



Proposal for the governance of the EU Youth Strategy

The EU Youth Strategy beyond 2018: a focused strategy with a coordinated management

This paper aims at exploring **how Member States and relevant stakeholders may have more ownership of the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS), seeing it as a relevant and ambitious cooperation framework.**

Coordination of activities at the European level and focused priorities with clear objectives for the next EUYS lie at the core of the proposal.

Structure of the proposal:

- Principles the governance of the EUYS should rely on;
- Design of the priorities and objectives of the EUYS;
- Introducing country commitments and National Action Plans;
- A new approach to benchmarking;
- Participatory management in the youth field;
- Coordination, implementation and monitoring of the EUYS – proposing new inter-institutional and cross-sectorial Coordination Working Group;
- Intervention logic of the EUYS;
- Open Questions.

Principles for governance:

- A. **Participatory** – meaningfully involving relevant stakeholders, especially youth organisations, in all phases of the policy cycle from the identification of the problem to policy evaluation, and recognising the added value of such engagement;
- B. **Strategic** – where the set objectives should be measurable, time-lined and resourced;
- C. **Multi-level** – strategy that is well coordinated between EU, national, regional and local levels, mobilising efforts and working towards common objectives. Having these objectives embedded in strategies and policy planning documents on all levels;
- D. **Clear in responsibilities and accountable** – whereas even under voluntary provisions, the Member States are working towards the implementation of common objectives. Clear responsibilities should be outlined in the strategic policy planning documents;
- E. **Cross-sectorial** – mainstreaming youth policy across different fields, and actively involving policy-makers, such as directorates general and ministry representatives, from horizontal youth policy areas.
- F. **Resourceful** - with sufficient resources put in place to reach the objectives agreed in the strategy.

Priorities and objectives – an ambitious strategy, equally important to those who think they don't need it

1. The new strategy should have a mix of fixed and flexible priorities, ensuring work towards continuous youth issues, as well as reacting to sudden social and economic challenges.
2. As a part of the implementation of strategy, Member States should be asked to commit to specific fields and priorities they will focus on;
3. National action plans should be part of the implementation structure on national level.

Priorities

There is a need for a more coordinated action in the field of youth on the European level. **Thus the future EUYS should focus on fewer priorities and to introduce a dual system with fixed and flexible priorities** to be able to tackle sudden social and economic challenges.

Dual system with fixed and flexible priorities of EUYS:

Fixed Priorities	Flexible priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EUYS should outline 4 main priorities: access to quality education; volunteering and participation; access to quality employment; non-discrimination and access to social rights. - Are agreed upon in the core text of the EUYS; - Outcomes of the Cycle VI of the Structured Dialogue (Youth Goals in particular) should directly feed into the proposal on priorities of EUYS; - Each of the priorities have concrete objectives that are measurable, resourced and time-lined; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An instrument to react on political, social and economic developments globally and within the European Union throughout the duration of the cooperation framework; - Are agreed upon in the triennial Work Plans in consultation with the Coordination Working Group; Structured Dialogue consultations should be used to define the flexible priorities; - Each of the flexible priorities have concrete objectives that are measurable, resourced and time-lined; - Through the triennial Work Plans there should be a possibility to add new objectives to already existing priorities, if urgency has been identified.

Objectives

Objectives outlined in the EUYS should be measurable, limited in time and resourced. Each objective should be measurable with respective indicators from the [EU Youth Indicators' Dashboard](#), which has been developed by the Expert Group on Youth Indicators under the current cooperation framework in the youth

field. When a new policy domain or objective that is not currently covered by existing indicators is introduced, the dashboard should be updated with new indicators.

Reliable and up to date data is a key aspect to develop evidence-based policy, therefore Eurostat data should be updated with up to date datasets on youth across different silos.

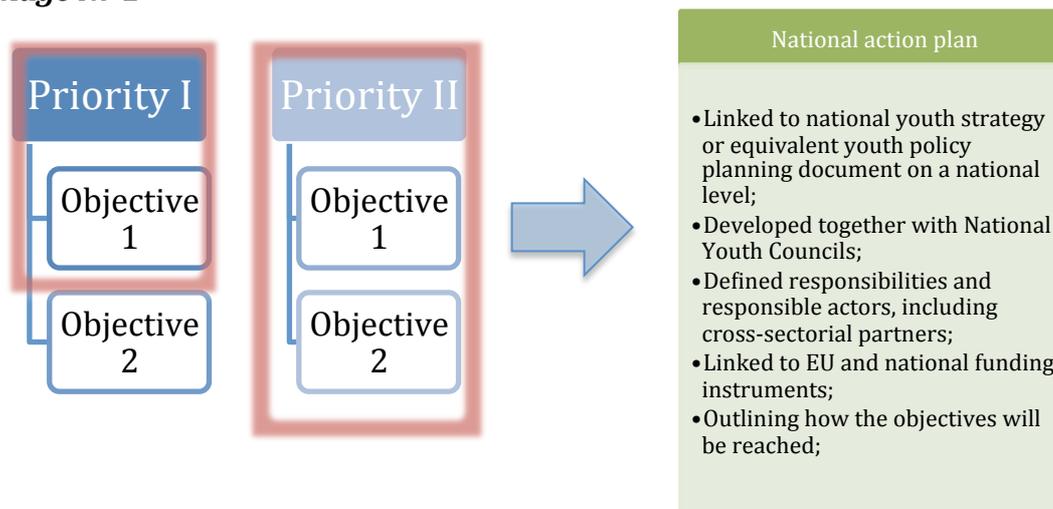
Choosing priorities and developing National action plans

Interim evaluation of the EUYS 2010-2018 revealed that Member States have used the strategy to work on some of the focus areas and objectives, but none of them have worked on all eight fields covered in the EUYS. Member States should have a possibility to commit to specific priorities and objectives they will work towards, following how Member States see the relevance of the EUYS¹. It would make it possible to evaluate the impact of the strategy and make the strategy relevant for all Member States, concentrating the efforts towards the most crucial areas.

The *Image Nr 1* below visualises the process of countries choosing the focus areas and objectives. In the proposed model with fixed and flexible priorities, Member States would need to select at least one objective from two priorities. Also Member States would need to pick at least one objective from the flexible priorities defined in each of the triennial work plans.

Furthermore, each of the Member States would develop National action plan, where they would outline specific activities towards reaching the selected objectives. To ensure the link with the National youth strategies or equivalent youth policy planning documents on the national level, the selected commitments should be embedded in the national policy planning documents.

Image Nr 1



¹ Executive Summary of Final Report on the Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU, p 3. European Commission, 2016;

A new approach to benchmarking

Existing benchmarks targeting youth or including youth as one of the target groups, have already been introduced under the ET2020 framework and the EU2020 Strategy, and are linked to EU agenda for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Youth Strategy should continue contributing to reaching and monitoring these targets, providing better links with the ET2020 cooperation framework and its successor.

Recognising that further benchmarking in the youth field can contribute to more strategic actions, improvement of conditions for youth, and a better coordination, the European Youth Forum proposes to include the following element in the next EU Youth Strategy:

A benchmarking system, where countries would commit to increasing certain figures from the indicators' dashboard according to the objectives they are working towards, and having activities outlined in the National action plan on how to reach them.

This kind of system would cater for country-specific needs, allow countries to set up ambitious targets, and act in a coordinated way towards common objectives. These benchmarks should be decided closely with stakeholders and respective authorities, like youth organisations and respective ministries, if the benchmarks are related to horizontal policy areas.

Participatory management² in the youth field

EU level

With regards to the principle of subsidiarity applied in the EU and recognising that cooperation in the youth field is happening within the Open Method of Coordination, the European Youth Forum calls on the highest possible involvement of youth in the policy-making on the EU level.

While the Structured Dialogue is a participatory process to consult young people that should be kept in the future EUYS, youth participation in policy-making should not end there. The EUYS should live up to the principle of participatory policy making, ensuring that young people and youth organisations are invited at the table when discussions take place, listened to and involved in policy evaluation.³

² Whereas participatory-management means that representative youth organisations are involved in decision-making within an institutionalised body, either in form of an ad-hoc or permanent committee, or outside of it being closely involved in policy-making processes.

³ European Parliament resolution of 27 October 2016 on the assessment of the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015 ([2015/2351\(INI\)](#)) noted that 57% of youth organisations in the EU consider that youth expertise is not taken into account when youth policies are being formulated.

National level

After having EUYS adopted on the EU level, important focus should be put on its implementation on the national level. Youth and youth organisations should be key partners in this process, and participatory and co-management like⁴ structures should be developed. For example, Slovenia has an Advisory Council that brings together youth organisations and government representatives from different sectors that make proposals on youth policy.

The new EUYS should recommend to the Member States to permanently establish such structures.

Coordination, implementation and monitoring of EUYS

Coordination Working Group

In order to achieve coordination between different EU institutions, Member States and partners, the European Youth Forum is proposing **to establish a Coordination Working Group**.

The working group would bring together the Commission (DG EAC in a leading role, but other DGs should be associated to the process and participating, ensuring a cross-sectorial approach), Member States, other EU institutions (such as the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions), as well as key stakeholders (such as youth organisations).

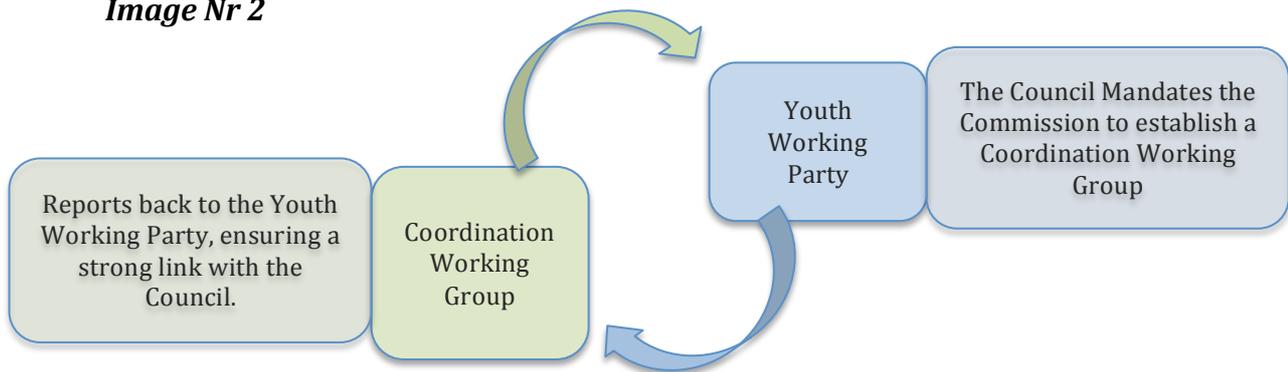
The Coordination Working Group would coordinate and inform implementation of the EUYS between different institutions and stakeholders, connecting different actions. It would be a space for Member States, institutions and stakeholders to exchange the overall progress, following the action plans and triennial work plans developed to implement the objectives. The Working Group would also monitor the implementation of EUYS, and should play an important role in the interim and final evaluations of the EUYS.

The Coordinating Working Group could be established under the provisions of Commission Decision of 30.05.2016. on establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups. It also should have a close link to the Council and the Youth Working Party, establishing connections to work of the Council, as visualized in *Image Nr 2*.

Term of reference should define that the Coordination Working Group should be meeting minimum two times a year.

⁴ Co-management in the field of youth is currently practiced in the Council of Europe. In this model government representatives and youth organisations work together in a committee that make policy proposals, assign budget envelopes and make proposals for priorities in the field of youth of the Council of Europe.

Image Nr 2



Thematic Expert Groups

The European Youth Forum is proposing to have a structure where the thematic expert groups would be established under the Coordinating Working Group in the form of sub-groups, keeping it similar to the current hierarchical structure.

Thematic Expert Groups should be established to:

- Input in development of EU policy documents, such as Council Conclusions, or publications;
- Facilitate and contribute to mutual learning between Member States on concrete themes;

The European Youth Forum underlines the need to find the most fit for purpose form of work to deliver different outputs. In addition there should be a clear understanding and indication from the target group that the foreseen outcomes will be useful and will contribute to youth policy or practice advancement. For example, before developing toolkit, there should be identified need and target audience who would use the toolkit.

Intervention logic of the EUYS

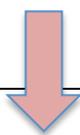
Priorities and objectives outlined in the EUYS should guide different EU initiatives concerning youth, as well as programmes, such as successor of current ERASMUS+ programme. They should be providing a real strategic framework in the youth field.

These programmes and initiatives should be a way to reach the aims defined in the European cooperation framework in the youth field.

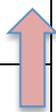
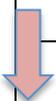
Multi level cooperation – all of the activities should be seen in European, national, regional and local contexts, connecting the strategy through different levels.

Objectives

-fixed
-flexible



Instruments:		Outputs and outcomes:	Impact
<u>Policy Cooperation:</u> Council, Youth Working Party, Triennial work plans; European Commission; Member States; Coordination Working Group and Expert Groups (including cross-sectorial participation of European commission, youth organisations, other EU institutions); Structured Dialogue; EC-CoE Partnership	<u>Implementation:</u> Member States – national youth strategies, National action plans; regional coordination; Progress reporting and monitoring; Evidence based policy making on all levels; Projects; Structured Dialogue; Dissemination of information and the results; Mutual learning – Member States, stakeholders, practitioners	Evidence based policies and initiatives on youth contributing towards reaching objectives; Youth Mainstreaming across silos; Youth participation in decision-making and policy making; Information for youth; Reports on progress – including availability of data; Mutual learning – transfer of knowledge on relevant areas concerning the objectives;	Impact should be assessed through the youth reports, Youth Wiki, EU youth indicators dashboard; and national benchmarks against to the outlined objectives
Funding – EU funds and national funds: ERASMUS+, Youth Guarantee; ESF etc			



Open questions:

- Having benchmarking system as a part of the EUYS has been a proposal and recommendation from several partners and institutions. How to have a benchmarking system that would fit the youth field, considering that it is coordinated under the Open Method of Coordination? If it is done through countries committing towards increasing particular figure, how to make it easy to monitor and not be a burdening, bureaucratic process?