach the Secretary-General with a project plan and discuss it with her. Once the Secretary-General has cleared the idea with the National Board they meet again to discuss funding possibilities. Where funding cannot come out of the regular UNA budget, the volunteers and the Youth Consultant cooperate in writing fundraising applications to external foundations. Once funding has been cleared, everyday coordination of the project between the volunteers and the General Secretariat usually runs via the Youth Consultant, important decisions are made in consultation with the Secretary-General.



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*Conrad Marburg, Youth Consultant of
UNA Germany 2007*

Volunteers

While the General Secretariat supports the youth activities within its capacities, the bulk of the projects are carried out by young people for young people. Young volunteers who live in Berlin may use the office of the General Secretariat after hours and on weekends on a case-by-case basis, where they have access to a small conference room, telephones, computers, internet, printers, a photocopying machine and mail services. The board of UNA Germany is very appreciative of the resourcefulness, initiative, and hard work of the young UNA members - the funding and personell capacity of the General Secretariat is not nearly large enough for it to conduct such extensive projects alone. This presentation of UNA Germany's youth activities not only describes the youth projects of the organisation as such, but also makes clear the way in which they were created and are carried out by young volunteers.



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1. The National UN Youth Delegate Programme

"Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline."

(Kofi A. Annan, Former UN Secretary-General)



(Mr. Annan with the Jan Munz and Christina Apel, German Youth Delegates to the United Nations 2006)

UN Youth Delegates

UN Youth Delegates are young people, generally aged between 18 and 25, who represent the interests of the youth of their country at the United Nations, by accompanying their government's delegation to the United Nations for a few weeks each year, where they advise the diplomats on youth issues. Youth Delegate Programmes are not about "simulating" the UN as with Model United Nations conferences, they are about real youth participation in UN decision-making processes. Between 10 and 30 UN Members States send such Youth Delegates to the UN each year, thereby following the recommendation of the biennial General Assembly resolution "Policies and Programmes Involving Youth". While some UN Youth Delegate Programmes are essentially limited to this journey of young people to New York, other Programmes put special emphasis on the "multiplying" function of Youth Delegates before and after their journey. The latter option is the concept adopted in Germany. Before and after their stay in New York, the German Youth Delegates come into contact with a large number of young people all over the country, in order to collect the views and opinions of youth about the current issues on the UN agenda and to inform them about their work.



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Lobbying Process

In 2003, UNA Germany was approached by two of its young members, Kimon Haars and Astrid van der Merwe, who asked the Association to help them in setting up a UN Youth Delegate Programme in Germany. The board wished to overcome its lack of youth work and was happy to take up the proposal. With the help of the two young UNA members, the German National Committee on International Youth Work and the Federal Parliament, UNA Germany engaged in a 18-month lobbying process at the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs. Together, they managed to convince the ministries to agree to including two Youth Delegates on their National Delegation to the UN General Assembly.

Patrons and Coordination

UNA Germany and the German National Committee on International Youth Work (representing the National Youth Council and the Youth Organisations of the Political Parties) subsequently became joint patrons of the Programme, which started with the 60th General Assembly in 2005. The two young UNA members who had accompanied the lobbying process set up the "Youth Delegate Team", a team of university students supporting the Youth Delegates with regard to research, fundraising and public relations. Most importantly though, the Youth Delegate Team began to coordinate the National Tour of the Youth Delegates, allowing them to speak to thousands of young Germans before and after their stay in New York. Ever since, the Youth Delegate Programme has been run by this team of young volunteers, which recruits itself annually from students of Berlin universities. Since 2006 UNA Germany employs a Youth Consultant who supports the Youth Delegate Team with regard to fundraising and coordination of the programme between the patrons, the relevant ministries and the Federal Parliament.



(Youth Delegate Team 2007)



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Selection Process

The two patrons of the programme, UNA Germany and the German National Committee on International Youth Work, advertise the two Youth Delegate positions nationally at the beginning of each year. In the past years, they have received up to 130 applications from young people all across Germany. Formal application requirements are age 18 - 24, German citizenship, good English skills, the willingness and ability to spend between 20 and 40 hours a week on the position for the duration of one year, and experience in general youth work and in UN youth projects. Political affiliations have no relevance.

The selection process entails a written selection procedure, telephone interviews, an assesment centre and personal interviews. The selection committee is made up of the former Youth Delegates, the Youth Consultant and the Secretary-General of UNA Germany, the Youth Delegate Team, members of the United Nations Youth Association Germany (UNYA), members of the German National Committee on International Youth Work and representatives of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs. The selection committee takes into account gender disparity and, among those candidates who fulfil all the requirements, aims at selecting the Youth Delegates according to their personality, as they must be fit both to deal with a great number of young people as well as diplomats.

National Tour of the Youth Delegates

After having been selected in the beginning of the year, the Youth Delegates go on a National Tour through Germany. They come into contact with thousands of young people all over their country in order to discuss with them the current issues on the UN agenda. They collect the views and opinions of young people at youth conferences, youth meetings, seminars, panel discussions, youth campaigns, exhibitions, political events etc. They visit schools, universities and youth organisations.

The National Tour is a very successful tool in improving the public image of the UN, if one considers the great amount of young people across Germany that are inspired to become interested in the UN each year. When the young people realise that what they say will actually be heard through the voice of the Youth Delegates at the United Nations, they become very much interested in international politics. Next to Model United Nations conferences, a national UN Youth Delegate Programme which includes a National Tour is a wonderful opportunity to involve young people of all ages, social and cultural backgrounds and diversities in UN matters. The National Tour has been successful particularly in targeting young people who would not usually have the opportunity or would not take the initiative to participate in Model UN conferences.



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Organising the National Tour entails a lot of coordination effort on the part of the young volunteers. With the help of the German National Committee on International Youth Work and the National Youth Council, which represents 80 % of all German youth, the Youth Delegates and their team have managed to build up lasting contacts with a great number of formal and informal youth organisations across the country. While it took two to three years to set up sustainable cooperations with these youth organisations, the effort has proved highly rewarding. While initially the concept of "UN Youth Delegates" was new to the youth organisations, more and more youth organisations now want to become involved in the Programme and are including invitations to the UN Youth Delegates into their annual agendas. This makes the coordination of the National Tour easier by the year. The youth organisations are very valuable partners to the programme in that they are important multipliers - they represent a large portion of German youth. Through the channels of the youth organisations the Youth Delegates are able to reach thousands of young Germans each year. For most of these young people the National Tour is actually the first opportunity to take an active interest in the United Nations. The merits of involving young people directly in UN decision-making processes can really not be overestimated.



(Christina Apel, Youth Delegate 2006, listening to the wishes and concerns of young people at a Tour Stop in Leipzig)



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During the first programme year the Youth Delegate Team realised that while the formal youth organisations hosting some the tour stops were joined up in the National Youth Council, such a network was lacking for the great number of UN university clubs and Model United Nations Initiatives existing everywhere in Germany. This made an involvement of these UN youth initiatives in the National Tour difficult. In the second programme year, the Youth Delegate Team thus worked with other UN-enthusiastic young people across the country, joining up the diverse UN youth societies and setting up the United Nations Youth Association Germany (UNYA Germany). This proved a fruitful idea- since its inception in Winter 2005, UNYA Germany has, among other projects, successfully begun to organise some of the tour stops on the National Tour of the Youth Delegates.



List of demands, which young tour participants wish to bring before the United Nations through their UN Youth Delegates



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Press Work

The patrons of the Youth Delegate Programme have been surprised time and again by the high and ever increasing degree of press coverage on the local, regional and national level. While the host organisations of tour stops on the National Tour arrange for local press coverage, the Youth Delegate Team focuses on arranging interviews with newspapers, radio and television stations on the regional and national level. The Youth Delegate Team makes specific use of the World Youth Day, the launch of the UN World Youth Reports, different thematic "UN Days", national and international events, UN summits as well as peak times within the Programme in order to issue press releases and get into contact with press representatives on all levels. The team has been highly successful in drawing attention to the Youth Delegate Programme, thereby making it publicly known across the country. Also, the ever rising press coverage makes the work easier by the year in that representatives of the press have started to approach the team out of their own initiative.



(Press Interview with Jan Munz, UN Youth Delegate 2006)



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At the UN General Assembly

After their preparation period of up to 10 months the German Youth Delegates accompany their government's delegation to the UN General Assembly in New York for up to three weeks, generally in October. As part of the delegation they receive diplomats' passes from the German Permanent Mission to the UN to enter the UN building, where they are allowed to access even restricted areas. Since 2006 the German Youth Delegates have been allowed to hold a speech in front of the third committee of the UN General Assembly on behalf of the German youth. Furthermore, they participate in writing an amending the "Resolution on Policies and Programmes Involving Youth", which is passed every two years by the General Assembly. The Youth Delegates generally advise the diplomats of the German Permanent Mission to the UN on the youth point of view on all sorts of matters. Together with the Youth Delegates of other countries they write "youth newsletters" which they distribute to the diplomats of the UN Member States. They make appointments with UN employees, NGO representatives and diplomats of foreign countries. They organise so-called "side-events", where they invite diplomats and inform them about the situation of young people pertaining to different issues each year. Oftentimes the Youth Delegates are invited to receptions of the Permanent Missions, where they have the opportunity to speak to foreign diplomats about their concerns.



(Jonathan Mack, UN Youth Delegate 2007, holding his speech in front of the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly)



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Follow-Up Activities

After returning from New York the Youth Delegates attend conferences and meetings so as to speak to young people in Germany about their experiences and their successes. Next to other organisations, UNA Germany gives the Youth Delegates a forum at its annual UN Youth Conference. Furthermore, the Youth Delegates meet civil servants, youth activists, NGOs, heads of youth organisations, parliamentarians and local politicians. They speak to the press about the current trends in youth policy at the United Nations. They write reports for Ministries, NGOs and youth organisations. They attend follow-up meetings with the Youth Delegates from other European countries.

Since 2006 the German Youth Delegates have the opportunity to travel to New York a second time to attend the ECOSOC Commission for Social Development in February of the following year. This is done, because many of the resolutions relevant to youth are first introduced at this commission in February of each year, before being dealt with again at the General Assembly in autumn. By attending this first introduction of relevant resolutions, the Youth Delegates can lobby in the right direction and thus prepare the work of the next Youth Delegates, who will deal with these documents in October of the same year. Once the new Youth Delegates have been selected, the old Youth Delegates hand over their positions by conducting extensive trainings and seminars for the newcomers. Even after handing over, they are still available to the new Youth Delegates for telephone conferences and meetings, whenever questions or problems arise.

Funding

The German Youth Delegate Programme is funded by the two patrons of the programme, UNA Germany and the German National Committee on International Youth Work, as well as the Federal Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs and the Robert Bosch Foundation.



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2. Annual UN Youth Conference

The idea of organising a two-day UN Youth Conference first arose in the context of the German Youth Delegate Programme in 2006. UNA Germany wished to give the two Youth Delegates a forum to speak to young people from all over Germany about their experiences when returning from New York. One of the member organisations of UNYA Germany, Bonn International Model United Nations, offered to host the conference. Funding was acquired externally from the State of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Robert Bosch Foundation. While developing the concept of the first conference in 2006, the Youth Delegate Team and members of the United Nations Youth Association Germany (UNYA Germany) proposed that the objective of the conference be two-fold: next to the report of the Youth Delegates, they organised several workshops, dealing with different issues on the UN agenda and encouraging the young participants to start own UN youth projects when returning home from the conference.



One of the outcomes of the conference was a handbook "Chairing Model United Nations" which the UNA published in collaboration with the UNYA. After the first conference with 120 young participants from all over Germany proved very successful in the first year, the National Board of UNA Germany decided to organise such a UN Youth Conference annually. The design of the working groups is to be left open to new suggestions and creative ideas from young UNA members every year. For example, in the case of the 2008 conference UNA Germany took up the suggestion of young UNA members to open one of the workshops to European and international participants, who are to use it as a constitutive meeting to a new, international UN students' project, the Making Commitments Matter Initiative.



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3. Making Commitments Matter Initiative- An Initiative to Implement UN Agreements

In the beginning of 2007 UNA Germany was approached by some of its young members who wanted to bring into being a students' initiative, working across countries towards a better implementation of UN agreements. Over a period of 18 months the students' initiative, entitled Making Commitments Matter Initiative, is to come up with creative ways of helping civil society actors all over the world to hold their governments to their international promises. UNA Germany agreed to host the constitutive conference of the Initiative together with UNYA Germany, as part of its Annual UN Youth Conference 2008. From September to December 2007 young members of UNA Germany conducted a selection procedure and came up with a team of approximately 30 young university and PhD students from 20 different countries- 17 European countries, Australia, Tanzania and the USA.

In preparation of the constitutive conference, UNA Germany put three questions to the Initiative to consider: (1) To which extent is the hypothesis of a "missing information link" between the UN and civil society, put forward by young members of UNA Germany, correct? (2) How could such an information gap be closed? If an analysis of UN agreements were to be written for the use of NGOs, what should this analysis look like, considering the needs of the large variety of civil society actors? (3) Who, or more specifically, which institution(s) would be most suitable for writing such an analysis and how can they be convinced to assume this task? UNA Germany suggested that the Initiative deliberate these questions at their constitutive conference and that they come up with a specific course of action, which sets out to answer them over a period of 18 months.

The UNA asked a team of four people to coordinate the preparation efforts of the Initiative via telephone conferences, online chats and electronic group discussions. Furthermore, it helped its young members design a UN distance-learning course with the aim of ensuring a similar basic level of UN knowledge among the participants of the constitutive conference.

While UNA Germany will leave all decisions to the Initiative at its constitutive conference, it is very much looking forward to seeing its youthful creativity unfold and is more than willing to support the Initiative in any way it can. The UNA has already decided to support the two selected German members of the Initiative by providing them with contacts and help them with fundraising applications to external foundations in order to cover their communication and travel costs. Should members of the future coordination team of the Initiative come from within UNA Germany, the organisation will support them likewise.



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4. Involvement of UNA Germany in WFUNA-Youth



"If we are not able to find some way to relate to the new generation, help them understand the vital role that the UN plays in the world then we are going to fail to keep the UNAs surviving."

(Ambassador William Luers, President of UNA USA on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of WFUNA)

One of the young members of UNA Germany, Kimon Haars, was involved in the inception of the World Federation of United Nations Associations-Youth (WFUNA-Youth) as of its first Plenary Meeting that took place in Barcelona, Spain 2003. Mr. Haars subsequently served as Acting Head Coordinator of the Federation until the next General Meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2006, where he successfully facilitated negotiation of an amendment to the WFUNA constitution, which made WFUNA-Youth an integral part of WFUNA. Since 2006 the newly-founded United Nations Youth Association Germany has been accorded full powers by the UNA to participate in WFUNA-Youth as the official German UN Youth Association. The representative of UNYA Germany at the Plenary Meeting in Buenos Aires, Dania Röpke, was elected member of the Coordinating Committee of WFUNA-Youth until 2009.



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5. Agreement of Cooperation with UNYA Germany

While young UNA members were very much involved in setting up the United Nations Youth Association Germany (UNYA) in 2005, it is an organisation established in its own right and independent of the UNA. Following negotiations with the spokespersons of the UNYA in summer and autumn 2007, UNA Germany signed an Agreement of Cooperation with UNYA Germany at the biannual General Meeting of the UNA on 08 December 2008 in Leipzig, Germany.



(Signature of the Agreement of Cooperation in Leipzig. From left to right: Prof. Dr. Bruha, National President of UNA Germany, Lars Dudeck and Christian Stock, spokespersons of UNYA Germany)



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III. Contacts and Website of UNA Germany

UNA Germany is more than willing to provide other UNAs and UNYAs or interested individuals with more information about its youth activities. The contact details are as follows:

Youth Activity	Contact Person
Creation of the UN Youth Delegate Programme	Astrid van der Merwe, co-founder of the programme and youngest member of the National UNA Board: astrid.vandermerwe@un-commitments.org
Current running of the UN Youth Delegate Programme	Elias Michaels, Head of the Youth Delegate Team: team@jugenddelegierte.de
UN Youth Conference	Conrad Marburg, Youth Consultant of UNA Germany: Jugendreferat@dgvn.de
German Involvement in the Making Commitments Matter Initiative	Andreas Kehrbach and Marian Sutholt, German representatives of the Initiative germany@un-commitments.org
German Involvement in WFUNA-Youth	Working Group "International Cooperations" of UNYA Germany: ag-internationales@junges-uno-netzwerk.de
Agreement of Cooperation with UNYA Germany	Astrid van der Merwe, co-founder of the UNYA and youngest member of the National UNA Board: astrid.vandermerwe@un-commitments.org



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Should you ever experience difficulties in reaching any of the contact person please get in touch with the Youth Consultant of UNA Germany via jugendreferat@dgvn.de or at +49-30-259375-26, who will then forward your request.

The English website of UNA Germany can be found at <http://www.dgvn.de/una-germany.html>