

The EU Youth Test: Investing Now in the Union's Future

Young people are not only the present, but the future as well. As a result of the pandemic and the severe financial crises in the last decade we have seen that young people are one of the first groups within our society who are affected by the new measures, such as austerity measures or lockdowns. These policies not only impact the economic possibilities of future generations, but also create inequalities and serious consequences on mental health, among others. In 2019, we saw a record turnout at the European elections which included a great increase of youth participation. Young people have a strong opinion on issues that impact them, such as economic growth, digitalisation or the climate crisis. It is time to provide the sufficient means to include them in policy-making since they are the ones who need to carry the burden of these decisions.

Several participatory processes exist in the European Union (EU), such as the “Have your say” portal. Young people have a number of opportunities to express their view on topics they are asked about. However, it is not enough to consult with young people, invite them on the stage and just move on without taking them into consideration. There is a clear call for meaningful participation and engagement, while there is also a need for follow-up on how the voice of youth has been heard. By now it is clear that young people are affected by policies that are outside the scope of traditional youth policies, yet they are rarely included in the policy-making process. The EU needs to step up and work on policies that consider the

impact on those that will suffer the consequences: young people today and future generations.

The **EU Youth Test** is an impact assessment tool that will ensure that young people are considered during the policy-making processes within the EU. As a result, the EU will be able to create better policies that are long-lasting and impactful, actively close inequality gaps, and take into account current and future generations. Policies will address the experiences, needs and expectations of young people and they will help Europe's youngest generation maximise their potential.

EU Youth Test: With and For Youth

The EU Youth Test is designed to evaluate the impact that any new proposals may have on youth in the EU and identify any mitigation measures necessary to avoid any negative impacts.

It is based on 5 pillars:

- **Assessment of the relevancy** of any legislation proposal to young people
- **Meaningful engagement** with relevant youth stakeholders including experts working on youth and youth-led organisations working on relevant topics
- **Impact assessments** of draft proposals
- **Mitigation measures** to address adversities on groups of young people, with a special focus on groups living in vulnerable situations
- **Transparency** - publication of the results of the EU Youth Test - for scrutiny by the other institutions and in youth-friendly language

It supports the mainstreaming of youth by addressing the lack of involvement in policy fields that are not usually considered youth-related, e.g. sustainability, economic or infrastructure policies.

The EU Youth Test will focus on all proposals coming from the European Commission. All EU proposals should be assessed to see the impact on the

lives of young people. The assessment done by each Directorate-General (DGs) would include the following steps:

- Application of a standardised checklist of questions to determine the level of relevancy of the proposal to young people and future generations (that are not yet born)
- Qualitative consultation with representatives of young people from youth-led organisations and experts
- Analysis of the draft proposal based on the available data and the outcomes of the discussions with young people
- Summary of the impact on young people with clear indication of the proposal's degree of fitness
- In case of a low level of fitness, clear recommendations for changes to mitigate the potential negative impact
- Publication of the result of the EU Youth Test (e.g. on the Youth Portal) and presentation of the results on a regular basis to the other EU institutions.

The EU Youth Test should be conducted by every DG. DGs should be prepared to use the impact assessment tool and would need to be properly trained to include youth stakeholders meaningfully in the policy-making process.

Bringing the missing 25% to the forefront

Young people make up 25% of the whole population of the EU and, while they will live the longest with the consequences and impacts of the regulations designed today, they are underrepresented in political processes and in consultations.

The EU Youth Test has proven to be useful in several national legislative processes already. For example, in Germany in the last 4 years, the level of relevance was checked in cases of more than 500 legislations, with more than 100 impact assessments conducted. These assessments cover a wide range of topics such as the implementation of the Climate Protection Programme 2030 in tax law. While in Germany the test does not include mitigation measures, it highlights how certain legislations can impact the

life of young people. The assessment pointed out several benefits for young people in terms of affordable, long-distance commuting opportunities, but also warned that the increased access to mobility is relevant only for those young people who live close to the existing infrastructures.

Furthermore, we believe a youth impact assessment could have been highly beneficial for the EU in several instances in the past. One of the most recent examples would be the EU taxonomy proposal. This exact proposal is highly relevant for young people and future generations. As we are aware, climate change and the destruction of our environment is something that by now not only the future generations will have to live with, but is already taking the lives of millions of young people every year. It is therefore a bare minimum to include young people in the discussion about energy sources like nuclear power or natural gas. Based on recent events, it is clear that young people would have given stronger political momentum against the clear error of including gas and nuclear as sustainable energy sources. Furthermore, young people are considered to be the drivers of the circular economy and future generations should be the main beneficiaries of sustainable investment opportunities. Policies addressing the new ways of the economy will have an impact on the employment, health and wellbeing of future generations that needs to be considered now, otherwise such policies will cause further disruptions, barriers and inequalities within our society.

As it has been said many times, young people are not only the future, but also the present. As it was rightly pointed out by President Ursula von der Leyen, young people have been one of the most affected groups within our society by the previous financial crisis and the current health crisis and sliding economy. By now it is evident to create policies that consider their point of view.

Mainstreaming of Youth into all policies: An existing objective at EU Level:

An EU level Youth Test is one of the measures set out in the Conference on the Future of Europe Outcomes Report that has been endorsed by all voting components in the Conference plenary and the citizens. Young people are demanding proper consultation on all policies that affect them, and to have their voice taken into account in the shaping of these policies. While the Youth Test meets these expectations, it also acknowledges that young people's interests are wide-ranging and go far beyond traditional 'youth' topics such as education and mobility exchanges. Youth mainstreaming into all policies is also an aim of the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027) and one of the four key objectives of the European Year of Youth 2022. Adoption of the Youth Test is therefore a way to implement this strand of the Strategy, to realise this objective of 2022, hence providing a long-lasting legacy and to follow up concretely on a measure coming from the Conference on the Future of Europe.

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Numerous 'Best Practice'

The EU Youth Test exists in several Member States at national and regional levels in different forms, but always for and with young people. In some cases, it is conducted by a separate entity (Germany, Flanders) and in other cases it is done by the respective Ministries (Austria, France). Several child and youth impact assessment tools were launched as a result of the recommendation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (New Zealand, Canada, Scotland). Even though these tools only partially address the challenges, since they are conducted after the approval of the legislation rather than prior and hence without the inclusion of youth in the decision-making process, they prove that there is a global tendency of assessing the impact of legislation on youth with their engagement. We can also see that thanks to NextGenerationEU, more and more states are working on an impact assessment on youth (Italy), which should be something that the Commission does not only expect from the Member State, but should champion and introduce a standardised mechanism as well.

While these best practises prove to be rather diverse in terms of methodology and scope, after the Youth Forum conducted interviews

with several National Youth Councils, we found that the youth impact assessment tools are considered to be a great way to mainstream youth policy, ensure that youth inequalities are mitigated and closed, and include young people's perspective in the policy-making procedure.

Last year, the European Youth Forum collected and analysed several examples of youth impact assessment tools based on the input from 5 National Youth Councils and available online information. These examples cover both national and regional level and focus on the implementation of youth impact assessments on legislative proposals. However, the spectrum and the methodology of each differ, in some cases significantly. Further research is expected to be conducted to include the perspective of the representatives of the authorities, particularly EU Member State representatives. The table below intends to grasp the scope and the methodology of the impact assessment tools, identify the entities conducting them, and suggest relevant aspects to be considered for the development of an EU Youth Test.

Region/ Country	Scope	Methodology	Conducted By	Transferable best practice principles to be considered in the development of the EU Youth Test
Flanders	Young people 0-25 years of age	An extensive report with 14 questions. During the assessment, data and indicators are expected to be provided by the	Respective ministry	The assessment report is easily understandable and thorough

		assessor		
Austria	Children and youth (under 18 years of age)	Either an extensive assessment with concrete indicators or a simplified questionnaire, depending on the relevance	Federal administration, the department that is proposing the initiative or legislation	The checklist can be a good way to assess the relevance of the draft policy for young people, and as such decide on further steps in the impact assessment. The presentation of an aggregated report of the Youth Checks to the Youth Ministry on an annual basis is positive transparency.
France	Young people 16-25 years of age	N/A	Respective ministry	The impact assessment clause is part of the legislative framework that could make it binding and highly visible. High level political support.

Germany	Young people 12-27 years of age	Standardised assessment tool and a two-stage assessment process considering areas of life and several impact dimensions	Competence Centre Youth-Check - a separate institution from the ministry	The two-fold assessment process gives a detailed picture of the impact on youth. The publication of the results of the Youth Check in youth friendly language is also positive transparency.
Italy	Young people	Under development	Several stakeholders are involved in the impact assessment, such as scholars, youth representatives and policy-makers	Related to the NextGeneration EU funds and the National Recovery and Resilience Plans
New Zealand	Children and young people	Two-step screening based on an extensive questionnaire	Public authorities but it can be freely used by anyone - enhancing transparency and widespread adoption	Publicly available and to be done by anyone

Road to the EU Youth Test

The European Youth Forum and its more than 100 member organisations urge the Commission to adopt an EU Youth Test and make the promises of the European Year of Youth a reality for all young Europeans. It is a chance to create a long-lasting legacy that will support the future generations in living a sustainable life. Together with other relevant stakeholders, such as EU institutions, representatives of youth-led organisations and Member States, the Youth Forum has started to map the possible scenarios for an EU Youth Test. Based on the previous discussions, we suggest the following steps for the European Commission to take forward in the upcoming months of 2022:

- Conduct research and analysis on existing youth impact assessment tools
- Finalise the proposal for an EU Youth test with the involvement of youth stakeholders
- Together with youth stakeholders, draft the procedure and guidelines, including the checklist and the analysis
- Expression of interest by DGs to include a youth perspective and future generations in policy making processes
- Capacity-building of DGs to readily apply the EU Youth Test when drafting new proposals
- Monitor the implementation of the EU Youth Test on an ongoing basis

The EU Youth Test can be a successful instrument if it is used widely by DGs and if policymakers are enabled to have meaningful engagement with young people. While the EU Youth Test might seem to require additional resources from the EU institutions, it is in the utmost interest of all EU Member States that the policies do not impose threats and negative impacts on future generations.

ANNEX

Regional youth impact assessment:

Flanders

The Child and Youth Impact Report, or JoKER for short, assesses the effects of new proposals of decrees on children and young people. Every time a minister submits a draft decree to the Flemish Parliament that directly affects the interests of persons under the age of 25, it must be accompanied by a JoKER. This consists of the impact of the proposal and alternatives, while also providing data to strengthen the assessment. JoKER mainly relies on the 2003 comments on 'general measures of implementation' of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including a child impact analysis. The competent minister and administration are responsible for drawing up a JoKER when submitting a decree, and involve the contact point for youth and children's rights policy. They can also ask for help from the Department of Culture, Youth and Media. The assessment follows a questionnaire that details the objectives, the alternative policy options, the analysis of impacts, and the outline of the consultation included among others.

EU Member States' youth impact assessment:

Austria

In 2013, Austria introduced an overarching impact assessment on proposed legislations. This impact assessment aims to provide clarity on the priorities, effects on the budget and effectiveness of the proposals. It is carried out during the drafting phase and considers several policy areas ("impact dimensions"), such as finance, environment, consumer protection, businesses, children and youth, and gender equality. In case a legislation does not affect the state budget, or does not have a substantial financial relevance (below 1 million euro), it is enough to carry out a simplified assessment first to see in which policy areas the legislation has a relevance. This simplified assessment is a short survey, which is now also digitalised. The impact assessment consists of a problem analysis (why government action is necessary), formulation of objectives (what effect is to be achieved in society), formulation of measures (how the respective

goals are being pursued) and assessment of the effects. In case a youth perspective is found to be relevant, the impact assessment is carried out by considering the following aspects:

- Protection and promotion of the health, development and upbringing of children and young adults
- Care and support of children and eligible young adults, and the compensation for child costs
- Security of the future of children and young adults in the mid-term

In case of the simplified impact assessment, no indicators are used and no assessment of the effects is carried out.

The underlying initiative will be evaluated after five years at the latest, which means that the respective departments carry out an internal evaluation, during which effects that actually occurred are compared with the assumptions made at the time of the assessment. In case of a simplified impact assessment, this step is not carried out either.

An aggregated form of all the youth checks carried out is compiled and presented for review by the Youth Ministry on an annual basis for the purposes of transparency and fulfilment of the mainstreaming aspiration set out in the Austrian Youth Strategy.

France

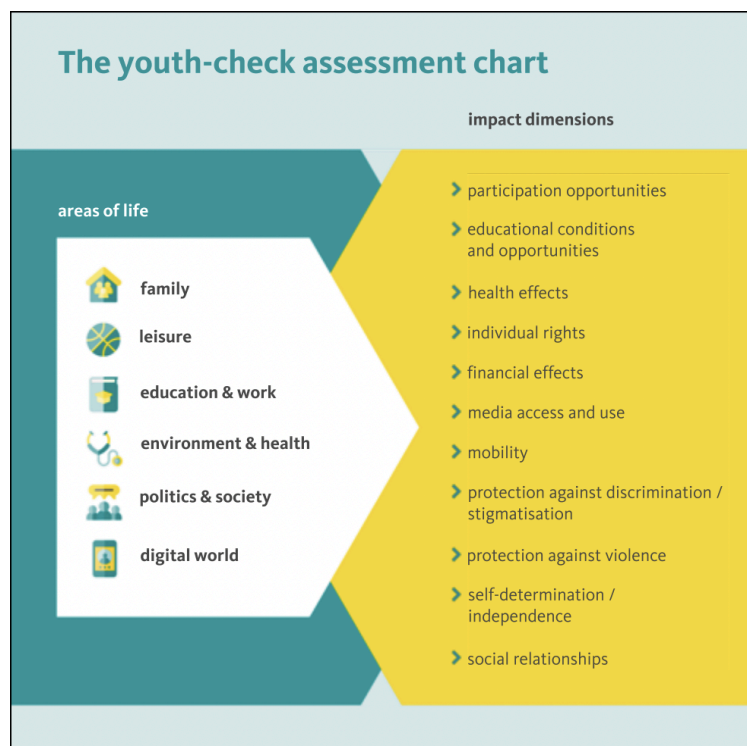
The French Law requires all draft laws to include a preliminary evaluation of the economic, financial, social, and environmental consequences of the adoption of the law (with the exception of finance and budget laws, Organic Laws, Laws modifying the Constitution, etc.). An internal note from the Prime Minister from 2016 insists on the necessity to systematically conduct youth impact assessments (but this is not binding). All impact evaluations are supposed to be available on the website of the SGG (Secrétariat général du gouvernement). In the Ministry of Education, the DJEPVA (Direction de la jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et de la vie associative - in charge of developing, coordinating, and evaluating policies in favour of youth, popular education, and associative life) is in theory consulted and involved in the development of impact assessments of draft

regulations. The drafting ministry (who also drafts the impact assessment) can ask for the support of the DJEPVA in doing this. Upon receipt of these documents, the SGG can ask the advice of the DJEPVA if it considers the impact assessment lacking. The SGG then convenes a scoping meeting gathering the drafting ministry, the DJEPVA and all other services concerned by the transversal impact. A notice of 48h is required which means that observations on the impact assessment are only circulated during 48h. In practice, most of the time, this scoping meeting is the first time the DJEPVA sees the impact evaluation. The policy pursued in favour of young people aims in particular to support them in their efforts to gain access to employment and autonomy. It also aims to guarantee all young people access to public services, essential for building their life project.

Germany

The Youth-Check in Germany was introduced in 2017. Up until now the Competence Centre Youth-Check (ComYC) has examined over 500 legislations. The examination of legislation can be initiated by the Minister for Youth or by the ComYC itself through its monitoring process. The ComYC conducts a preliminary examination of all laws that are accessible to the ComYC (usually all laws in which the Ministry of Youth is involved or is in charge). Where there is a relevant, non-obvious impact on young people, the Youth Check is carried out and the result is published. The assessment is carried out during the drafting phase (pre-parliamentary). The ComYC has the possibility to carry out an initial assessment and in case the legislation is changing after the input of other stakeholders (i.e. cabinet, local reps), the ComYC still has the chance to give final input. The Ministry forwards the Youth-Check together with the legislation to the lead ministry which proposes it as a government bill to the parliament. The ComYC also publishes the shorter version of the Youth-Check to support the discussion in the Parliament. The Youth-Check is based on a standardised assessment tool and a two-stage assessment process. As a first step, it is confirmed whether the legislation has a relevance for youth and it is determined whether young people or specific groups of young people between the ages of 12 and 27 are affected by the proposed legislation. In case the legislation has a relevance for young people, the

next step is the main impact assessment. During the main impact assessment the legislation is examined as to which impact dimensions are affected by the proposed legislation in the individual areas of life.



Various methodological approaches are chosen in order to obtain indications for the possible effects, and data from several sources is used as well. Primarily secondary data is used (statistics, available publications, etc), however, in isolated cases, if there is no available data, ComYC conducts surveys and interviews with experts and youth representatives. In general, the youth check consists of a description of the affected groups and the relevant passages of the bill as well as the resulting effects on young people. In addition, the affected areas of life are identified and, if necessary, "notes and remarks" are given. As it was already mentioned, a shorter version is produced and sent out for members of the Bundestag and another short version is drafted that uses a youth-friendly language that is published on a designated website aimed at young people, and includes a simple description of what the legislation is, in addition to the

¹ Source:

<https://www.jugend-check.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/the-youth-check-in-germany-regulatory-impact-assessment-for-the-young-generation.pdf>

youth check results. Finally, besides sending the Youth-Check to the respective decision-makers, all versions are published on the youth-checks's website. Furthermore, there is the ComYC App, which provides information on the legislative process and the assessment procedure, and with which the Youth-Check can be tried out interactively.

Italy

In 2021, Italy established a Committee to monitor the impact of public policy on young people and future generations. The idea is mainly related to the NextGenerationEU (NGEU) funds and the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (PNRR in Italian). It consists of several stakeholders such as the youth ministry, the National Youth Council, the national agency, the national statistical office, the public health authorities and experts on impact assessments. The stakeholders collaborate in four areas of work, namely:

- Group for a shared definition of measures for young people;
- Group for the assessment of generational impact and models practised in other EU countries also with reference to the SDGs of Agenda 2030;
- Group of analysis of good practices and reforms of youth policies at the European level;
- Group to support the monitoring of the implementation of Pillar "F" of Regulation (EU) 2021/241

As a result of this distribution of tasks, the Committee's ultimate aim is to provide data and information useful for more effective government action on the coordination and implementation of youth policies. The measures analysed initially are those with a direct impact on young people. The impact assessments are not public and are submitted to the Youth Minister every six months.

The stakeholders collaborate in four areas of work:

1. Group for a shared definition of measures for young people: the group is responsible for analysing all of the government's measures

for young people in the budget law, in the PNRRs, which is the plan using NGEU funds, and in the National Investment Plan complementary to the PNRR.

2. Group for the assessment of generational impact and models practised in other EU countries also with reference to the SDGs of Agenda 2030: the group deals with defining the national (and local) taxonomy of indicators for the assessment of generational impact, to ensure intergenerational equity..
3. Group of analysis of good practices and reforms of youth policies at the European level: the group will define indicators to determine good practices at the European level and their transferability.
4. Group to support the monitoring of the implementation of Pillar "F" of Regulation (EU) 2021/241: in order to assess the ongoing consistency of the "youth priority", a priority identified as transversal in the PNRR, with the specific objective of Pillar "F" of Regulation (EU) 2021/241, quantitative and qualitative indicators will be defined in conjunction with the Control Room for PNRR of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of the Economy.

Third country impact assessment

New Zealand

After the 2011 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommendation, New Zealand established the Child Impact Assessment (CIA), which is a tool for public officials to assess whether policy proposals will improve the wellbeing of children and young people. It is also based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Tool is used to support the debate and decision-making with regards to a proposal and it can be freely used by the conducting entity. As part of the tool, the first step is to check whether the proposal has any youth relevance through the screening sheet. When completing the Screening Sheet, note should be made of:

- positive impacts on children and young people by the proposal
- mitigations for any negative effects or unintended consequences

In case there is a direct impact on young people, the full impact assessment is conducted. There is more scope in the full Child Impact Assessment (than in the Screening Sheet) to unpack the broader context of any proposal, for example, how it may impact on issues such as school engagement, socio-economic factors (such as child poverty), youth wellbeing / development or disability. During the assessment, consultation is encouraged with all relevant stakeholders, such as experts, youth representatives, policy makers, etc.

Further examples to be discovered:

- [Netherlands](#)
- [Sweden](#)
- [Finland](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Canada](#)

Global report:

<https://www.oecd.org/gov/fit-for-generations-global-youth-report-highlights.pdf>