

## MIJARC Europe's Specific Objectives 2022-2025

*Adopted by the Orientation General Assembly 17-18 July 2021*

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### Introduction

MIJARC Europe is a coordination network of rural and Christian youth organisations in Europe. The organisations and movement which are part of our network are active either at local or national level and they are led *by, for* and *with* rural youth.

This document aims to define the objectives that MIJARC Europe would like to realize between 2022 and 2025. This paper should guide and explain how we intend to achieve these goals.

### Thematic Focus Points

#### **Thematic Focus Point 1: Together Against Discrimination**

As a network that connects numerous countries, we are aware of our responsibility to lead by example through the promotion and implementation of ethical behaviour. We consider non-discrimination to be a necessary element for the creation of a solid foundation within any collective process, no matter the field of activity. This is the reason why we as MIJARC Europe do not accept racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and any other form of group-based discrimination and structuralized hate. We ask that our member organisations make no exception in this regard.

In order to have a functional and durable network, we need to follow a non-discriminative methodology. We aim to transfer this practice to our youngsters and to everybody else who considers MIJARC Europe to be an inspiration.

Steps are being made in this regard, as evidenced by the endorsement of various laws and regulations by countries globally. We consider their efforts to be essential in the creation of an inclusive future for our youngsters. Therefore, we value any such initiatives and actions. Youngsters from all over the world should be supported in their endeavours to shape the future. This signifies that any discriminative behaviour will be detrimental for the motivation of young people. This is the reason why we as a Christian youth organisation do not accept any form of group-based discrimination and structuralized hate in society, politics and church. We as MIJARC Europe make no

exception in this regard and expect our member organisations to follow this example. This should be our principal mentality and should go beyond a mere policy on paper. We are a network that highly value inner democracy, with the involvement and participation of all its members.

We as MIJARC Europe want to set a good example by being an organisation that is reflective of all the potential barriers youngsters may face when attempting to fully participate within our structures and/or events. We are aiming to be as open and accessible as possible.

### **Thematic Focus Point 2: Our Vision for the Future of Europe**

We as MIJARC Europe want to support and sustain our goals that help to connect youngsters across borders. We also want to deal with the future of Europe itself. We wish for a Europe that strengthens rural areas, protects and develops civic spaces, promotes a pluralistic democracy, and enables religious openness and dialogue. We want to promote an ecologically and socially sustainable Europe that is desirable for youth generations. To make Europe more attractive for young people we need to talk about ecology, climate, agriculture, human rights and supply chains.

As a vibrant tapestry of lives and landscapes, Europe's rural areas provide us with food, homes, jobs, and essential ecosystem services. To ensure that rural areas can continue to play these essential roles, MIJARC Europe places the youth at the heart of our organisation. The youth are the main players when it comes to keeping the rural areas alive. We are trying to ensure a better future for both the youngsters and the rural areas by connecting young people with stronger, more resilient, and prosperous rural communities.

MIJARC Europe further motivates public authorities and stakeholders to act on the needs and aspirations of rural residents. Through the creation of new opportunities, we aim to attract innovative businesses, provide access to quality jobs, promote new and improved skills, ensure better infrastructure and services, and leverage the role of sustainable agriculture and diversified economic activities.

We strive to strengthen and clarify our main postulates – that is, how to motivate youngsters and organise ourselves to ensure the development of rural areas – by continuing our cooperative work with EU organisations, organising both online and offline educational activities, and taking part in discussions concerning the future of Europe. By focusing our attention towards current and important topics within the EU, we as an international organisation aim to highlight the issues that are of great importance.

To revitalize a pluralistic democracy, we believe that it is crucial for the youth to remain well informed. By continuing to work under regular conditions, as well as adapting our work to best fit the Covid-19 pandemic (such as through the delivery of online activities), we hope to empower young people to raise their voices and act to change the circumstances of their regions.

Moreover, we envision a world where young people from different denominations and religions can engage in open and respectful dialogue. We at MIJARC Europe want to highlight solidarity, understanding, and comprehension between the different branches of Christianity and other religions. In order to avoid violence and harassment between different denominations, we are ensuring that our goals and foci revolve around the idea of a Europe that is free from the constraining borders of religion. By taking Christian values into consideration, we are striving to raise awareness about these issues by facilitating intercultural exchanges, seminars, and many knowledge-enhancing opportunities in a sustainable and culturally sensitive manner.

### **Thematic Focus Point 3: Claiming Youth Rights**

As an international youth association, MIJARC Europe strongly supports the rights of young people across the whole of Europe. Indisputably, many young people across Europe are being denied their rights that they are entitled to. Young people often face barriers when it comes to education, social protection or attractive and secure jobs. Though human rights are universal and should be applicable to all, young people are oftentimes denied such rights.<sup>1</sup> This situation affects young people from rural areas in particular. These youngsters are also oftentimes structurally disadvantaged and politically unsupported compared to those living in urban areas.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation for young people has worsened even more. The report of the European Youth Forum titled "Beyond Lockdown: the 'Pandemic Scar' on Young People" proves that the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to many short-term disadvantages, also threatens to have negative medium- and long-term impacts on the social and economic situation of the youth and their overall well-being. The report also shows that intersectionality<sup>2</sup> plays a major role: young

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://tools.youthforum.org/youth-rights-info-tool/human-rights-and-young-people/human-105-rights-and-young-people> (last accessed on: 15.07.2021)

<sup>2</sup> Intersectionality means that social categories such as origin, gender, physical affiliation, class and others cannot be viewed in isolation from one another in order to understand the background of social inequality. It is much more about the interweavings and intersections of several categories (intersections) with social structures and relations in economy, politics, culture. The focus of the intersectionality concept is power, domination and norming relations that (re)produce social structures, practices and identities.

people from marginalized backgrounds are particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

MIJARC Europe is particularly committed towards strengthening and empowering young people in their endeavours to (re)claim their rights. Our advocacy work enables us to stand up for youth rights, show youngsters of the rights that they are entitled to, and ultimately allow them to demand such rights from decision-makers. Through this we also wish to highlight the social factors and ways in which young people in particular are structurally disadvantaged. There are many youngsters who face high barriers due to group-based structural disadvantages. This is a situation that we as MIJARC Europe cannot accept. We are therefore demanding equal rights for everyone. Within the framework of our events, trainings, and meetings, we are setting goals to empower young people from marginalized groups and to sensitize youngsters from our member countries to support disadvantaged groups and to view them as allies.

Intergenerational justice is equally as important for our organisation. Young people have the right to grow up and live in a healthy and biodiverse environment. Therefore, the effects of the climate catastrophe have had an extremely devastating impact on the living conditions of young and future generations. We as MIJARC Europe strongly demand this right on behalf of all young people. We also call on politicians and decision-makers to adopt measures and take actions that truly and effectively protect the environment.

We want to work with our committed young participants and youth leaders to develop and implement campaigns and projects that enable us to stand together in our support for youth rights. We further want to point out to legislators and decision-makers in the fields of politics, religion, and society in general that every decision, regardless of the issue, has or can have a major impact on the lives of young people. Therefore, our position is very clear: every policy is a youth policy.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://www.youthforum.org/introducing-our-new-report-beyond-lockdown-pandemic-scar> 107 young-people (last accessed on: 15.07.2021)

## Operational Objectives of MIJARC Europe

### **Operational Focus Point 1: Development and Continuous Growth of MIJARC Europe for and with its Member Organisations**

The success of organisations and networks continue to rely upon internal and external developments. Considering the importance of boosting community development throughout Europe, we at MIJARC Europe strive to enhance the capacities of our member organisations by strengthening their positions in their communities and fostering their professionalism in the field of youth work. As one of the largest international youth networks in Europe, we aim to provide external development opportunities for our member organisations by sharing our networks, resources, and expertise.

The internal development of MIJARC Europe is also bolstered by the strong and sustainable ties between our members. We are therefore in the process of developing a better communication strategy to deliver greater opportunities for our member organisations and to provide them with a common space for collaborative work. Moreover, we aim to connect our member organisations to empower them by working together.

For the time to come, MIJARC Europe will aim to expand its scopes of membership by engaging relevant and experienced rural youth organisations into the network, with a particular focus on Northern Europe.

Last but not least, MIJARC Europe's Staff and Secretariat will ensure the success of the network's internal and external developments thanks to their huge investments in project proposal development, communication with member organisations and partner networks, and provision of necessary resources within the network.

Taking this point into consideration, we will also promote the personal and professional development of our member organisations by providing their young members with an opportunity to join any of MIJARC Europe's Commissions.<sup>4</sup> They aim to gather youth experts from different areas, while remaining relevant to MIJARC Europe's main activity field areas and supporting the whole network.

Additionally, during the strategic cycle 2022-2025, the Commissions will continue to have a relevant

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<sup>4</sup> In 2021 MIJARC Europe has three active commissions: 1) Commission on agriculture and rural youth, 2) Commission on peace and living an interconnected world, 3) Commission on citizenship and youth participation

and responsible role to contribute to the success of MIJARC Europe. At the same time, it should be continuously evaluated whether the thematic focus points of the current Commissions are still relevant. By decision of the General Assembly, the thematic focus of a Commission can be both confirmed and changed.

### **Operational Focus Point 2: Communication**

External communication is an essential part in the functioning of our organisation. By being active on our different social media channels, we are keeping in contact with young members from all our member organisations. We believe that this is the best way we can bring new participants into our activities.

Some young members may be hesitant to join MIJARC Europe activities because of the belief that our events are only reserved for experienced people. We want to clarify what it means to be involved in our activities so that these young people can understand that they are more than welcome and capable to join.

The visuals and information we are going to bring into our social media accounts will need to be shared to our member organisations across their communication channels. That is why we also need to strengthen our internal communications with the different member organisations, especially with the European Coordinators. We will need to better understand the best way to reach young people for each organisation.

### **Operational Focus Point 3: Financial Resources**

Thanks to our Secretariat, MIJARC Europe is applying for grants provided by the European Union and the Council of Europe every year. MIJARC Europe mostly functions thanks to these grants. However, we should not rely on them exclusively. As we need to apply regularly for these grants, we cannot guarantee that our applications will be systematically retained.

By taking part in projects, we are able to access other financial resources. However, these project-based financial resources do not fully cover all MIJARC Europe's operational costs.

To stabilize our financial situation, we should try to find alternative financial resources. Diversifying the sources of our incomes will allow us to not depend exclusively on one resource. We will build a financial strategy that will focus on identifying donors, sponsors or any other contributors that are aligned with the values of MIJARC Europe.

Ideally, we also want to create financial reserves to at least cover our functioning costs. This is in case we encounter difficulties with the grants that we have previously applied to.