



## **NYELENI EUROPE and CENTRAL ASIA FOOD SOVEREIGNTY NETWORK**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, DEFINITION, GOAL, POLITICAL RESPONSE, MEMBERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

#### **BACKGROUND / HISTORY**

The concept of Food Sovereignty was first discussed and defined at La Via Campesina's 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference held in Tlaxcala, Mexico in April 1996, as an international reaction of social movements to the policies imposed by neoliberalism and the subsequent loss of associated rights to land and territories, oceans and small-scale food production.

It was developed as an alternative to the "food security" food system model imposed by national and international governing bodies. According to LVC, "Food sovereignty prioritizes local food production and consumption. It gives a country the right to protect its local producers from cheap imports and to control production. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not of the corporate sector." Since then, food sovereignty has emerged and launched a major global movement, comprised of food producers, women, youth and consumers as well as activists, policymakers, practitioners, academics, scientists and citizens for changing the dominant global food and agricultural system for the better.

In 1996, prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> World Food Summit, an international committee was brought together, in order to organize the Forum of Non Governmental/Civil Society organizations in advance of that summit. This space was named the International Steering Committee (ISC). A series of debates were held before and during the Forum, in the context of which the outcry for Food Sovereignty was raised, marking the first time La Via Campesina International engaged in such spaces.

From that moment on, the ISC began making strides hand in hand with the advancement of Food Sovereignty, which, in turn, played a key role in the criticism and mobilization against neoliberal policies and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle, Cancun and Hong Kong, as well as in actions against Free Trade Agreements, transnational corporations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Food Summit in 2002 in Rome, the ISC officially became the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) in 2003, made up of 11 global and 8 regional organisations; more than 6000 organizations of peasants, artisanal fisherfolk, family farmers, agricultural workers, Indigenous Peoples, consumers, environmental networks and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The IPC serves as a space of articulation, to spread information and build capacities around issues regarding Food Sovereignty. It opens spaces for dialogue, creating alliance and synergy between NGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs) and social movements, and facilitates the dialogue of civil society with different institutions and governments.



Following the IPC's formation over the course of a decade, civil society continued in a process of mobilization and broadening of alliances around Food Sovereignty, and held the first worldwide Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Forum between February 23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, 2007, in Selingue, Mali. The Forum was named Nyéléni as a tribute to a legendary peasant woman from Mali, Nyéléni, who grew crops and fed her people well. She embodied food sovereignty through hard work, innovation and caring for her people. In this event, 500 representatives from over 80 countries from all social sectors reaffirmed that every country, nation and people require Food Sovereignty policies whereby food is enshrined as a basic human right, with governments and civil society held responsible for achieving it. Together they defined the 6 principles of Food Sovereignty:

1. Focuses on food for people
2. Values food providers
3. Localises food systems
4. Puts control locally
5. Builds knowledge and skills
6. Works with nature

This event sparked other national and international food sovereignty forums. At this event, the [first international Declaration of Food Sovereignty](#) was written.

In Europe, four years later in 2011, the First Nyéléni Europe Forum for Food Sovereignty was held in Krems, Austria. This forum brought together existing European food sovereignty initiatives and aimed to regionalise and strengthen the dynamics of the International Forum for Food Sovereignty. It brought together over 400 people from 35 countries and over 250 organizations were represented. A European Food Sovereignty Declaration was one important outcome of the Forum and was approved consensually by the participants. The declaration has been translated into 16 languages and has served as the framework of the Nyéléni Europe Food Sovereignty Movement for years. You can find it here: <https://nyelenieurope.net/publications/nyeleni-europe-declaration-2011>

Five years later, the 2nd Nyéléni Europe Forum for Food Sovereignty took place in Cluj-Napoca, Romania between 26<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> October 2016. The Forum gathered over 500 delegates from 43 countries, from the Urals and Caucasus, and from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, representing 290 civil society organizations of peasants, fishers, pastoralists, indigenous people, consumers, trade unions, environmental justice, solidarity, and human rights organizations, community-based food movements, journalists, and researchers working for food sovereignty in Europe and Central Asia at different levels. The aim of the forum was to share experiences, build on our common understanding of food sovereignty, share ideas for powerful joint actions, discuss strategies to relocalize Europe's food systems, and explore how to influence key policies in Europe. The gathering was an important stepping stone for building a strong food sovereignty movement in Europe, especially in Eastern Europe, as well as in several other European countries where no food sovereignty platforms previously existed. The forum was also a first step towards structuring the European movement and giving it visibility through the planning of shared actions.



You can download the Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Nyéléni Europe and Central Asia Forum here: [http://nyelenieurope.net/sites/default/files/201704/Nyeleni%20Europe%20Report%202016\\_web.pdf](http://nyelenieurope.net/sites/default/files/201704/Nyeleni%20Europe%20Report%202016_web.pdf)

In between these historic events and since then, food sovereignty has played an increasingly important role in debates about the social and environmental impacts of the industrial food system and alternatives to neoliberal policies. Food sovereignty puts agricultural producers and consumers at the center of the debate, and supports all peoples in their right to produce their own food, despite international market conditions, to consume local food and to sustain traditional and culturally appropriate food.

### **WHO WE ARE**

We are a political and social alliance of grassroots, community based movements and organizations, representing small-scale food producers: *peasants/small farmers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, small-scale fisher people, agriculture and food workers*; and supporting constituencies, such as urban poor; rural and urban women's and youth organisations; consumers, environmental, justice, solidarity, human rights organizations; community-based food movements, which politically respect the 6 principles of Food Sovereignty as agreed at the First Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Forum and sign up to the Nyéléni Europe Declaration from 2011.

We recognize that the political leadership should be in the hands of the social movement constituencies, in particular small-scale food producers, who are right-holders and the most affected by agriculture and food-related policies and unsustainable food systems.

Supporting constituencies work in collaboration with social movement constituencies and support them in addressing political issues, developing strategies, actions and campaigns that involve the whole Nyéléni movement.

### **HOW WE WORK**

We facilitate the processes of the Food Sovereignty movement and represent the above mentioned IPC network at Europe and Central Asia level. We are organized under the principles of autonomy aiming to advance the Food Sovereignty agenda in the Region and to connect it to the global Food Sovereignty movement. We jointly develop strategies, advocacy and mobilization work for this entire region.



## WHERE WE WORK and WHAT WE WORK ON

1. **PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION:** Changing how food is produced and consumed with specific focus on small-scale, localized, sustainable and agroecological food systems;
2. **DISTRIBUTION:** Changing how food is distributed to guarantee short supply chains and the re-establishment and the strengthening of territorial markets;
3. **WORK AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS:** Valuing work and improving social conditions in food and agricultural systems to encourage fair labour relations, to increase the share of added value that goes to producer and local structures, and to ensure a living wage;
4. **NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMONS:** Reclaiming and asserting the right to land, water and other natural resources and the Commons;
5. **PUBLIC POLICIES:** Changing public policies governing our food and agricultural systems to advance food sovereignty in Europe, also considering its influence to other regions of the world.

## STRUCTURE AND OPERATION OF THE NYÉLÉNI EUROPE NETWORK

The political orientation and leadership of the Nyéléni Europe and Central Asia Food Sovereignty Movement is in the hands of the regional social movements that struggle for Food Sovereignty, and produce/live according to its principles.

### 1. Nyéléni Europe Forum:

Nyéléni Europe Forums for Food Sovereignty aim at amplifying our movement in Europe, and strengthening our vision of how to put the principles of Food Sovereignty into practice. They aim to catalyze and bring existing food sovereignty initiatives together, as well as to connect people and strengthen the work we do locally, nationally and/or regionally.

The Nyéléni Europe Forums for Food Sovereignty are based on the actions of hundreds of groups and organizations across the Europe and Central Asia region, to share experiences among national groups, and explore and develop collaboration on processes at local, regional and national level. These forums, which take place on an irregular basis, aim to increase the numbers of people engaging in the transformation of the dominant food and agriculture system, resisting the agro-industrial model of production and consumption, and building the Food Sovereignty Movement in Europe and Central Asia.



## **2. Facilitation Committee (FC):**

### **2.a. Composition of the Facilitation Committee (FC)**

The facilitation committee is composed of 5 active member organisations of the social movement constituencies in particular food producers. The nomination of the representatives follows autonomous consultation within the constituencies represented in the Facilitation Committee.

The composition of the Facilitation Committee should aim to have gender, generational and regional balance and also take into consideration other forms of exclusion and marginalisation along sexual identity, economic and ethnic lines.

**2.b. Duration of the mandate:** Representatives of the members of the Facilitation Committee are appointed autonomously by each constituency for a two-year term.

**2.c. Regular meetings:** The FC meets physically once/twice a year. Communication and meetings are preferably conducted using digital channels. External Symposium and Panels to which the Network is invited can be used to convene further physical meetings as necessary.

**2.d. Role:** Facilitation Committee adopts political decisions and provides strategic guidance according to the Forum's outcomes. It ensures that there are consistent consultation processes and mechanisms with other constituencies that are not represented in the Facilitation Committee. It also guarantees the participation of the representatives from the Nyéléni Network in activities, events and consultations in which the Nyéléni Network is involved. The Facilitation Committee should inform and consult active members of the platform on any issues assuming representation of the platform or speaking on behalf of the platform.

The Facilitation Committee along with the secretariat, working groups and supporting constituencies are responsible for raising funds to maintain the technical secretariat and the Nyéléni processes in Europe and Central Asia.

Considering that the network is still developing, new constituencies might emerge in the future. The Facilitation Committee has the responsibility to analyse its composition on a regular basis to ensure diversity and inclusiveness.

### **2.e. Link to the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty - IPC structure:**

The FC of Nyéléni Europe and Central Asia has to identify one FC member to represent the European and Central Asian region in the Facilitation Committee of the IPC.

In order to guarantee fluid communication and work between existing IPC processes in the Region, the Facilitation Committee of the CSOs in Europe and Central Asia will be represented by 3 members of Nyéléni Europe and Central Asia Facilitation Committee from different constituencies.



### **3. The Technical Secretariat:**

The Secretariat is subordinate to political decisions of the Facilitation Committee. The Secretariat helps in implementing the political work of Nyéléni Europe and Central Asia and operates as the IPC secretariat for the Region

#### Key roles:

- Technical assistance to the Facilitation Committee
- In charge of administrative and financial management
- In charge of implementing the communications strategies of the Network
- Technical and administrative support to the working groups, including enabling the connection with the Facilitation Committee
- Coordinate the sharing of information, communication and activities with IPC secretariats and IPC structures
- Support fundraising along with the Facilitation Committee, working groups and supporting constituencies for maintaining the secretariat and the Nyéléni Europe and Central Asia processes

### **4. Working groups/thematic groups:**

Working Groups are self organized and are open and flexible structures, formed on an ad hoc basis and with an open working methodology. The working groups must be led by the social movements and should encourage the participation of youth and women. All the organisations in the Nyéléni Food Sovereignty movement are invited to actively participate in the working groups. The working groups are coordinated by 2 political coordinators who are designated by the constituencies of the rightsholders (social movement constituencies), and 1 technical facilitator from supporting constituencies. Together they are responsible for maintaining direct contact with the Facilitation Committee in order to share key discussion points and action plans that emerge from the Working Groups and also to receive updates and information from the FC. Information should be regularly disseminated and circulated in the Region and organizations and within the Facilitation Committee. Each working group will agree on a supporting constituency to facilitate the daily implementation of the working plan. The supporting constituencies help the working groups by being one of the main contributors to the joint learning practices, carrying out necessary fundraising work and providing their technical expertise to contribute to the Regional processes.

### **5. Contact People:**

Contact people are the link between national processes and the Facilitation Committee. Ideally, they should be mandated by an organisation that is part of a national Food Sovereignty Platform, where it exists. The national structure is autonomous, but should include the participation and representation of the same constituencies of the regional and international networks. The number of Contact People per country can vary from one to three people. They should come from different constituencies.



The main roles of the contact people are:

- Dissemination of the necessary information to relevant organisations in their respective countries;
- Report back from meetings and processes at national level to the Secretariat;
- Collect information where needed to feed into the Regional Nyéléni processes;
- Help identify people at national level that can provide follow-up in the implementation of the work-plans.
- Facilitate the participation of persons from national level to meetings with a specific mandate on behalf of the Nyéléni Europe and Central Asia Network.

Fundraising for national processes is also responsibility of each national structure.

## **5. Translation / Interpretation**

- Interpretation / translation team: Language should not create a barrier to work within the network. All organisations involved in the network are responsible for supporting with the translation of relevant documents and creating resources to provide interpretation into whatever languages are needed.
- Each working group is also responsible for the internal translation of the working documents and internal communication.
- The Secretariat supports with translation for the Facilitation Committee.

## **6. Learning and Evaluation**

Continuous learning, monitoring and evaluation are important steps in building the Nyéléni Europe and Central Asian movement. An evaluation will be conducted every two years aimed at assessing the progress made towards the outcomes or outcome objectives, effectiveness in achieving ultimate goals, and strategies and capacities for fulfilling these. The Facilitation Committee, assisted by the Technical Secretariat, is responsible for conducting such an evaluation. As the new structure of Nyéléni Europe is put in place this year, it is suggested that a more limited, interim evaluation should take place already after the first year to assess the effectiveness and functionality of such a structure.