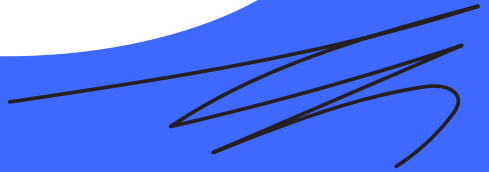




EU



# youth test



A guiding  
framework  
for practical  
implementation



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Author:

Kristóf Papp

With input from:

Alonso Escamilla for meaningful participation

Co-editors:

Anna Blackwell, Inge Brees

Graphic Design:

Benjamin De Moor

European Youth Forum

10, rue de l'industrie

1000 Brussels, Belgium

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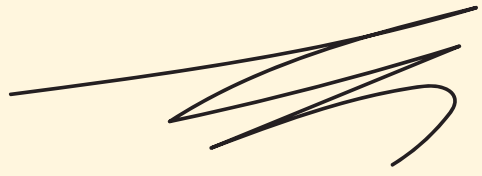
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# EU youth test



A guiding  
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## Forward

Young people's lives are impacted by decisions made across every single policy field - from agriculture, to fiscal policy, to climate, and health. In fact, there is no policy that is not a 'youth' and future generations topic. However, Europe's youth is not recognised as a group that merits specific consideration during the policymaking process. Young people's interests are not mainstreamed across different sectors - despite this aspiration forming one of the central objectives of both the current EU Youth Strategy and the 2022 European Year of Youth. Even though young Europeans have the longest to live with the consequences and impacts of the regulations designed today, they are consistently underrepresented in political processes and consultations.

To address this dichotomy, the European Youth Forum tabled the concept of an 'EU Youth Test' which has achieved strong support from a broad diversity of stakeholders. This tool appears in the Conference on the Future of Europe Outcomes Report as a key measure for implementation. The Economic and Social Committee in its recent Opinion also calls for the implementation of an ambitious Youth Test at EU level.

In order to realise this EU Youth Test, we have provided you with the following guiding framework setting out how this tool should operate in practice, drawing on inspiration from countries and regions that have this mechanism operating at national level - including France, Austria, Germany and Flanders.

Since you are reading this document, I would like to thank you for coming on the EU Youth Test journey with us this far. I hope that you can go even further and use this framework to implement the youth test within your respective spheres of influence, including local, regional, national and European levels of implementation. At the European Youth Forum, we stand ready to support you.

As President Ursula Von der Leyen stated in her recent State of the Union Address, policy making at EU level should not do harm to future generations. Together, we can guard against this. Proper implementation of this tool will ensure that young people and future generations will never be an afterthought, but instead, occupy their rightful place at the very heart of all EU policy making and legislative change. In turn, taking young people and future generations into account in this systematic way will help policy makers to create richer, more future-proofed, and more resilient policies that truly stand the test of our time and times to come.

Therefore let's provide young people with a fitting legacy to the 2022 European Year of Youth - and deliver this EU Youth Test!

**Silja Markkula, President of the European Youth Forum, October 2022**

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# EU Youth Test - Procedure Recommendations

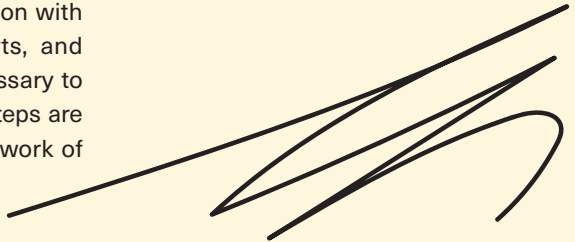
The **EU Youth Test** is an impact assessment tool that will ensure that young people are considered during the policy-making processes within the EU. As a result, the EU will be able to create better policies that are long-lasting and impactful, actively close inequality gaps, and take into account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

This tool is designed to evaluate the effects that any new proposals may have on Europe's youth. It should include an impact analysis and meaningful consultation with youth representatives and experts, and identify mitigation measures necessary to avoid negative impacts. All these steps are set out in more detail in the framework of the tool below.

## Framework Summary:

1. **Relevance:** Application of standardised checklist to determine the level of relevancy of the draft proposal to young people and future generations (that are not yet born).
2. **Consultation:** Qualitative consultation with representatives of young people from youth-led organisations as experts on youth-related topics and youth experts.
3. **Impact Analysis:** Impact analysis of the draft proposal based on the available data and the outcomes of the consultative discussions.
4. **Mitigation Measures:** In case of potential negative impact in short, medium or long term, clear recommendations for changes to mitigate that potential negative impact.
5. **Transparency:** Publication of the results of the EU Youth Test.

To ensure that the assessor understands the youth-related issues, preparatory training is advised with the involvement of youth representatives and experts.



## 1. Checklist to determine relevance of policy to youth

The checklist is the first step to check the relevance of proposals. A scale should be used to determine the level of impact that the proposal will have on the lives of young people. The checklist should be implemented based on the following recommendations:

1. The questions of the checklist need to cover a wide range of policy areas, such as environment, social, economic, infrastructure, sustainability, etc.
2. The items included on the checklist should be thorough enough to assess several policy fields, and broad enough to go beyond the traditional youth policy silo.
3. The questions on the checklist need to take into account both the indirect and direct impacts of the proposed policies. Indirect impact can have significant and relevant consequences for young people.
4. When considering the impact of the proposed policies, both positive and negative impacts should be considered at this stage.
5. The relevance of the proposed policies should be determined based on the checklist and should reflect on the specific reality of young people's experiences, which are frequently different to those of older generations.
6. The whole process should not just consider young people that are alive today but also future generations; hence why any long-term impact is also relevant and should be considered.

**In which level does the proposal impact...**

**Basic Human Needs**

... access to nutrition and basic medical care?

... access to affordable housing for young people?

... personal safety of young people?

... transition to adulthood and independent living of young people?

... access to clean water and sanitation?

**Foundation of wellbeing**

... the environmental quality?

... access to information and communication of young people?

... health and wellness of young people?

... the material footprint of Europe?

... access to basic knowledge?

**Opportunity**

... personal rights of young people?

... personal freedom and choice?

... access to infrastructure of young people?

... the inclusion of young people in vulnerable situations?

... access to advanced education?

**Average**



We are suggesting a checklist on the scale 1-3, where 1 means no impact on young people, 2 means indirect impact on young people, 3 means direct impact on young people. If the average of the scores is 1.5 or over we suggest considering the proposal relevant for young people.

An impact can be considered indirect when the impact occurs as a result of immediate actions that do not involve young people directly, but when these actions will affect the lives of young people and of future generations in the future (e.g. in case of a regulation on circular economy there is indirect impact on the mental health by impacting anxiety about the climate).

An impact can be considered direct when the impact occurs as a result of the actions directly involving young people (e.g. in case of a regulation on circular economy there is direct impact on the environmental quality).

When as a result of the action there is no change to the lives of young people, then it can be considered as having no impact (e.g. in case of regulation on circular economy there is no expected impact on access to education).

## 2. Meaningful participation of young people via consultation

The goal of the consultation is to receive general feedback from young people and their representatives on the draft proposal through meaningful interaction.

After setting up the suitable structure or forms of youth participation, the assessor can launch it in order to receive valuable feedback and input for the impact assessment. During this process it is advised to explore the wider topic that the proposal is tackling and - step-by-step - dig deeper into the challenges and possible solutions. Since the impact assessment is considering the impact on future generations, it is also important to consider trends that could be expected in relation to the issues the proposal is designed to tackle.

Achieving meaningful youth participation requires a combination of several different elements. If done poorly, there is a danger that participation is tokenistic or an illusion of participation, where young people are gathered to share their views, but where these views are not taken into account or genuinely heard.

This is why it is needed to ensure that the EU Youth Test is a binding requirement for the design of any public policy within the EU. This approach will ensure that every legislative initiative has to go through the EU Youth Test at the initial stages of the development of the policy, long before its launch and that the reformulation of the policy proposal genuinely takes into account the contributions received during the consultative exercise.

As a first step the assessor is encouraged to map the relevant youth organisations and young experts that can contribute valuable input to the impact analysis.

As democratically elected and youth-led entities, youth organisations are experts

on a wide variety of thematics - and have the accumulated expertise and knowledge to represent the views and interests of young people from diverse backgrounds. These organisations should therefore be at the heart of any consultation structure set up as part of the Youth Test tool.

Based on the above, it is considered that the participation element of the EU Youth Test should follow the following steps:

**Information and training is power:** clear, in-depth information about the participatory process including the goals, channels, resources, etc needs to be provided, and efforts made to ensure capacity building for participation.

- Does the process allow youth organisations and young people to be informed and trained during the input collection?

**Spaces open to diversity:** the setting provided needs to allow a diversity of voices to share their opinions and work collaboratively.

- Does the process include youth organisations and young people from different sectors and backgrounds during the input collection?
- Is the consultation space created one that allows diverse opinions to be expressed in a safe environment?

**Placing young people at the centre:** the participatory process needs to be defined by the young people themselves, and with a format that allows them to be considered as equal partners.

- Has the input collection process been co-defined with young people?
- Has it been made clear to young people from the start how their inputs will feed into the process as a whole and what will be influenced?

**Regular and honest communication:** regular two-way communication about each step of the process including the follow up and monitoring is essential to motivate young people's participation.

- Is the process regularly communicated to youth organisations and young people during the input collection?
- Does the process include a feedback process to inform youth organisations and young people how their contributions have been taken into consideration?

**Showcasing of contribution:** The process needs to ensure that young people's contributions have been visibly considered.

- Does the process record the contributions made by youth organisations and young people during the input collection?
- Are these contributions (if requested anonymised) or the summary of these contributions publicly available?

**Affinity and recognition:** the feeling of ownership and being recognised as key partners can support the motivation of young people.

- Has the process been co-created with youth organisations and young people

linked to the themes of the policy and to those of the territories it affects?

- Does the process recognise youth organisations and young people who participated during the input collection as key partners?

### 3. Impact analysis of draft proposals

The impact assessment is conducted when the proposal is found to be relevant for young people and young people have provided their input. The assessment is following the topics of the checklist but provides space to detail the impact on a short-, mid- and long-term. Based on the indicators provided, the assessors can summarise the expected impact and mark whether it will have adverse, neutral or favourable impact. The impact assessment should be implemented based on the following recommendations:

1. The impact assessment needs to consider a wide range of indicators. These indicators can be drawn from the preexisting, recognised tool of the [Youth Progress Index](#). The indicators are quantitative variables that can support the consultation with youth stakeholders and guide the assessor in understanding the challenges young people are facing.
2. The indicators should be able to assess several areas that are relevant to young people, such as wellbeing, sustainability, the environment, economic prospects, consumption, equality, fairness, etc. Furthermore, it should reflect the main

categories mentioned in the checklist.

3. The impact assessment should consider the impact on short-term (up to 1 year), mid-term (1-10 years) and long-term (10+ years). In case of a more than 10 years impact being identified, the impact on the future young people should be considered.
4. The assessment should be able to feed into the strategic foresight planning (if it exists) by analysing the possible future impacts and trends related to the proposed policy.
5. It should identify adverse, neutral or favourable impacts on young people, which will serve as a basis for the possible mitigation measures. In case of adverse impact, mitigation measures need to be included in the finalised policy or legislative proposal.
6. The impact assessment should be based on the available youth data (hence the suggested indicators) and the outcomes of the consultation with youth organisations and young experts.
7. The overall qualitative assessment should clearly identify how the input of youth stakeholders has been used and what were the main findings of the assessment.
8. General comments are expected to be provided when the impact is not clearly defined or when it is not provided to justify the lack of assessment.

**Title**

**Objectives of the proposal**

**Summary of the proposal**

<i>Categories / timeframe</i>	Short-term (up to 1 year)	Mid-term (1-10 years)	Long-term (more than 10 years)	General comments
Basic Human Needs				
Foundation of wellbeing				
Opportunity				
Overall assessment				

It is suggested that each of the categories should list out several impact descriptions within each of the timeframes. This would mean that for example the assessor should name the short / medium / long term impact related to affordable housing and personal safety within the Basic Human Needs separately. The impact should be considered according to the following criteria:

- Negative impact should be marked when as the result of the proposal, changes are expected in the life of certain groups of young people and this change may result in challenges.
- Positive impact should be marked when the result of the proposal is beneficial for certain groups of young people.
- Neutral impact should be marked when no consistent impact can be identified, which also implies that neither positive nor negative impact is expected.

The overall assessment aims to sum up the findings and feed into a summary of all impact assessments carried out on the proposal.

<b>&gt; Basic Human Needs</b>	<b>&gt; Foundation of wellbeing</b>	<b>&gt; Opportunity</b>
Youth deaths from infectious diseases	Level of air pollution	Voting rights
Adequate dietary intake	Percentage of green surface/person in urban area	Freedom of assembly and association
Access to healthcare	Access to information	Freedom of expression
Affordable housing	Internet users	Rule of law
Access to social protection	Media Censorship	Protection of personal data
Ability for future financing	Access to youth services and youth centres	Access to affordable public transport
Women safe walking alone	Access to mental health care	Equal treatment/freedom from discrimination
Assaulted youth	Proportion of leisure facilities	Gender equality
School leaving age	Access to essential services	Available funding for youth organisations
Rate of NEETs	Material footprint	Diverse groups
Unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene attributable deaths	Access to quality education	Years of tertiary schooling

The indicators above serve as possible topics and perspectives to be considered during the impact assessment. These can be discussed during the consultation with youth experts and youth representatives. As an outcome of the consultation and the available data related to the indicators, the assessor should be able to provide a qualitative analysis.

These indicators are suggested based on the Youth Progress Index, however the assessor can decide to use other indicators that are related to the main categories and questions of the Checklist that reflect the policy field under discussion. This way the consistency can be kept throughout the whole process, while allowing different policy departments the flexibility to tweak the assessment to suit the needs of the specific policy area under consideration.

#### 4. Mitigation measures to address the negative impacts identified

The impact assessment should point out the groups that are most likely to be affected by a negative impact. The person conducting the impact assessment should consider young people from vulnerable backgrounds, which can be the result of several obstacles such as disability, educational difficulties, economic obstacles, cultural differences, health problems, social obstacles or geographical obstacles.

For each of the groups affected, or for young people as a whole, the assessment should propose changes to the proposal or additional actions to be taken in order to tackle these: adverse impacts that have been identified and implement the relevant mitigation measures. In addition to policy revision(s) within the proposal to remove the impact entirely, the following actions could be considered, however the assessor of course can go beyond this list and propose different actions.

- Exemptions
- Financial aid
- Reduced costs
- Easing administrative burdens

In the event that mitigation measures are not proposed or have been proposed but are not reflected in the final proposal, it should be clearly stated why the negative impacts are unavoidable and why trade offs need to be made in the context of the wider proposal.

#### 5. Publishing the results of the EU Youth Test

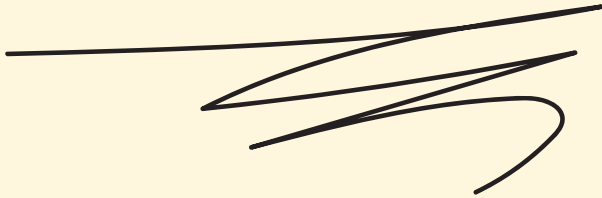
Throughout the application of the EU Youth Test, it is essential to provide clear information regarding each of the steps to those youth organisations and young people participating in the process - and for this feedback process to be agreed on jointly with the participants that are involved.

The EU Youth Test also needs to be a well known instrument among all young people. They need to be able to track the policy-making process and the result of the impact analysis and therefore feel confident that their concerns are being captured by policy makers and addressed so that no new piece of legislation is against their interests.

In order to ensure transparency and widespread appreciation of the process, the outcomes of the EU Youth Test need to be publicly available. The publication of the EU Youth Test on the respective

Commission websites in the same way as other impact analyses is essential, however it is also advisable to go further and publish the results on additional platforms such as the European Youth Portal, or have them disseminated by the EU Youth Coordinator.

The results should also be available to the co-legislators, thus further actions to reach relevant institutions and stakeholders should be put in place.





## Annex I.

### European Youth Organisations – to assist with mapping of relevant youth organisations to include in the consultative part of the tool.

This chapter aims to help the assessors to start mapping the relevant youth organisations to include in the consultative part of the EU Youth Test.

Youth organisations are spaces where young people's opinions matter. By organising, connecting with others and building communities, young people are empowering themselves to shape the world around them. Youth organisations foster more inclusive societies and enable outreach to young people from all backgrounds.

**Youth organisations** play a significant role in educating young people in ways that are not found in formal education settings. They promote various forms of civic engagement, including volunteering, and a sense of civic responsibility. Youth organisations also promote more positive attitudes towards democracy and inspire in young people a greater interest in politics. They can, for example, help young people understand how governments and politics work, and appreciate the importance and impact political structures and processes have upon their lives. They also encourage and enable young people to interact with young people who are different from themselves (e.g. in terms of class, gender, ethnicity or age),

and thus contribute to building openness and tolerance.

**National Youth Councils (NYCs)** are democratically elected representative bodies of youth organisations in each European state. According to the Statutes of the European Youth Forum, NYCs need to be open to all and include most of the main democratic youth movements and organisations on the national level in the respective state. As NYCs are expected to operate with democratically elected leadership, representing young people from all over the country, they are considered the main advocacy organisation representing youth nationwide. In most of the EU Member States the status of the NYCs is defined by law, which includes the establishment, role and composition of the body. As representative bodies, they are expected to be independent from party politics and to cover a wide range of expertise and backgrounds. This diversity allows them to form an opinion on a series of issues besides the traditional 'youth policy' topics, such as inclusion, sustainability, housing and democratic participation.

**International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs)** are international networks of youth organisations that are operating in numerous countries with national or local branches dealing with a wide range of topics. INGYOs are also governed by democratically elected leadership and work toward advocating for better life circumstances for young people, especially young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. INGYOs are considered the main source of information when it comes to youth perspectives on different policy areas by several international and

EU institutions, such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Commission. INGYOs have developed specific expertise on a series of topics that are relevant for young people by providing them with services and activities. Their fields of operation are extremely diverse, and include sustainable development, environmental protection, social rights, human rights, education, etc. The wide outreach and the diverse profile enables INGYOs to advocate for the interests of young people through systematic and tailored approaches that address complex issues.

The **European Youth Forum** is the platform of youth organisations in Europe. The Forum represents over 100 youth organisations, which bring together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe. The Youth Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives by representing and advocating their needs and interests and those of their organisations. The Youth Forum believes young people can be powerful catalysts for positive change and contributors of innovative solutions to Europe's challenges. The Youth Forum is working closely with its member organisations on making sure that the youth perspective is considered in all relevant policy areas. It creates bridges between relevant European institutions and youth organisations, ensuring they have a seat at the table. Besides the members, the Youth Forum also fosters fruitful partnerships with several other relevant platforms and coordinates with them on policies and initiatives on local, regional, national, european level and outside of Europe as well. Thanks to its widespread network and experience the Youth Forum can be a key partner

in designing meaningful initiatives that are tailored to the needs of young people.

A full list of the European Youth Forum's Members for inclusion in relevant consultations depending on the topic can be found on the [Youth Forum's website](#).

## Annex II.

### What is meaningful youth participation? - to assist with the design of the consultative aspect of the tool.

Meaningful participation is a cornerstone of the EU Youth Test. The following chapter allows the accessor to better understand the main principles of meaningful youth participation and reflect these principles in the design of the consultative element of the tool.

Participation has been a complex path to facilitate and achieve in practice. Despite this, the literature agrees that best-practice participation should not be found in a one-off, isolated event, but instead be multidimensional, develop over time and be part of a wider, meaningful process that has a genuine impact on decisions that are made. According to the “Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life”:

*Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society. (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, 2003)*

With this in mind, the European Youth Forum (YFJ) is clear that participation is key to building healthy and sustainable democracies, and that this can only be called participation if all groups of society are present in decision-making processes in institutions (European Youth Forum, 2020). In order to achieve this aspiration, three levels are distinguished which strengthen young people's participation:

- **Participation in community life**, where young people are given the opportunity, support and tools to participate in their communities (particularly at a local level).
- **Participation in representative democracy**, where young people are involved and have influence in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies in all areas of relevance to them.
- **Learning to participate and learning to promote participation**, where young people acquire civic competences, in both formal and non-formal education, to participate as active citizens now and into the future. (European Youth Forum, 2003)

However, participation is not just about being able to express views and opinions. It is also about being heard - with decision makers listening and taking these inputs into account. Studies carried out by the EU-CoE Youth Partnership distinguish the following two dimensions:

- **Direct participation**, where political decisions are influenced directly and structural links to political decision-making processes are enabled.

- **Indirect forms of participation** that reach out to citizens and encourage them to support certain issues and positions, in addition to enabling discussions, opinion-building and campaigning. (Council of Europe, 2022)

Building on the premise that participation is a multidimensional and evolving phenomenon, it is worth noting that **the initial barriers to youth participation were often conceptual: *why should we involve young people?* Today that debate and those obstacles have shifted to the procedural: how do we need to involve young people in order to make their participation meaningful?**

## Aspects of meaningful youth participation

There are a number of common factors that influence meaningful youth participation.

**Information and training is power.** Young people need to be informed about their right to participate and the channels through which they can do so. The whole participation process needs to be clearly set out in a way that young people clearly understand how the process will operate, including the obligations, consequences and potential impact of their participation and what resources will be available for them to participate and with which other actors. Furthermore, capacity-building activities should be included where young people increase their knowledge of the issues being discussed and develop their competences that enable their participation.

**Safe spaces open to diversity.** Young people need to have stable, functional and safe spaces where they can enjoy their rights to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association. (Partispace, 2018) In addition, youth are more likely to participate in decision-making processes when they feel that spaces encourage a diversity of voices to share their opinions and work collaboratively. (Kara, 2007)

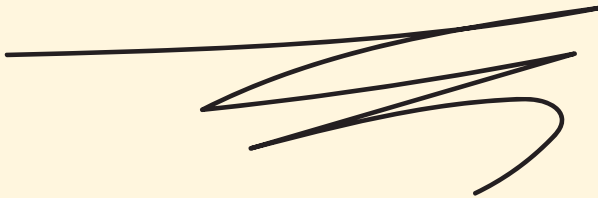
**Placing young people at the centre.** Participation processes should be defined by the young people themselves, including how they will participate, what their participation in the process will contribute to or what issues they want to address. Each participation process must also ensure that young people are on an equal level to decision-makers.

**Regular and honest communication.** One of the most demotivating factors for young people is the lack of two-way communication during participation processes. Sporadic communication from decision-makers or institutions causes young people - who have contributed enthusiastically to a process - to feel frustrated and as though they are the junior partner in the exercise. It is therefore necessary to be explicit from the beginning of the process what the decision making timeline will look like, who will be taking the final decision, as well as to communicate the progress and results of the processes that young people were part of. (European Youth Forum, 2020)

**Moving from words to action.** Young people need to see that their participation is not just recorded in a space or a document. It is

imperative that they see that their participation is genuinely taken into account during the development of the policy or to address the problem that is being discussed. This feeling of success increases the likelihood that young people will want to stay involved.

**Affinity and recognition.** Young people should have a sense of belonging to both the participation process and what is being decided. This affinity strengthens their autonomy, their networks and their willingness to continue participating. At the same time, the expertise and knowledge of young people needs to be recognised by the decision-makers or institutions; young people are experts on their own lives and their own generational experience.



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