



# European Youth Forum briefing note on the process leading up to the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027

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## A. New Proposal for the EU Youth Strategy

With the [current EU Youth Strategy](#) (European Cooperation Framework in the Field of Youth) coming to an end this year (2010-2018), the European Commission has launched a [Communication](#) containing a proposal for the future EU Youth Strategy for the period 2019-2027.

This briefing note will guide you through the timeline towards the adoption of the EU Youth Strategy, give an overview of the Commission's proposal, introduce the European Youth Forum (YFJ) analysis, as well as provide relevant resources.

## B. Timeline towards the adoption of the EU Youth Strategy

### Who are the key actors and how it will be adopted?

The EU cooperation in field of youth is governed by the [Open Method of Coordination](#), where decisions made at the EU level are not legally binding and Member States are participating voluntarily. That is because the youth policy is a competence of Member States and the EU can play only supportive and coordinating role. However, it is seen as valuable both by the Member States and the European Commission, so there is a strong ground for cooperation.

In this governance model the following steps lead to the adoption of the EU Youth Strategy:

1. The European Commission issues a Communication on the next EU Youth Strategy, containing concrete proposals and initiatives. It further invites the Member States to adopt the proposal.
2. Member States, based on the Communication from the European Commission, negotiate the next EU Youth Strategy. Negotiations take place first at a technical level, within the [Youth Working Party of the Council of the EU](#).
3. When Member States have reached an agreement in the Youth Working Party, Ministers, at political level, adopt the Council Resolution, establishing the next EU Youth Strategy.

### What is the timeline towards the next EU Youth Strategy?



## C. Overview of the proposal from the European Commission

The proposal has two-fold approach, focusing on 3 main areas of action (so called core youth policy or vertical youth policy), and proposing tools for mainstreaming youth issues across different policies. The actions are proposed for both the Member States and the European Commission.

### 3 main areas of action:

1. **ENGAGE: encouraging young people's participation in civic and democratic life.**

What are the key initiatives under this action?

- **EU Youth Dialogue:** restructuring the Structured Dialogue and developing new EU Youth Dialogue;

One of the main objectives of the EU Youth Dialogue is **to reach out to more young people**. Strong emphasis is also put on the **implementation and follow-up**. The proposal<sup>1</sup> keeps **the 18 months cycles, led by Trio Presidencies**, as well as the existing working structures, such as **National Working Groups** that lead the process on a national level and connects it to the EU level. During each cycle there will be **3 EU Youth Conferences, each one with it's own purpose**.

The first EU Youth Conference would bring together **diverse young people** and use methods of Blue Sky Thinking. The second conference would bring together **representatives of National Working Groups** to discuss outputs from national discussions and consultations, and select the best and relevant proposals. The third Conference would bring together **European and national decision-makers, as well as youth representatives at EU and national levels**, who would agree on an action plan for implementation and agree on indicators to measure progress;

- Developing a **Youth Portal** as a digital tool for young people to interact with EU, consolidating all information coming from EU for young people on the same platform;
- Promoting youth participation, including **participation in elections**;
- Promoting **youth participation in decision-making on all levels** within Member States, including through National Youth Councils.

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<sup>1</sup>Commission Staff Working Document: Results of the open method of coordination in the youth field 2010-2018, p. 64, 65:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth\\_swd\\_168\\_1\\_en\\_autre\\_document\\_travail\\_service\\_part1\\_v6.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth_swd_168_1_en_autre_document_travail_service_part1_v6.pdf)

**2. CONNECT: connecting young people across the EU and beyond to promote volunteering, opportunities to learn abroad, solidarity and intercultural understanding.**

What are the key initiatives under this action?

- Supporting implementation of the **European Solidarity Corps**, and promoting **cross-border volunteering** and **local solidarity**;
- **Revising [2008 Council Recommendation on cross-border mobility of young volunteers](#)**, with inputs from to be established Commission Expert Group<sup>2</sup>;
- Reviewing and **removing legal and administrative barriers** existing on a national level to cross-border solidarity;
- Promoting **recognition of volunteering experiences** and validation of learning outcomes.

**3. EMPOWER: support youth empowerment through quality youth work.**

What are the key initiatives under this action?

- **Supporting grassroots activities** addressing recognition, innovation and capacity building **of youth work under Erasmus+**;
- Developing **quality in the training of youth workers**, making sure that youth workers have necessary competences;
- **Adapting to digital opportunities** - developing digital youth work and making sure youth workers have the necessary digital competences to use technology and adapt their pedagogy;
- **Developing recognition tools** in line with the [2012 Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning](#) (national level);
- Reaching out to **all young people**, in particular those with **fewer opportunities**.

### **Horizontal areas for cooperation**

Alongside the 3 main areas of action, the European Commission has identified horizontal areas for cooperation<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup> The European Commission has planned to establish a Commission Expert Group to contribute to the revision of the 2008 Council Recommendation on cross-border mobility of young volunteers.

<sup>3</sup> Commission Communication on the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, p. 9:

[https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth\\_com\\_269\\_1\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v9.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth_com_269_1_en_act_part1_v9.pdf)

- Education - training;
- Employment - entrepreneurship;
- Health, including mental health;
- Poverty - social exclusion;
- Integration of youth with migrant background;
- Internet - media literacy;
- Sustainability - climate change.

While these areas are listed, it is not entirely clear how the implementation instruments will address them and how the EU Youth Strategy will facilitate that youth is given importance within these areas.

#### **D. What are the main implementation instruments of the EU Youth Strategy?**

- **Policy development at the EU and Member States' level:** for example, through Council Recommendations or national policy and legislation. This also includes evidence-based policy making and reports and studies commissioned by the EU;
- Introducing **National Action Plans** - national level action plans that each Member State would set up. These plans should draw on cross-sectoral cooperation between youth and other policy areas. Countries also will be asked to set targets for themselves (self-benchmarking) and outline how they will be reached;
- **Mutual learning and sharing of good practices** between Member States, as well as organising peer-reviews. It includes setting up **Commission Expert Groups** on specific topics to facilitate mutual learning or deliver specific output, such as contribute to revision of Council Recommendation on cross-border mobility of young volunteers or develop practical toolkits;
- **Using EU funding programmes** to achieve the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy, such as Erasmus+, Youth Employment initiative, European Solidarity Corps (yet to be adopted) etc.;
- Introducing **tracking of the EU Spending on young people**. It would concern tracking how much funding from EU programmes<sup>4</sup> is spent on individual young people.

#### **E. How the EU Youth Strategy will be governed on the EU level?**

The European Commission is proposing to establish an **EU Youth Strategy Platform** to give stakeholders a role in coordinating the implementation of the Strategy, offering

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<sup>4</sup> Notably Erasmus+; European Solidarity Corps; Employment and Social innovation Programme; Horizon 2020; Creative Europe; Europe for Citizens; Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme; EU Health Programme; Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (COSME); Youth Employment Initiative; European Structural and Investment Funds; Young Farmers' Scheme (Common Agricultural Policy); EU Aid Volunteer; European Neighbourhood Instrument.

opportunities to exchange information on activities and results. It would bring together representatives of youth organisations, civil society organisations, EU institutions, and social partners. The platform would meet at least once a year, and in between there can be organised separate stakeholders' meetings.

Another innovation that is proposed is the **EU Youth Coordinator**, that would be “*an adviser working in the services, supported by the Directorate General in charge of youth policy. The Coordinator’s tasks would include leading the new EU Youth Dialogue on the Commission side, processing views of young people and the results of the EU Youth Dialogue to share them with relevant Commission services as well as relating with the European Parliament and national policy-makers. The Coordinator would also serve as a first contact point for young people and their representatives and steer information and communication actions directed at young people, in cooperation with other relevant parts of the Commission.*”<sup>5</sup>

The Commission is proposing **to keep the EU Work Plans on Youth** that are adopted by the Council every 2-3 years and outline what Member States and the Commission will do in the concrete period of time.

**Monitoring** will be done through [YouthWiki](#), [EU Youth Indicators' Dashboard](#), as well as **new set of policy indicators** that will measure the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (to be developed). Countries will report on the implementation of the National Action Plans to the European Commission.

## **F. European Youth Forum analysis of the proposal**

### **Overview**

The European Youth Forum [welcomes](#) the proposal from the European Commission, recognising that it establishes strong framework for cooperation over the next 9 years. Several initiatives proposed in this Strategy lack clarity over how they will be implemented, therefore the Youth Forum will be closely following further developments and come with own vision on the implementation.

We welcome the fact that the [Youth Forum Resolution](#) and proposals for [the governance of the next EU Youth Strategy](#) and the [Structured Dialogue](#) that have been developed with Member Organisations, are widely reflected in the proposal. That is a result of good cooperation with the European Commission throughout the preparation phase.

### **Main observations**

After analysis of the proposal, taking the Youth Forum Resolution and proposals as a basis, we have identified things to improve, as well as actions that we would like to see being kept. Here are the main observations:

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<sup>5</sup> Commission Communication on the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, p. 8:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth\\_com\\_269\\_1\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v9.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth_com_269_1_en_act_part1_v9.pdf)

1. **List of horizontal areas of cooperation needs to be elaborated on** (the list can be found earlier in this briefing) - the Youth Forum welcomes the structure with two-fold approach, where core youth policy has clear actions and key initiatives that are planned, and is complemented with topics for cross-sectoral cooperation. However, we are concerned that at the moment these topics are only listed, without clear indication how the cooperation within these areas will take place<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, there is a risk that no actions will be taken within the horizontal areas.

In order for the cooperation to be truly cross-sectoral, **we want to have a specific reference in the Strategy on how these horizontal areas will be reflected in the EU Work Plans for Youth, and how the implementation of the Strategy will be monitored by the EU Youth Strategy Platform**, connecting different institutions and stakeholders.

2. **Role of the National Youth Councils within the new EU Youth Dialogue** - while we welcome the proposal for the new EU Youth Dialogue, and the objective to reach out to more young people from diverse backgrounds, we need to make sure that it is not done without the involvement of National Youth Councils or undermines the invaluable work the youth organisations are carrying out. More importantly, we need to make sure that National Youth Councils are empowered to reach out to more young people, and that includes allocation of sufficient funding for it.

**The Youth Forum together with the Member Organisations has a responsibility to work with the Member States to ensure that this role is clearly reflected and defined** in the Council Resolution and no one is questioning it.

3. **The EU Youth Coordinator needs to be a cross-sectoral instrument** - the current proposal is not clear, and we will need to monitor closely how it is implemented. The main purpose of such coordinator needs to be mainstreaming of youth issues across different Commission directorates and other EU institutions. Considering that the Youth Forum has been calling for more effective mainstreaming instruments within the EU, we will advocate towards the European Commission for the EU Youth Coordinator to have this function. We welcome this proposal and are convinced we can still shape this instrument to contribute to better youth policy in Europe.
4. **Proposal on National Action Plans is a success** - the Youth Forum welcomes the proposal to introduce the National Action Plans. In fact, we have been calling for it ourselves and the proposed structure is very close to what we wanted. Now we need to **get full support of Member States**, as well as **make sure that Member States ensure that youth organisations will be closely involved** in design, implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plans.

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<sup>6</sup> The only concrete reference on it is concerning the National Action Plans where countries will need to draw-up cross-sectoral initiatives, also within these fields of action.

5. **The EU Youth Strategy Platform is welcomed** - in the Resolution on the next EU Youth Strategy the Youth Forum called for coordination of implementation, bringing together different stakeholders and institutions. We welcome the proposed EU Youth Strategy Platform, especially seeing that it is a window for civil society to engage in the implementation and monitoring. Connecting it to the action in the horizontal areas (see paragraph 1), **we need to make sure that the work and influence of this Platform covers** not only the main 3 areas of action proposed in the Strategy, but **also the listed horizontal areas.**
6. **Tracking of EU funding on youth will be useful for our advocacy** - the Youth Forum welcomes this initiative that will contribute to transparency on how EU funding is spent. Furthermore, it will be useful information to advance the advocacy for more investment in youth.
7. **The Youth Work agenda needs to be inclusive for all young people and youth workers** - the Youth Forum welcomes the recognition of importance of youth work and the strong presence of youth work in the proposal. It is important to connect the work that the Council of Europe is doing on youth work with the new Youth Work agenda, to not duplicate between the two institutions, but rather complement each other.

**We need to make sure that youth organisations have a strong role and place in the new Youth Work Agenda** and are fully included in all developments on the national and EU level. That includes support for youth organisations (including financial support), but also recognition of voluntary youth workers that are predominantly working in the NGO sector.

8. **Lacking of rights-based approach and principles of non-discrimination and equality** - the current proposal **entirely lacks rights-based approach** to youth policy, that acknowledges that young people are rights-holders and policy makers need to work towards the long term fulfillment of their rights. Further principles as equality and non-discrimination that are outlined in the current strategy, are left out in the proposal. **We need to work with Member States to get these approaches reflected in the new Strategy**, and for Member States to commit to measures that would advance youth rights.
9. **Youth Organisations should be empowered** - the narrative to reach out to more diverse young people is the one of youth organisations as well and policy-makers should be made more aware of it. We need strong youth organisations to be able to do it, and Member States should support us in this call. Additionally, **youth organisations should be involved in decision-making processes, and their role should be even stronger emphasises in the text.**

## **G. Next Steps**

- Continuously working with the European Commission to shape implementation of their proposals, addressing our concerns. It includes working on the implementation of the Youth Dialogue, EU Youth Strategy Platform and the EU Youth Coordinator.
  - Working with the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of Regions to input in their opinions on the next EU Youth Strategy.
  - Advocating our positions towards the Member States, addressing opportunities and concerns (we need your help here!) that we see in the proposal.
  - Closely following developments and positions of the Member States to map the situation (please share their positions - written or spoken, if you have discussed the Youth Strategy with them).
  - Coordinating with the Member Organisations for better advocacy actions through the informal network on the EU Youth Strategy on Basecamp.
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### **Are you interested in following the developments closer?**

We have informal network on the EU Youth Strategy on Basecamp where we exchange information on developments and coordinate between each other.

You can join the informal network by sending a request to Līva Vikmane, Policy Officer on Youth Policy ([liva.vikmane@youthforum.org](mailto:liva.vikmane@youthforum.org)).

### **H. Useful resources**

- [Commission Communication on the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#)
- [Staff Working Document \(2018\) 168 on the results of the open method of coordination in the youth field 2010-2018](#)
- [Commission Factsheet on the EU Youth Strategy](#)
- [Council Resolution on the European Cooperation Framework in the field of Youth 2010-2018](#)

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