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Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Young people and artificial intelligence in serious dialogue

The World Youth Forum concluded dual summits in Hong Kong and Macau in mid-August, with programmes combining business, technology and social sciences.

According to the organisers, almost a thousand young people from fifteen countries and regions took part.

The event was divided into the Future Economics Leadership Summit in Hong Kong and the Future Liberal Arts Leadership Summit in Macau.

The thematic focus was on robotisation and the relationship between technology and humanities.

The programme included competitions and academic activities, such as the National Economics Challenge, Business Professionals of America, and the International Academic Decathlon, as well as an exhibition segment, the Global Youth Creative Expo.

The forum also had a U20 Youth Voice session, which featured cross-national teams such as China and India and the United States and South Korea, as well as an accompanying seminar for teachers.

There are reasons why this should not be considered just another generic youth event.

The formats and partnerships illustrate the ambition to connect young people with real steps towards the labour market and public policy.

The inclusion of economic and business competitions provides a degree of knowledge, and the humanities line opens up space for discussions about the values and social consequences of technology.

This moves from the domain of promotional panel discussions to a framework for learning skills, solving problems, and building coordination between schools, universities, and industries.

The very fact that the meetings took place in two countries with different legal frameworks adds to the logistical and organisational complexity, but it also contributes to the international nature of the forum.

A permanent channel for exchange

The World Youth Forum is neither a United Nations platform nor an official intergovernmental format. It is an independent, cross-sectoral platform, a forum that brings together partners from education and industry, with the aim of expanding the network in the coming years.

In their announcements, the organisers stated that they want to include more than a hundred countries in the partnership structure by 2030.

This is important because it shows the intention for the forum to develop into a permanent channel for exchange between young people and actors in the knowledge market.

In the European Union, there is a phased timetable for obligations under the AI Act.

> Educational institutions and young entrepreneurs are already encountering regulatory realities that shape the development of teams, companies, and projects

The obligations for general-purpose model providers came into force on 2 August 2025.

The European Commission has also published guidelines clarifying the implementation of these obligations. In July, it confirmed that there will be no delays to the deadlines, despite industry demands.

The entire regulation will be gradually extended to more complex risk categories in 2026 and 2027.

This implies that educational institutions and young entrepreneurs are already encountering regulatory realities that shape the development of teams, companies, and projects.

Expanding the network

In this context, the dual structure of the forum makes sense. The business section, with competitions such as the National Economics Challenge, introduces young people to measuring knowledge in micro- and macroeconomics, investment decisions and market simulations.

At the same time, the humanities series raises the question of the ethical limits and social consequences of automation.

When these subjects are combined, there will be a generation that understands how to write a business plan and how to shape the responsible use of technology.

This is precisely what is missing in most public discussions about artificial intelligence, where the labour market is considered separately from issues of rights, culture and trust.

The geography of the event carries an additional message. Hong Kong and Macau occupy a different place in Asia's education and research landscape.

Hong Kong is strongly associated with universities, which are highly ranked in the fields of engineering and computer science, and has a well-developed financial infrastructure.

Macau traditionally has a distinct profile that emphasises its cultural and tourism identity.

The combination of these environments fosters the notion that one cannot separate technical knowledge from cultural policy.

The organisers announced their intention to expand the network and reach more than a hundred countries by the end of the decade

The focus on robotisation in one environment and the relationship between technology and the humanities in another follows this logic, providing a real laboratory for interdisciplinary work.

For business and public policy, the sustainability test is crucial. The organisers announced their intention to expand the network and reach more than a hundred countries by the end of the decade.

The feasibility of such plans depends on three things. Firstly, the success of these plans hinges on the quality of partnerships with reputable institutions, as this is the only way to establish credibility and gain access to financiers and universities.

Secondly, a clear shift from forums to collaborative teams persists even after the conference room closes.

Thirdly, assessing the results of projects that shift from a competitive setting to commercial or public initiatives.

The Forum can serve as a link between classrooms and research labs if it successfully passes this triple test. If not, it will continue to function as a networking event without significant external influence.

Avoiding the gap between education and regulation

In Europe, the next year will determine the pace at which schools and universities adapt teaching to new obligations and guidelines.

A voluntary code of conduct for general-purpose AI models, which the Commission has supported as a transitional tool for

harmonisation, will also play a role.

Familiarising young people with the obligations of data transparency and safety assessment will avoid the gap between education and regulation.

This is the context in which events such as the World Youth Forum take on added value, because they introduce the generations that will immediately work in an environment with clear rules and responsibilities after 2026 and 2027.

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The ITU (International Telecommunication Union) connects stakeholders from governments, academia and industry through the AI for Good platform, with the support of numerous United Nations organisations.

It is the framework in which solutions for health, climate and infrastructure are tested.

The value of forums such as those in Hong Kong and Macau will be greater if the results and teams are fed into these global channels and appear in public consultations on national AI plans.

Realistic expectations and risks

What are the realistic expectations for the coming period? First of all, the organisers will certainly try to standardise the U20 Youth Voice in a permanent format that works between meetings.

If they manage to attract a network of mentors from universities and companies and keep the teams together through online modules and joint projects, there is a chance to create an interregional network of students working on real tasks with clear deadlines and measurable results.

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Secondly, partnerships with business and technology competitions are likely to expand, as they provide identifiable metrics and facilitate selection.

Third, consolidation of collaboration with teachers and headmasters through seminars and curriculum sharing is expected, as this is the way to multiply results without dramatically increasing costs.

Simultaneously, there are also potential risks involved. Over-reliance on corporate sponsors without clear conflict of interest rules can undermine the forum's reputation.

Another risk is the overcentralisation of decision-making in relation to local schools and universities, which understand their own needs. The third risk is the limited transparency in the criteria for selecting participants and mentors.

If these risks are not mitigated, there will be a gap between aspiration and trust. Responding to these risks with rules, reporting, and open invitations enhances credibility and accelerates the expansion of partnerships.

Where the real performance will be measured

From September on, it will become evident whether the teams' permanent work materialises, whether schools and universities adopt teaching modules, and whether the forum's alumni networks begin to implement projects that can be measured in terms of revenue, grants, or adoption in public policy.

If this happens, there will be a model that combines three levels. Young people will have the opportunity to get out of the classroom and engage with real-world problems.

As AI law introduces obligations and codes of conduct, schools and universities need to be quicker to link teaching to industry standards and responsibilities

Educational institutions will form partnerships that help modernise teaching without incurring huge additional costs.

Business will get an early insight into the talent and issues coming out of classrooms and laboratories.

Then, events like the World Youth Forum are no longer just annual gatherings but become training grounds for learning and working throughout the year.

There is another lesson here for Europe. As AI law introduces obligations and codes of conduct, schools and universities need to be quicker to link teaching to industry standards and responsibilities.

If forums linking business, technology and the humanities are positioned as an introduction to this practice, half the work is already done.

The rest of the work is in the hands of those who will translate the competition results into prototypes, spin-off companies, research projects, and public programmes. This is where the real performance will be measured.