



Empowering
young people

YES Forum's Statement on the Public consultation on the mid-term evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027)

As stated by EU institutions, the EU Youth Strategy is an important framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027 with crucial instruments to make significant change towards a social and inclusive Europe. Together with the 11 European Youth Goals the Strategy provides a vision for young people to become active citizens in their country, and agents of solidarity and positive change inspired by EU values and a European identity.

The main goals of the European Youth Strategy (EYS) - Engage, Connect, and Empower - can only be achieved in a socially and fair Europe, which requires active engagement and effort from Member States to **build a bridge to the European Pillar of Social Rights**.

This statement outlines the importance of **recognizing and accommodating the diversity of young people** within EU member states and advocates for **the reactivation of monitoring of youth policies and initiatives' impact** to meet these challenges effectively.

1. Addressing Country and Regional Specificities

The EU acknowledges that European youth is not a homogeneous group. Each local group possesses unique characteristics, needs, and demands. The realities faced by young people in different countries, such as the Netherlands and Romania, can differ significantly. Moreover, what might be urgent for young people in one region of a country might not be as important for those in another region of the same country. This highlights the importance of addressing country and regional specificities when formulating youth policies and initiatives.

2. Enhancing the European Youth Dialogue

To ensure that the next cycles of the European Youth Dialogue are more effective, it is crucial to better address country and regional specificities. This can be achieved through targeted efforts to engage local communities, youth councils, and grassroots organizations. By

Involving young people directly in the policymaking process, the EU can gain valuable insights into their needs and aspirations and tailor its strategies accordingly.

3. Building a Bridge to the European Pillar of Social Rights

The success of the EYS goals - Engage, Connect, Empower - hinges on the creation of a social and fair Europe. Member States must fulfil their responsibility by implementing youth strategies that align with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. This integration will ensure that young people have equal opportunities, access to quality education, decent work, and adequate support for their mental well-being, poverty reduction, and access to public transport.

4. Addressing Post-Crisis Challenges

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and economic challenges across the EU, young people have faced profound impacts on their lives. Policymakers must consider the specific needs of young people in vulnerable situations, including those from rural areas, minority groups, and those far from structured dialogue or youth councils. By involving these groups in decision-making processes, the EU can develop more inclusive and representative policies.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure that youth policies and initiatives are effective and inclusive, it is crucial to reactivate the monitoring of their impact within Member States. By understanding the diversity of young people's realities, the EU can identify and address gaps in its strategies, making continuous improvements to meet the evolving challenges faced by young Europeans.

The report on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2021)¹ lacks substantial data and information on concrete results and impact of the EYS in the Member States. Also,

¹ Report from The Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2021) COM/2021/636 final <https://shorturl.at/ioMN5> accessed on 2 August 2023

it provides only very general information on the situation of young people in Europe in that period.

6. Communicating the EU Youth Strategy

One significant challenge in evaluating the effectiveness of the European Youth Strategy (EYS) is the lack of transparency and updated documentation regarding the results and impact of its implementation. To effectively assess the strategy's outcomes and identify areas of improvement, it is crucial to easily find relevant data and information. This includes details on the instruments used to evaluate the strategy, such as publication of the results of the expert groups and the peer learning exercise of the Member States. Without a clear understanding of the actions developed so far, and the results presented, it becomes challenging to measure the strategy's effectiveness and impact on young people's lives.

Thus, we urgently call to make the European Youth Portal the planned reference portal to promote the Strategy and the publications of results from expert groups and peer learning exercises of the Member States. The existing library can play a pivotal role in enhancing transparency and accessibility of information related to the EYS. To ensure its usefulness, the library must be regularly updated with relevant research, reports, and data on youth-related issues, policy interventions, and the outcomes of the EYS. Only a comprehensive and up-to-date repository of information will empower stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers to make evidence-based decisions and drive positive change for European youth.

Overall, our position emphasizes that **recognizing and addressing the diversity of young people within the EU member states is essential for creating inclusive and effective youth policies**. By reinforcing Member States' commitment to the European Youth Strategy and **aligning it with the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU can foster a social and fair Europe that provides equal opportunities for all young people**. Active engagement with local communities and the reactivation of monitoring efforts will ensure that youth policies remain responsive to the ever-changing needs and aspirations of young Europeans.

However, evaluating the effectiveness of the European Youth Strategy is dependent on transparency, access to updated documentation, and the availability of relevant data. By sharing the results of expert groups and peer learning exercises, the EYS's impact can be better understood and measured. Updating the existing library with the latest research and data will further support evidence-based decision-making and enable stakeholders to collaborate effectively in building a more inclusive and impactful youth strategy.

To create impact and successfully implement the EU Youth Strategy we call on all stakeholders to address country and regional specificities to cater to the diverse needs of young Europeans. **We also emphasized the importance of transparent and updated documentation on the strategy's implementation and results.**

By working collaboratively and proactively addressing the highlighted points, we can ensure that the EU Youth Strategy becomes a powerful tool in shaping a brighter future for European youth, promoting social inclusion, and empowering young people to reach their full potential.

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About the YES Forum

Founded in 2002, YES Forum is a European network of organisations working with and for young people facing challenging situations. By promoting their social inclusion and developing their professional skills, we act to improve the life chances of vulnerable young people. YES Forum aims to create an environment where young people and youth professionals have equally accessible learning and work-related opportunities in Europe and beyond.