



GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP AND MANAGING YOUTH ADVISORY STRUCTURES IN EU DELEGATIONS

European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships
(DG INTPA)



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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Youth Action Plan (YAP)¹ in the European Union external action (2022-2027) is the policy framework for a strategic partnership of the EU with young people around the world to build a more resilient, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable future. It aims at enhancing meaningful youth participation and empowerment in the EU's external action policies and actions.

One of the flagship YAP commitments is the setup of a Youth Sounding Board (YSB) for EU International Partnerships and the creation of youth advisory structures (YAS) in EU Delegations (EUDs). These structures are groups of young people that play an advisory role and help make EU action more participatory, relevant and effective for young people in EU partner countries.

This document offers guidance for setting up and managing youth advisory structures in EUDs, as well as background information and practical advice on the setup and operation of youth advisory structures in EUDs.

The Guidelines start with a discussion on issues regarding youth participation and youth empowerment as key driving forces behind youth advisory structures. The Guidelines present a number of examples of youth advisory structure models and approaches.

¹ [Youth Action Plan in EU External Action \(2022-2027\)](#).

The step by step part of the Guidelines goes into the why and the how of setting up youth advisory structures. It offers insights into key areas of motivation behind the advisory structures including policy and value issues, as well as essential benefits and advantages of permanent advisory structures for youth.

Furthermore, the Guidelines offer insights into the process of setting up, launching and operating the youth advisory structures. Issues of needs, capacity, diversity and sustainability are discussed.

Finally, the practical aspects of the setup process, launch and early stages of operation as well as more permanent and long-term operational solutions are presented.

The above is supported by practical examples, templates and guidance documents which are annexed to the Guidelines.²

² For the elaboration of these guidelines, experts have reviewed existing experiences from EU institutions (Youth Sounding Board for International Partnerships and youth advisory structures in EUDs), from Member States and other stakeholders.

1. Key terms

Participation

Participation in decision-making is a fundamental right and an essential element of democratic citizenship. Involving target groups in decision-making not only makes policy and programmes more relevant and sustainable, but also creates an environment that fosters engagement among citizens to engage with the communities in which they live. Active citizenship, which is one of the cornerstones of the EU agenda, means strong agency, where participation ideally leads to opinions being heard and acted upon.

Participation in democratic processes has been a key governance strategy of modern states. Active citizenship has been promoted as a means to empower people while helping close the perceived gap between public authorities and citizens. As a result, empowering people to co-create through participation and taking responsibility to address their own everyday problems has become the advocated strategy.³ However, taking action is not as straightforward. In fact, there are multiple external and internal variables that influence willingness to participate.

Prominent external variables include the socioeconomic and political context, as well as general access to material resources and education, while internal variables can be feelings of hope and hopelessness or willingness to effect change and take action.

Youth participation

Youth participation refers to the involvement of young people in decision-making processes on issues that predominantly affect them directly. In short, "Youth participation is about exercising rights and having opportunities, equal access, support and responsibility to participate and influence decisions, and to be systematically engaged in actions and activities that help to strengthen a society based on EU values."⁴

Youth participation can manifest itself differently depending on the social, political and cultural context, from sharing social media posts about relevant issues, to creating platforms to engage in dialogue with policy-makers.

Enabling youth participation is about creating opportunities and empowering young people to be involved in decision-making processes on issues that affect them, and supporting them in exercising active citizenship.

³ Smith, S., & Dalakiouridou, E. (2009). Contextualising public (e) Participation in the governance of the European Union. *European Journal of ePractice*, 7(11), 47-50.

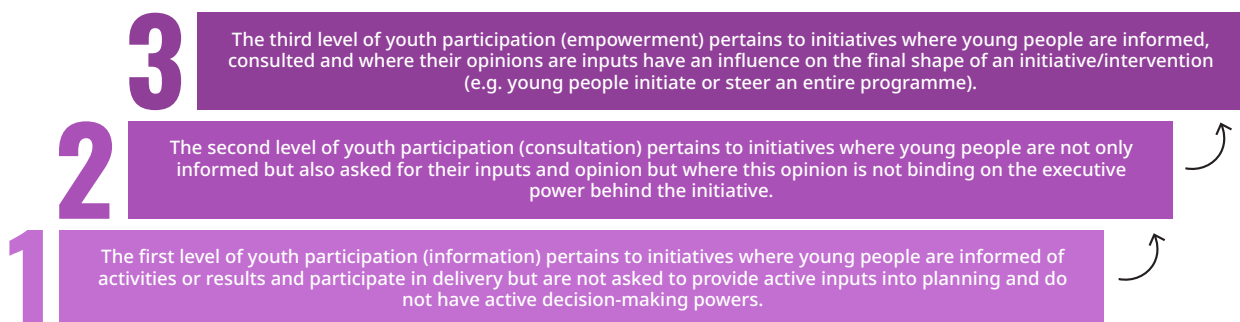
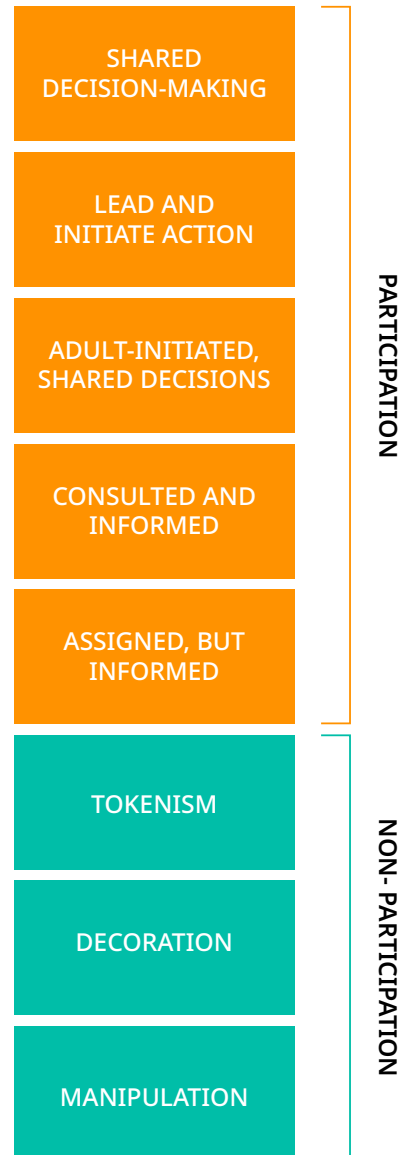
⁴ Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on strengthening the multilevel governance when promoting the participation of young people in decision-making processes, 8766/21, May 2021.

In Roger Hart's (1992)⁵ "ladder of participation", eight steps represent the varying degrees of participation, from the lowest (least engaging) to the highest (most active). Steps one through three – "manipulation", "decoration" and "tokenism", refer to non-participatory instances of youth not really understanding or even consenting to the full extent to the issues under discussion. These first three steps can sometimes be caused by adults undermining youths' capability to understand, and mostly caused by overall unwillingness to explain and listen to young people's voices.

The next five steps under the umbrella of "degrees of participation" refer to varying degrees of involvement and responsibility, which is appropriate to the youth depending on their background, education, cultural context and pedagogical abilities. Some scholars consider these five steps to be different but equal forms of participation, which can be utilised depending on the context.⁶

Youth participation is key to youth empowerment. Youth empowerment cannot be achieved without the active participation of young people. As illustrated by Hart's ladder, participation is a multi-faceted term and is usually approached as a range of actions and approaches.

Most models of participation originate from the above-mentioned study of citizenship and community work (Hart 1992) and are vertical (ladder, scale). Such vertical models of participation assume that participation comes in a variety of forms, from de-facto non-participatory ones (tokenism, decoration) to fully participatory citizen control forms (co-decision, full empowerment), and that the transition from one to another is not linear and reversible. (See graphic below)



⁵ Hart, R. A. (1992). *Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship*.

⁶ Kellett, M. (2011). *Engaging Children and Young People*. Centre for Children and Young People Background Briefing Series, no.3. Lismore: Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University.

Although participation is widely recognised as essential in youth policymaking and implementation, it remains an aspiration more than reality. Following a series of EU Council conclusions since 2018, there is an increased emphasis on giving young people a seat at the table where they can voice their opinions, but also where these will be heard and acted upon. Considering contextual differences, the essence of youth participation comes down to empowerment, and providing an enabling environment for effective engagement and inclusion. The success of such an environment depends on the right conditions and all relevant actors, including policymakers taking responsibility for ensuring that these conditions are present.⁷

Youth empowerment

Youth empowerment can be understood in two ways:

- As an input process: the empowerment of youth by the adults around them
- As the output of a process: young people having greater control over their lives, being empowered by participating in democratic processes.

A number of international organisations and cooperation partners targeting youth in Europe and worldwide share a basic understanding of empowerment as the result of a process of engaging young people (participation) in decisions that affect them and their communities. Youth empowerment is about the ability to take charge of one's own life and create greater community change.

As empowerment is best achieved through meaningful participation, it is different from youth development. This is mostly because youth development is centred on developing individuals, while empowerment is focused on creating greater community change, which relies on the development of individual capacity. This entails enhanced control through shared decision-making, and creation of opportunities to learn, practice, and increase skills.

Enabling environment for meaningful youth participation

Meaningful youth participation is an inclusive, intentional and mutually respectful partnership between young people and their communities (including decision-makers). In this environment, power is shared, contributions are valued, and young people are enabled to share ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths that inform the design and implementation of programmes, strategies, policies, funding mechanisms and organisations that affect their lives and their communities, countries and the world.

⁷ For a comprehensive overview of enabling factors, see 'Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life': "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." ([Youth participation - Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#)).

The EU has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to promote an environment where young people can meaningfully participate and has taken deliberate actions. The EU is therefore supporting youth participation through its external action programming, including through civil society initiatives as well as in cooperation with partner country governments.

At the same time, the EU has also highlighted and addressed the shortcomings within its own structures, acknowledging the need to recognise young people as partners. A key challenge is how to sustain meaningful participation in an environment where young people can still feel empowered to express their opinions and where these are perceived and accepted on an equal level. As the lack of a conducive environment for participation can lead to disinterest among all involved, it is essential to introduce structural measures which can ensure that when young people are encouraged to speak up, they are also listened to. Establishing youth advisory structures, either at headquarters or at EUDs is one of the approaches chosen to fulfil the EU commitment to more meaningful youth participation.

2. Youth advisory structures

2.1 An overview on importance, purpose and nature of selected existing structures

Young people's engagement can be promoted in different ways, some complementary and some mutually exclusive. Not all contexts lend themselves to a single type of engagement, so it is important to consider both flexible and structured methods to build a group of young people who become active. Depending on the social and political climate, EUDs may consult young people to varying degrees and in different forms, and at different stages of a process. Even if some of the engagement may remain limited in scope for reasons beyond the EUDs' control, a close and transparent relationship with young people should be maintained so that they feel welcome at every level and in every form of participation. Meaningful participation should be the goal of any form or level of participation.

One approach to youth engagement in development cooperation is the establishment of a youth advisory structure (YAS). YAS is an umbrella term for various forms of youth advisory bodies, covering all forms of regular and structured youth engagement. Different terms, often derived from the nature and purpose of the structure itself, can be applied to different YAS formats. A range of names are used by different organisations, including Youth Sounding Board, Youth Advisory Board, Youth Advisory Council, Youth Panel, Youth Consultative Group or Committee and similar.

A youth advisory structure usually consists of a group of young people selected to engage in a dialogue on youth-related issues and provide a youth perspective on policy, projects or

processes. Youth advisory structures can be small or large, online or offline, formal or informal, long-term or ad-hoc, thematic or interdisciplinary. A number of EUDs have so far consulted youth mainly on an ad-hoc basis, involving youth when the Delegation deems it appropriate or required. Such consultations often take the form of meetings, events, conferences, training sessions, focus groups, surveys, competitions, awareness-raising activities and communication activities.

An established youth structure can provide EUDs with a means to reach a diverse group of young people and, conversely, allow youth representatives to approach delegations to provide a youth perspective and raise real-life issues.

A youth advisory structure can be established at different stages and levels within a country programme (MIP), either as a general mechanism addressing overall priority areas, or linked to a specific priority area or precise programme or process, with a more limited scope. Depending on the moment of the intervention cycle, the composition and scope of the structure’s mandate may vary (see table below).

Programme phase	Potential role youth advisory structures can play...
Formulation	Explorative mandate, where the objective is to tap into the existing knowledge, experience and perspective of youth.
Implementation	Monitoring role, where programme implementation issues can be discussed.
Evaluation	Assessment role, providing input in the evaluation and closure of a programme.

Below are five example models for youth advisory structures. They are intended to show options from which a mix can be chosen or simply serve as an inspiration, as each structure will vary depending on the actual needs and country context, as well as the capacities and resources available at each EUD.

2.2 Sample models of youth advisory structures

MODEL 1: YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

Overall structure and composition	Permanent board (mandate for a set period of time) attached to the EUD composed of a group* of young people selected in line with specific criteria, mainly to ensure diversity and representativeness.
	<i>*The size of the group will depend on the priority areas, the objectives identified, and the diversity/representativeness sought. No less than 3 young people should be involved per priority area, while overlaps are possible and recommended.</i>
Role and function	The selected Youth Advisory Board is formally attached to the overall institutional structure and its cycles of decision-making to the highest possible extent.
Preparatory works/ Issues to consider	Following a coordinated priority-setting process conducted by an institutional task force under the supervision of a high-level official (e.g. the Head of Cooperation or the Ambassador), a set of priority needs and objectives to be addressed and worked on by the Youth Advisory Board will be identified. On this basis, Terms of Reference (ToR) will be developed by the same task force, providing a clear and agreed description of the role and responsibilities of the Youth Advisory Board, as well as technical details of its procedural functioning and interaction within the EUD.
Mode of operation	The Terms of Reference, a confidentiality agreement and a Code of Conduct (CoC) , agreed with the Youth Advisory Board at its inception phase, form the basis for the work of the Youth Advisory Board, both as a whole (e.g. on horizontal issues) and in thematic working groups (e.g. according to set priorities in thematic areas).
Meetings	It meets regularly according to a set work plan (which also takes into account internal decision-making procedures and processes), but also on an ad-hoc basis to level up/bringing the youth perspective into EUD policies and work processes, in areas that are both directly (e.g. education) and indirectly (e.g. infrastructure) related to young people.

As identified by EUD youth focal points during dedicated online and offline trainings:

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages/Challenges</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables working directly with young people • Can ensure diversity of different profiles • Can enable regular engagement that motivates members and in turn provides valuable input to EUD • Potentially enables greater visibility of EU • A more integrated approach that can lead to a better understanding of EU action, more transparency, trust and also better control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with the diversity of different profiles • May require more financial/human resources • Might not be appropriate or feasible in restrictive environments (political etc.) • May require high level involvement and representation (HOD, HOC) • Could lead to increased workload for the Youth Focal Point and other managers • Potentially challenging when measuring success and managing expectations

MODEL 2: YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Overall structure and composition

The committee will be composed of a group of young people initially nominated by civil society organisations (following an open or closed call) and then approved by the EUD according to specific criteria to ensure the greatest possible diversity according to institutional needs and set priorities. This group is not necessarily composed only of members of these organisations, as they may also be nominated on the basis of experience of working with them or appreciation of their expertise in a relevant field.

Role and function

The Youth Advisory Committee will mainly be **consulted on an ad-hoc basis, and provide advisory support as needed.**

Preparatory works/ Issues to consider

The committee acts on the basis of a previously prepared **terms of reference** and is bound by a **code of conduct** including a **confidentiality agreement**. Note that a confidentiality agreement is not necessarily required as a standard procedure for all meetings under this model, especially when young people are asked for thematic feedback in areas that are not formal in nature. In such cases, confidentiality may even become an obstacle if, for example, young people need to approach their interlocutors to obtain relevant information.

NOTE

The rather loose structure and irregular work schedule of the Youth Advisory Committee entails the risk that persons with particular experience and expertise in one area or another may not be available as soon as a corresponding need arises. It is therefore recommended to **consider collaboration with a wide group of civil society organisations (CSOs)** that focus on a variety of areas, which can ensure that there is always sufficient expertise available in a particular area when it is needed, also on an ad-hoc basis.

The Youth Advisory Committee is not merely an advisory body, since they are also indirectly representing the civil society organisation that has nominated them. Therefore, a deliberate communication and decision-making plan should ensure that advice provided by the committee is properly reflected in the wider decision-making process and communicated with the respective CSOs. This, alongside increased ownership, would also help to further enhance EUD collaboration with the CSOs.

Mode of operation

The Youth Advisory Committee has a flexible work plan and its members, when available, will be asked mainly for advice on how to better integrate the youth dimension in new programmes and processes (across policy and programmes), as well as for youth representation in public events. This may include advice on the general preparation of an MIP, a mid-term review, a design of an action or a youth-focused activity, but also organisational and communication support for such events.

Meetings

It meets irregularly and mainly ad hoc, when needed.

As identified by EUD youth focal points during dedicated online and offline trainings:

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages/Challenges</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominations made by CSOs may assure presence of more qualified members • Can require minimum consultation due to higher qualification, and mean less workload for EUD • May allow for better empowerment of CSOs and increased diversity from across the communities • Can allow for quick and demand-based consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite more qualified members, expectations may bring challenges • Possible risk that the usual CSOs and those nominated by them want to advance their agendas and agencies (Risk of hidden agenda and less control) • Limitation in assuring follow-up may bring risk of motivational challenges • Less transparency on the selection of the members may lead to trust issues

MODEL 3: YOUTH PROGRAMME CONSULTATIVE ASSISTANCE

Overall structure and composition	The group is composed of both young people directly affected by a particular action targeting youth that is subject to consultation, as well as independent observers. The group can be appointed for the entire period of the action, following an open call or nominated by CSOs (or a mix of both approaches).
Role and function	As the name of the model suggests, the group of young people under this model focus mainly on youth and youth-related assistance and support provided by the EUD through a particular country-specific action, programme or project, explicitly addressing young people’s needs (in contrast to the previous models with a multi-sectoral focus).
Preparatory works / Issues to consider	For the smooth and meaningful consultative involvement of young people throughout the entire cycle of the action a clear mechanism and plan needs to be prepared, considering different phases of the respective action.
Mode of operation	Depending on the scope and size of the action, support activities may include involvement in one phase or in the whole intervention cycle, starting from needs assessment and overall formulation, through to assessment and selection of tenders, monitoring of the action, and finally to evaluation of its implementation as well as recommendations for possible follow-up actions. Another important role of the group can also entail dissemination of the results achieved through a variety of social media tools and other media outlets.
Meetings	The group should meet regularly for consultative processes at certain milestones of the respective action.

As identified by EUD youth focal points during dedicated online and offline trainings:

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages/Challenges</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide both ad-hoc consultation and wider permanence (throughout the project cycle) • Can improve awareness and understanding of the whole project/programming cycle • Potentially less costly (financially and in terms of human resources) • Allows for a more targeted and sectoral approach with a focus on youth issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be less sustainable (time-limited) and more informal • Potential risk of less inclusivity and visibility • May not address issues other than those tackled in the project and those of its target group • Risk of limited member engagement due to time and scope constraints

MODEL 4: THEMATIC YOUTH GROUPS (PER THEMATIC SECTOR)

Overall structure and composition	For each thematic priority sector, depending on the EUD's country plan (Multi-Annual Indicative Programme, MIP), a small group of young people will be advising the different sections or sector on work processes and programmes. The group is selected per sector according to set criteria, whereby general interest and expertise in the respective thematic area plays an important role in parallel to overall diversity criteria.
Role and function	The groups primarily provide feedback on the youthfulness (active youth participation and empowerment) of planned initiatives and activities.
Preparatory works / Issues to consider	In contrast to model 1, this model mainly focuses on a certain priority sector, ensuring that the youth dimension is well integrated in the overall programming of the respective sector. In the event that several sectors make use of such a model, deliberate collaboration between the thematic youth groups as a measure to enable a cross sectoral approach is recommended.
Mode of operation	The thematic youth groups operate on a regular basis, follow terms of reference and are bound by a Code of Conduct and confidentiality agreement . While they will mainly be active in the respective planning phase, they may also be asked for further support in monitoring and evaluating the respective activities in line with defined indicators to ensure sufficient and meaningful youth participation and empowerment.
Meetings	The group should meet on an ad-hoc basis, particularly during the preparation/planning phase of actions under respective thematic priority sectors.

As identified by EUD youth focal points during dedicated online and offline trainings:

Advantages	Disadvantages/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially benefiting from more specialised/ sectoral youth opinion • Optionally both, mobilising ad-hoc or regular support for mainstreaming youth across sectors • Benefit of working with like-minded groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of low commitment, and ergo less sustainability and availability • Potentially not inclusive, hence not targeting most vulnerable groups • Risks over confidentiality

MODEL 5: COLLABORATION WITH EXTERNAL (OR EXTERNALLY MANAGED) YOUTH ADVISORY STRUCTURES

Overall structure and composition	This model mainly refers to the possible cooperation with existing youth advisory structures set up by other stakeholders and agencies, e.g. with an existing national youth council in the country, a UN body or an existing structure that is working with one of the EU Member State embassies, if suitable. Alternatively, the establishment of a youth advisory structure can be outsourced and managed, on behalf of the EUD, by an external institution such as a CSO or a consulting firm with competencies in the field of youth and civil society.
Role and function	In this model, the role and function of the structure would depend heavily on the nature of the group and its primary functions within the respective agency or national council, and the extent to which these can formally or informally be utilised for the benefit of the EUD in achieving its objectives and meeting its needs. In the case of possible outsourcing, any of the previous models or a mix of them in terms of role and function can be considered, with the difference that the group(s) will be managed externally but primarily for the benefit of the EUD to meet its needs in actively engaging and working with young people.
Preparatory works / Issues to consider	Extensive research needs to be carried out on existing structures within other development assistance structures and their relevance to EUD priorities and objectives, as well as the feasibility of working together in a common framework. Cooperation can be sought, for example, with EU Member States' representations in the country (e.g. DANIDA and the Netherlands Development Agency have already established similar structures in a number of partner countries) or with UN bodies. Other development organisations can be considered, such as Plan International, with relevant experience in engaging with young people as part of their own mandate and providing support to national and international counterparts.
Mode of operation	The mode of operation will much depend on the structure and type of collaboration identified and agreed upon.
Meetings	Same as above.

As identified by EUD youth focal points during dedicated online and offline trainings:

Advantages	Disadvantages/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reduce workload for EUD • Opportunity to promote Team Europe approach (e.g. collaboration with embassies) for EU MS • Allowing for more accessibility, e.g. through use of existing platforms, and benefiting from insider knowledge by learning from the contractor's expertise • Can ensure sustainability through efficient use of project synergies (supported by other donors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of very limited control (including on selection) • Workload for young people may become too big as the contractor wants to fulfil expectations • Possibility of weak visibility and reporting that is not in line with EU rules and provisions • Trust issues may become high risk in case of misconduct by the contractor • Frequent procurement procedures, combined with high costs, are another set of challenges

3. Setting up youth advisory structures at EU Delegation level

3.1 Why set up youth advisory structures at EU Delegation level?

Beyond the institutional commitment taken up in the Youth Action Plan, youth engagement and participation are at the core of the EU's founding values and treaties, and called for by a number of internal and external policies. Additionally, strengthened and meaningful youth engagement can bring added value, and contribute to efficiency, innovation and enhanced impact.

Contributing to core EU values

Youth participation, although not explicitly listed among the EU core principles and values in the Lisbon Treaty (TEU), is very closely related to a number of founding principles of the Union.

Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) are the basis for EU action in the youth field. Article 165 in particular aims at encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. According to the TEU, the Union's objective is to promote its values and the well-being of its peoples as well as peace – which cannot be achieved without the active participation of youth. The latter is also highlighted in UN Security Council Resolution No. 2250, which states that “young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security”. Furthermore, the Union aims to combat social exclusion and discrimination and to promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and the protection of the rights of the child. All these values, in particular solidarity between generations (including youth) and the protection of the rights of the child, can only be fully realised if meaningful youth participation is ensured.

In addition, the TEU lists values related to the EU's relations with the rest of the world, which the Union seeks to uphold and promote, thereby contributing to the protection of the citizens of its partner countries. As the EU aims to contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, youth participation is indispensable, as also underlined by the Council conclusions on the role of youth in external action.

This means that all consultative mechanisms involving young people in EU external action directly speak to the very core EU values and contribute to a more meaningful realisation of EU values in practice. When setting up and running a youth advisory structure, its founding principles and rules of operation should always reflect and align with core EU values.

Linking internal and external policies

Youth policy is a relatively new policy area for EU institutions and structures, and youth participation approaches do not have a long track record in EU policy. Although the first official references to a European youth policy can be traced back to the 1957 European Economic Community (EEC), youth and youth policy played a minor role in the Union's operations until the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht. In the late 1990s, when the EU started cooperating more closely on social matters, the European Commission took a further step with the publication of the 2001 white paper "A new impetus for European youth". This was the catalyst for the evolution of EU youth policy. The paper suggested new ways of enabling young people to participate in public life, the improvement of information on European issues for young people, encouraging voluntary activities and increasing knowledge and understanding of youth-related issues. Since the early 2000s, EU cooperation in the field of youth has gone from strength to strength, leading first to the 2005 European Youth Pact, the development of the first EU Youth Strategy 2010-18 and then the second EU Youth Strategy 2019-27. 2022 was declared the European Year of Youth and brought youth policy and engagement to the fore. The Youth Action Plan in EU external action was adopted as part of the EU institutions' efforts to mark the European Year of Youth 2022 and its international dimension, shining a light on the important role of young people in building a better future – greener, more inclusive and digital.

Youth in EU external and development policies

Youth is a crosscutting element within the new European Consensus on Development.⁸ The EU Global Strategy and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) emphasise the importance of deepening the work on youth. In 2018, Youth was one of the key topics in the EU's relations with its bilateral, regional, continental and global partners, in particular in Africa. It is crosscutting and touching upon all strands of our external relations and cooperation; with three out of four young people living in EU partner countries, they naturally constitute a core target group and a major partner in international partnerships. Youth hence certainly remains a key track at the African Union (AU) – European Union (EU) Ministerial Summits, as well as at the AU-EU Summits.⁹

The June 2020 Council conclusions¹⁰ on youth in external action is the first high-level policy document to be issued by the EU that addresses youth in external action. The conclusions stress that young people are important change-makers and essential partners in the implementation of Europe's external action and development policy, and recognise their creative and innovative potentials and abilities.

The Council calls for investment in and work with, by and for youth, as key to building stronger, more legitimate, peaceful and democratic societies, where human rights and the rule of law are respected and where no one is left behind. The Council also highlights the importance of

⁸ [European Consensus on Development](#).

⁹ [6th European Union - African Union Summit: A Joint Vision for 2030](#).

¹⁰ [Youth in external action: Council adopts conclusions](#).

ensuring the meaningful inclusion and active participation of youth at all levels of society, the economy and politics.

As requested by the Council to the Commission and High Representative, a Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU External Action¹¹ (2022-2027) has been adopted in 2022. It outlines a horizontal approach to promote meaningful youth participation and empowerment for sustainable development, equality and peace, and establish a partnership with young people in EU external action. Council conclusions on the Youth Action Plan¹² approved in late 2022 support the involvement of young people worldwide in policymaking.

The YAP commits to establish youth advisory structures in most EUDs to enhance institutional youth engagement.

Effectiveness

Facilitating young people's participation through a youth advisory structure is an effective means of seeking young people's input in an organised, regular and comprehensive manner. Other approaches, such as ad-hoc consultations and event-based youth advisory mechanisms, may lack the long-term benefits of permanent advisory structures.

Through a long-term engagement process, young people develop valuable skills and become more familiar with policy cycles and programming modalities. These competencies can be applied not only in consultation processes, but also during the implementation and monitoring policy dialogues, and in their everyday lives in their communities.

This is also a useful argument when weighing the various advisory modalities against each other with limited resources. Long-term approaches based on a set of principles and modes of operation are conducive to more efficient use of funds and other administrative resources.

Ownership

A youth advisory structure in an EUD assures better ownership of the consultative process. In most advisory structures of this type, young people are included in a process that lasts a few months and sometimes a few years, depending on their modus operandi. This helps ensure that they identify better with the outcomes and results of their work and the process itself, and that they feel they have a stake and a decisive role in the process. When planning governing documents for the youth advisory body, it is important to always consider the ownership of the process and results by young people themselves so they feel they are central to the advisory process and not just accessories to it. This will definitely lead to more comprehensive and holistic support that is realistic and backed by those who are affected by it.

¹¹ [EU adopts the first Youth Action Plan in EU External Action.](#)

¹² [Youth Action Plan: Council involves young people in policy-making.](#)

Quality

As is the case with ownership, the long-term character of youth advisory structures integrated with an EUD and the regular involvement of young people across the consultation cycle contribute to better quality outputs. Advice generated over a series of meetings or through a long-term process can build on previously produced outputs and ensure a more qualitative input into a policy or programming process at hand. Furthermore, the long-term character of an integrated youth advisory structure allows for the planning of a capacity-building programme including activities that enhance young people's skills in providing advice in meetings and in writing, increasing the overall quality of the experience.

Innovation

Young people have a great capacity to innovate and break patterns of thinking. They can bring in not only new ideas but also new language and new paradigms, contributing to innovative and possibly more effective solutions to the issues faced. The added benefit of collective reflection in an integrated youth advisory structure is the potential to generate more and better ideas to resolve issues of shared concern, but also to simply questioning and re-thinking processes which may not make further sense.

3.2 Preparing for setup: Key elements to consider when setting up a youth advisory structure

Before setting up a youth advisory structure, there are a number of key elements to consider that are important in choosing the right model and deciding on the size and scope of the structure. The most essential considerations are listed and explained in detail below, including variations and scenarios that are either complementary or adjustable to specific situations and contexts. The direct suggestions in this section of the guidelines are directly addressed to the persons or teams assigned with the establishment of a youth advisory structure, such as the Youth Focal Point at the EUD or external consultants.

Know your needs

The first stage in setting up a youth advisory structure is to clarify **institutional needs** (i.e. what support you, the hierarchy and the rest of staff at EUD expect from young people) and what you can offer them in return. Remember that the establishment of a youth advisory structure is **not about adding another administrative committee**, but primarily about a voluntary advisory body to support the EUD in effectively integrating the youth dimension into its activities and programming. It is therefore necessary to reflect on how the different sectors or a selection of these, including administrative staff, can be involved and benefit from greater youth participation. Make sure that you do not create too high expectations either within your own structure or towards the young people. The support they provide should therefore be in line with your needs and expectations, while you should actually be able to provide structured opportunities for young people to actively engage rather than just attend meetings. This assumes in return that the needs are in line with the understanding of all staff within the EUD, at least among those affected by the new structure.

Know your capacity

The support needed by a youth advisory structure may vary depending on its size and activities. In this respect, overall support from hierarchy and the rest of staff as well as time and finances need to be carefully adapted to the planned size and type of activities needed by the respective youth advisory structure. While organising regular online meetings and working groups is less costly but possibly less effective and motivating, face-to-face meetings and greater involvement in the overall decision-making process require more resources (staff, funds, time) but can have a greater impact due to enhanced ownership, learning and continuity. They also help ensure continuation.

It can be convenient to appoint a **dedicated support person***, a 'one-stop shop' with relevant skills and knowledge to work with and facilitate engagement with young people. One way to keep costs down would be to increase the **responsibility and autonomy of the advisory group**. In line with a **self-made work plan**, the advisory group can ideally manage itself, with members of the advisory structure being able to oversee their own sub-groups, which can also help to reduce costs.



***DEDICATED SUPPORT PERSON?**

- Be focused but able to see the 'bigger picture'
 - Be very organised but flexible
 - Be patient and willing to listen
 - Be able to facilitate activities but not micro-manage
 - Be able to relate to youth and respect their views and ideas
 - Be able to maintain a high level of energy
 - Be approachable and friendly
- And yes, don't be a boss! This is not your board but that of the young people! A good sense of humour would also help a lot!

Know youth capacity

The young people involved in youth advisory structures are neither employees nor external consultants or otherwise engaged workers with a contract and a salary, bound by certain administrative and legal rules. It might be a little too naïve to believe that these young people would do so because they care deeply about the values of the EU, but they certainly see the EU as a tool, a doorway to achieve their goals. In most of the countries concerned, their engagement is not even officially recognised, let alone legally protected. These young people have a variety of reasons why they want to volunteer in this structure. Their main motivation may be driven by one or more issues of their concern where they see a great opportunity to make a difference through their involvement, or simply by the desire to use this opportunity as a career advancement. There can be many other reasons as well, but usually these two

or a combination of both are at the forefront, and both are very valid. For this purpose they invest their rather limited time, besides other obligations such as study, work, family or all of these, as well as their energy, knowledge and skills, and to a greater extent also their contacts and networks. In some countries with a difficult context, where there is lack of freedom of expression or assembly or even an armed conflict, they may also put a good portion of risk on the top of all these. And all free of charge. In return, they would like to see that they are actually **contributing to desired change**, in one way or another, **and learning**, and last but not least that their **efforts are recognised and valued**. These three interrelated prerequisites combined with the above-mentioned capacity limitations form the basis for the establishment of a youth advisory structure of any kind and must hence be the focal point of its future planning.

On recognition and valuation of voluntary efforts: There are many ways to recognise and appreciate volunteers, and you can find a wide range of practical tips and hints in this regard on the web. Besides these, here are three major recommendations:

1. It should be ensured that the work of volunteers does not entail any additional costs for them, while all costs related to their work should be covered and budgeted accordingly. Typical costs include travel, accommodation and catering for meetings as well as communication or dissemination costs (printing, digital connection, ...).
2. Official recognition of the work done by volunteers should be done on an individual and collective basis. While some are happy to receive public acknowledgements and official certificates, others, for various reasons (including safety), simply just want to know that they have helped others with their work. Make sure you take the right approach for everyone.
3. Providing additional learning opportunities and capacity-building support to volunteers is a great way to not only recognise their efforts, but also to enhance them. Volunteers often do not have the means to attend training and other learning opportunities to improve their skills in a particular area. Therefore, make sure they can benefit from capacity-building activities offered by EUD and its partners, preferably free of charge.

In addition to the above, let volunteers know that their work makes a difference through a transparent communication of results, show trust by offering them new tasks or roles where appropriate, keep them informed about steps, processes and changes, provide and receive honest feedback, and last but not least do not forget to thank them e.g. by providing some time and resources for the volunteers to get together socially.

Know youth diversity

What are the key criteria in your country and community context that can ensure the greatest possible diversity in a future youth advisory structure? The answer is complex and multi-faceted. First of all, you may think of age, gender and regional aspects. Issues such as thematic knowledge, educational and social background as well as conditional aspects such as health, economic circumstances, sexual identities also have to be considered. These are

followed by political, ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations, but also disability conditions and migration status, and last but not least, traditional specificities. This is an extensive list but may not yet consider all aspects of youth diversity. Let's take age as an example: Is a 17-year-old girl living in the countryside the same candidate as a 17-year-old girl from the capital, because both are the same age? Certainly not, and that wouldn't even be the case if both were from the same region, city or village. Again, a cross-section of all the above and more including skills, abilities and preferences play a role in shaping a young girl's identity and the issues related to her life. The key issue here is to find in a transparent manner the right balance in the group, also by making sure that this balance mirrors to some extent the reality in the country of concern. In this regard, working only with young university students may considerably make the work easier, but it may not represent the country's diversity, neglecting a wide range of other and possibly less visible groups. This means other ways need to be elaborated to achieve maximum possible diversity in the overall structure, be it in terms of agency or direct representation. Finding this balance can vary considerably depending on your resources, conditions and especially the country context and realities. One of the reasons why diversity cannot be sufficiently reached is the simple lack of time, finances and availability of certain groups. In some countries, volunteering is often possible for the privileged, while for others it is not compatible with daily needs. If you are unable to ensure full diversity in your group in terms of representation, you can consider introducing effective tools that better compensate for the efforts made (financial support, certificates, in-kind support, etc.) or work with those who advocate for others, e.g. marginalised youth groups from rural areas through youth organisations or an NGO.

One of the key aspects of diversity that influences YAS inclusion and day-to-day operation is language. The main language of the YAS should be preferably the one spoken by the majority of youth in the country. In case of multiple languages, EUD should consider interpretation support, where feasible. Selection of YAS members based on languages other than the official, or using an 'international' language (e.g. English/French/Portuguese) may reduce diversity and inclusion in the group. Contrary to ensuring diversity to the highest possible degree, requirement of the knowledge of foreign languages may only attract the more privileged and disadvantage young people with fewer opportunities.

Make it sustainable

Many factors play a role and should be considered in order to sustain a future youth advisory structure. Of course, these depend not only on the model or a mix of these that you have chosen with a view to creating the ideal youth advisory structure, but also on your timetable, the size of the group, the overall goal and the needs that lead to the objectives that support your approach.

However, there are some key factors in facilitating the ongoing struggle for sustainability, regardless of the model chosen and its objectives:

AGE VERSUS EXPERIENCE

It is understandable if you want to work with a group of advanced and qualified young people that you may tend to involve young people from a higher age group to ensure better efficiency. However, be aware that these young people may soon leave the group for a variety of reasons, whether due to the limits set in the terms of reference or simply because of lack of time and availability stemming from other commitments. This would leave a major gap to fill, requiring a repetition of the efforts and investments made to increase capacities to a favourable state before the group is again fully operational. To avoid such idling, it is recommended to keep the age range well balanced. This will allow for a natural turnover within the team, where the younger generation can acquire necessary skills with the help of their more experienced counterparts and become mature enough to pass on these skills to the following younger generation. An ideal balance would allow that around half of the group, mostly composed of the younger generation, would stay on for additional years. When thinking about lower age, make sure that the age limits in the country are respected (e.g. travelling alone) and that higher attention may need to be paid to pedagogical skills.

TOKENISM VERSUS YOUTH POWER

Voluntary work is serious work! When asking young people about the drive needed to continue volunteering, one often hears that the results of what they do should be real, tangible and visible within a relatively short period. Young people don't have the patience to wait for many years to see real change happening as a result of their volunteering support. And young people definitely don't want to be just a small screw within a far too complex system. It is important that the role given to a young person acting voluntarily in a given advisory structure goes beyond mere representation (sitting in the meetings) but clearly leads to results (contributing to common decisions) that are already assessable within each term of cycle. Avoid at all costs any form of pure informing or ineffective consultation or placation. Do not only encourage young people but also give them the free space to create their own mandate and evaluate their own work and progress within the overall plan, so that they can clearly see and feel their place in the process. This can be topped up by setting clear indicators ensuring a meaningful and active participation that can be monitored and regularly reported on.

MERIT-BASED VERSUS PERSONAL MOTIVATION

An essential element that sustains any advisory group working on a voluntary basis is the individual motivation of each member. Their motivation may increase or decrease in the course of the mandate, but ideally, it should stay high – and it is also the hosting organisation's (EUDs) responsibility to maintain it. Therefore, when selecting members of the youth advisory structure, attention should also be paid to what drives the young candidate to apply, rather than only focusing on what he/she can bring to the group as personal merit. A merit-based selection can make it very difficult to achieve the desired diversity, while too much focus on motivation can lead to lower capacity and efficiency of the advisory group. A balanced approach here should help to find the right ingredients and create the most appropriate structure that is both knowledgeable and motivated. It is therefore recommended that during the selection process, not only should applications and supporting evidence be reviewed, but sufficient time should be taken to better understand the motivations and expectations of each shortlisted candidate and whether these can be met. If this is not the case, there is a risk that applicants, if selected, will quickly lose their motivation.

SUSTAINING SUSTAINABILITY

Appropriate mechanisms for handing over not only responsibilities but also institutional memory are key to sustainability. While boards and groups are often temporary, there is sometimes also a high turnover among EUDs' staff. Whatever the reason, either end of mandate or institutional procedures, the change needs to be prepared for to ensure that there are no gaps between periods and that all information and expertise is well passed on to the next generation of board and new staff respectively. A common scenario is to ensure a short overlap of periods where new board members or staff can work with their predecessors. Some kind of ideal and strategic balance where half of the group stays and the other half leaves would also be very helpful. Another important measure is the need to keep processes simple, with these well described and easily understood in a handover document and supported by relevant digital and physical materials left behind. A new board starting from scratch would lose a lot of time and energy to (re-)create a new modus operandi for its effective functioning.

Make it safe and secure

Besides general health and safety measures (further explained in the next chapter), a number of issues need to be considered at a very early phase of the planning prior to setting up a youth advisory structure with regard to security and safety issues. These can be divided into two areas:

SECURITY AND PROTECTION

Overall, in order to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the youth advisory structure, it is of great importance that members operate in a protected and safe environment at every stage of their work. In this respect, the necessary measures must be taken to ensure that everything said and decided within the counselling group is kept confidential and that no personal opinions are brought to the outside world without the consent of each individual member and the group as a whole. Issues related to confidentiality and the protection of individuals need to be addressed through a code of conduct that binds both members and the EUD to an agreed code and conditions, ensuring that the youth advisory structure is a safe space. Although the intensity of security measures may vary from country to country due to political or social circumstances, it is strongly recommended that a minimum level of security conditions be established in any context for the protection of individual members of the youth advisory structure. Advice of the local EUD security team and relevant authorities should be sought.

E-SAFETY

The term 'e-safety' refers not only to the internet but also to other forms of communication by young people via electronic media, e.g. mobile phones. The appropriate use of electronic media by young people, staff and volunteers must be based on agreed procedures laid down in a code of conduct that regulates this. The code of conduct on e-safety, which should meet the principles set by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), should also help to ensure that any form of discrimination or bullying through the means of communication used will not be tolerated and will be treated as such. It is recommended to ensure that selected members subscribe to values of inclusion, non-discrimination and respect. A good practice could be to organise a workshop on diversity and inclusion at the outset. The use of online tools and applications with sufficient safeguards is mandatory to ensure that none of the data shared and communicated in the youth advisory structure and with the respective EUD can be used against them or misused for other purposes.

Make it real and dynamic

Be honest! Do you think that the success of an advisory group can be only measured via its final results or would it be more important for its members to see things moving and getting done? If a process is ongoing but lacks outputs, as could quite often be the case, you may want to think of ways to still benchmark the progress. This may be done through additional research, keeping alive external communication through social media updates or journaling reflections. This will help the young people to remind themselves that their progress is not standing still but is in fact moving and "real." This will also provide them with important tangible

products that they can include on their CV or certificates, and will at the same time provide you with concrete outcomes that you can share with stakeholders as a result of young people's participation. Indicators for such outcomes can be set around the level and extent young people have increased their knowledge on a certain issue, communication skills, teamwork, awareness of policy and political instruments, collaborative methods, but also simply soft skills when collaborating with their counterparts and public authorities, to name a few.

Make it loud and be an example

Be loud! Young people's genuine and pure voices need to be heard, at all levels, starting most prominently and exemplary from the hierarchy at both the EUD and the Headquarters (European Commission and other EU institutions). Young people should have a say in matters that affect them in their community and in their lives, and their views and opinions should be taken seriously. It encompasses all aspects of life and decision-making in which young people can make a meaningful contribution appropriate to their age and stage of development. This ranges from informal situations where they express their opinions to their peers to participation in democratic structures or mechanisms such as the youth advisory structure. It is important that their voices are made known to a wider audience, that the decisions they have made and the results they have achieved by raising their voices are recognised and widely disseminated. This is the only way to ensure that this example of good practice attracts followers and invites emulation. The EUD's social media channels are certainly a good starting point, but may not be enough. Use all available channels in line with a deliberate communication plan agreed and implemented by the EUD communication team and encourage young people to use them in line with the social media guidelines. Among other things, it would be highly beneficial to regularly produce short brochures about the work of the youth advisory group and share them with the respective government institutions. In some countries this is a unique occurrence, so it would be a shame if word did not get out loud and clear.

3.3 How to establish: The process of setting up a Youth Advisory Structure

Initial terms of reference

Before launching the call (either openly or via a nomination system, as explained above and below) you should draft an initial terms of reference document. This is, first and foremost, a matter of clarity for applicants (see call below), and secondly, a starting point for the initial stages of work of the planned youth advisory structure. Absence of such a document can lead to confusion and false expectations from the outset – this applies to both young people and policymakers/EUDs.

The document should be kept brief and concise at 2-3 pages at most, it should provide a basic outline of the purpose, objectives, activities and modus operandi of the planned youth advisory structure and should briefly explain how it aligns with the processes in EUDs as well as the programming timeline.

Selection process

The selection process has to be carefully planned before launching the call for applicants. The selection process can be documents-based only (reading applications – one selection stage only), or more complex with a first stage based on documents and a second round based on interviews (in person or remote). You need to be clear about both steps' eligibility criteria (e.g. age, gender, geographical residence), and quality assessment criteria (e.g. motivation, formal and non-formal skills and competences). The latter do not have to be aligned with application questions, but would make the selection process clearer and also give the applicant a better overview of what is and will be expected from them, if selected. An example of a 100-point scoring scale is given below:

- **Motivation question:** please describe your motivation to join the advisory body (criterion: motivation – 40 points)
- **Experience question:** please describe your experience in working with young people in your community (criterion: experience – 40 points)
- **Contribution question:** please describe your contribution to the functioning of the advisory body (criterion: contribution – 20 points)

It is imperative to clearly state the selection process deadlines and milestones in the call, e.g. pre-selection of candidates for interviews (if applicable), interview timing, final selection deadline. Please also consider communicating clearly about the possibility of providing feedback to individual candidates on their performance (this may not be possible for larger groups).

***Note:** Assessment of a single application could take up to 1 hour through the entire process (if only documents-based) and up to 2 hours for interview-based recruitment process – therefore sufficient resources should be dedicated to this to ensure a quality selection.*

Call for applications

The call for applicants needs to be launched with due attention to detail such as initial terms of reference, and a clear set of application questions (see selection below).

There are several call types, depending on the type of advisory body to be set up.

- An open call can be placed on an EU platform like EU Survey. Applicants can submit their applications online, which are stored on the respective platform where they can be retrieved and analysed by the selection body (see below).
- In situations where an open call is not feasible or suitable (e.g. due to security issues, or limited number of places available), a closed call can be launched. This can also be done on an online platform (EU Survey) but can be circulated offline (e.g. Word document) – this mode is most suitable for the 'nomination' or closed system.
- A mixed call is also possible – in this instance, some participants can be recruited through an open call and some through a closed/nomination system. This would be most appropriate if you wish to work with both young people not necessarily affiliated with any CSO and others clearly nominated by CSOs. This approach can bring some added value by bringing a greater diversity within the group.

It is important to keep in mind that the call should be published for a sufficiently long time to ensure good outreach and give applicants time to engage – a timeframe of at least 4 weeks is advisable. Most applicants tend to apply at the very beginning and at the closing of the cycle. Sending regular reminders will help to bring the issue back to the attention of potential candidates.

Document management

By the time of the network launch, you need to clarify with all confirmed members of the youth advisory body, as well as staff and colleagues at the EUD, a number of key issues pertaining to their engagement and covering the following issues:

- **Terms of Reference** (as mentioned above) – this document can be in draft format, to be further elaborated with and by young people – members of your advisory structure (determining jointly how the board is going to be organised, working methods, and work programme etc.).
- **Ethics charter** – the advisory body needs to have a clear understanding of ethical guidelines and code of conduct.
- **Safeguarding and security** – especially important if the advisory body includes minors or vulnerable youth. Young people need to know what mechanisms are in place to keep them safe from harm.
- **Communication and privacy** – basic principles regarding both internal and external communication, and preserving the privacy of group members, if applicable.
- **Conflict of interest** – it is essential to establish what conflicts of interest may arise in the advisory body's work – e.g. with funding decisions, access to personal data, etc, and to make sure any potential conflicts of interest are avoided.

Launch and induction phase

The launch of your advisory body is not just an event. It is also a symbolic moment of initiating the joint process of work by the young people that are part of it. Young people require recognition and validation of their efforts; it is therefore important (if feasible considering the security and safety requirements) to make the launch event a relevant and symbolic occasion. It is also a good moment to restate the objectives and expectations towards the advisory body to make sure everyone is clear as to the results and possible outcomes. Launch events are also very good opportunities to increase visibility and demonstrate the importance of youth participation to other stakeholders.

As part of the launch phase, it is essential to familiarise young people with the operations of the EUD. This induction can take different formats: a site visit, a set of documents describing the EUD's work or a series of online meetings where young people can meet or 'visit' different sectors and learn about their work.

3.4 After establishment: How to make it work

Once the youth advisory structure is set up, it is important to devote relevant resources (e.g. secretarial support, facilitating communication, providing per diems and travel reimbursement, online working spaces, specific email contacts or meeting premises, if appropriate) and provide adequate support to maintain the momentum in its work. Initial enthusiasm connected with the newly established group will quickly fade and you need proper procedures and plans in place to make sure the momentum can be sustained and that young people can continue learning, growing and contributing. The same also applies to the staff and colleagues in the EUD, so that momentum is not lost with them either.

Think collectively and co-create

One of the first realisations of the youth advisory structure should be that it is a collective body and as such should allow for group processes to take decisions and make their own plans. They should be able to co-create the work of the advisory body. Allow time and space for young people to plan their own activities, and set a clear list of issues that you would like to have clarity on (including the points below).

Build a team

Even once you have established with all young people that decisions will be taken jointly, you still have to make sure the group is a team and not just a collection of individuals. You should consider hiring an external facilitator to lead the group through a group-building process through a number of in-person or online sessions (depending on circumstances). This will allow the group to communicate and work together more smoothly.

Teambuilding becomes even more important when changes to YAS membership are considered. This goes especially for the more established and formal models such as Model 1 and Model 2, where YAS members are expected to work together but replacements can happen. YAS members can resign or their mandate can be expired by the EUD due to non-attendance. Due attention has to be paid to replacement processes to ensure clarity and smooth operation of the YAS.

Work plan

The young people on board should create their own annual work plan or several plans (short-term and long-term) to express their vision and the activities they will undertake. It is important to clearly mark all milestones and key events in the work plan for all members of the advisory body to be conscious of the work ahead of them, and to get a realistic sense of commitment and resources available. You have to remember that young people are providing their advice on a voluntary basis and should not be overstretched.

The work plan should pay due attention to EUD needs and procedures, making them clear to YAS members. The work plan should also consider young people's availability (which has to be clearly agreed upon from the call for applicants stage), ensure regular review of past performance, and allow for flexibility (e.g. replacement of members, see above).

Tools and time for collaboration

Choosing the right tools and methods for collaboration is crucial for the success of the youth advisory structure. Consider carefully, preferably with the group itself, how they can best work together. There are many approaches to this, and a good mix of online and offline methods and tools can give the best result. Overall costs and expenses should definitely be considered in this context (including time, money, security, convenience, efforts and outputs), with care taken to keep transaction costs low. Regular online meetings can be a good option, but you may also consider the time and energy required to organise them, while sometimes it may be more efficient, both in terms of time and other resources, to organise a physical working weekend where the group can work intensively together on selected topics. When choosing online tools or other means for collaboration, always make sure that they are accessible and feasible for the young people working in the youth advisory structure.

Continuous Learning and Development (CLD) Plan

Together with the work plan, it is essential to establish the learning and capacity-building needs of the young people in your youth advisory body. Some of them may have all the will to contribute to consultations but have little skill to do so. Devising an individual and group plan on issues such as policy research, paper drafting, note-taking, public speaking and group work can increase the quality of work and ownership in the group. Peer learning approaches are encouraged, so you can let young people tutor and mentor each other.

Representation and management

Especially in larger youth advisory bodies, it may be advisable to divide responsibilities within the group. This can be done by theme: e.g. some young people focus on human rights issues, others on gender, another group works on sustainability. This can also be rotated, so some young people switch their 'portfolios' from time to time. In case of larger groups, it may also be a good idea to identify a steering group or management committee that will facilitate contact with the whole group and the EUD. Consider including an internal mechanism for constructive feedback and accountability among the members of the board.

4. Annexes: Existing material for inspiration

The following materials focus mostly on previous EU initiatives in developing countries and examples of what EU Member States have done at the national level when relevant.

- A. Sample: Terms of reference of a youth sounding board at country level
- B. Sample: Call for candidates to a youth advisory structure
- C. Sample: Application form to a youth advisory structure call
- D. Sample: Scoring and selection procedures for youth advisory structure membership
- E. Sample: Code of ethics: rules and values
- F. Sample: Costs and expenses for smooth implementation of youth advisory structure

Annex A - Sample Terms of Reference Document

Youth Advisory Structure

Name	Youth Advisory Board (YAB)
Introduction	<p>The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) has been established to provide advice to the INSTITUTION [Can be replaced with name of EUD] in LOCATION, on the situation, challenges and opportunities of youth in COUNTRY.</p> <p>The establishment of the YAB contributes to meaningful youth participation and enacting the EU Youth Action Plan [Or any other policy framework].</p> <p>The YAB is selected for the duration of two years.</p> <p>The YAB is composed of 20 (or any suitable number) young people who work in areas in line with the priorities of the YAP and INSTITUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth participation - Human Rights - Sustainable Development Goals.
Objectives	<p>The YAB will be proactive and committed to engage with the INSTITUTION and provide constructive advice on policy and projects presented for discussion by the Embassy, whilst taking into account the wider needs, issues and views of young people in COUNTRY.</p> <p>The Embassy will take the advice of the Board seriously, and provides information on what is done with the advice given.</p> <p>The YAB will provide advice on the topics below, but not exclusively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meaningful youth participation at the INSTITUTION and in COUNTRY; ● The INSTITUTION Annual Youth Plan; ● The INSTITUTIONAL Multi Annual Country Strategy; ● Other policies and strategies, as appropriate.
Membership criteria	<p>The YAB is open to young people who are aged between 18 to 30, resident in COUNTRY.</p> <p>YAB selection is based on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good understanding of the English language ● Experience in youth engagement ● Communication skills ● Representing a relevant constituency of youth in COUNTRY ● Available for an average of NUMBER of working days a year.
Membership selection	<p>The recruitment will be launched via INSTITUTION website and via selected partner organisations in COUNTRY.</p> <p>Based on the applications received the INSTITUTION will create a shortlist, based on the criteria for membership.</p> <p>Interviews with selected shortlisted candidates will be held by the INSTITUTION.</p> <p>A reserve list of candidates will be retained in case of changes in membership.</p>

<p>Membership structure</p>	<p>The Youth Advisory Board will consist of the following membership structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A maximum of 20 young people ● Diversity in terms of various characteristics, gender, ethnicity, religion, and preference for underrepresented groups and communities ● YAB members can only serve one 2-year mandate ● Membership of the YAB is voluntary (no remuneration) ● The YAB will not hold decision-making power. ● The YAB will elaborate its own working methods and programme of activities ● The YAB will select one of its members as a chairperson, who be the main focal person for the Embassy. ● The YAB will select one of its members as a secretary. The Secretary is responsible for distributing the agenda before every meeting, and drafting the minutes of each meeting.
<p>Executive support</p>	<p>The Embassy will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide terms of reference to new board members; ● Provide an induction/training on INSTITUTION and its engagement with young people ● Oversee the recruitment and selection process for committee membership; ● Organise the meetings with the YAB and the relevant policy officers; ● Provide the YAB with the relevant documents or information for their input; ● Provide the YAB with virtual and/or physical working spaces for meetings; ● Provide feedback on information/consultation results
<p>Meeting frequency</p>	<p>Meetings of the YAB will be held quarterly, or more often on an as-needs basis by agreement between the YAB members and INSTITUTION. A schedule of meetings will be developed and agreed upon after the members of the committee have been selected.</p> <p>It is expected that each member of the YAB will attend the quarterly meetings, and will try to be available for the extra agreed meetings.</p>

Confidentiality	The work of the INSTITUTION can be sensitive, and information can be confidential in nature. Therefore the Embassy will decide on ad-hoc basis what can be shared with the board. Members of the board agree to handle information provided to them with utmost care, and will be asked to sign a declaration of confidentiality.
Guiding principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We are inclusive, open-minded and respectful of everyone's perspective. ● We put our personal agendas aside and provide advice for the greater good of the INSTITUTION and its cooperation with COUNTRY. ● The INSTITUTION will take the advice given seriously, and provide explanation on what happens with the advice. ● We actively participate and engage in the work of the board. ● We are punctual, well prepared, timely with responses and we follow through. ● We are realistic about what we can achieve and handle the information provided to us with utmost care.

Annex B – sample Call for Candidates

Sample Youth Structure

The Sample Youth Structure offers young people the thrilling opportunity to embark on a one-year learning path, discovering the EU and the functioning of the European Institutions, and networking with like-minded young people from LOCATION/COMMUNITY.

Why the Sample Youth Structure?

Over the past few years, engaging with youth has become one of the top priorities of the European Commission in LOCATION/COMMUNITY. It is a way to proactively seek the support of youth and partner with them to foster sustainable development and to acknowledge and enhance the key contributions of youth in pursuing positive social changes worldwide.

The Sample Youth Structure is being launched by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships/ EU Delegation in LOCATION/COMMUNITY, which is responsible for formulating the EU's international partnership and development policy.

What is the Sample Youth Structure about?

The Sample Youth Structure aims to increase the ties between young people living in LOCATION/COMMUNITY and the European Union (EU), and enhance the knowledge and involvement of young people in THEMATIC/GEOGRAPHIC AREA.

The Sample Youth Structure objectives are to

- connect young people from LOCATION/COMMUNITY and with the EU institutions and decision-makers,
- inform the EU – LOCATION/COMMUNITY partnership in a spirit of co-creation,
- deepen the understanding about the EU in LOCATION/COMMUNITY,
- create links with other youth initiatives at regional and country level, including the EU and Member States.

What will the network do?

The Sample Youth Structure members will serve a one-year mandate that includes: a week-long study visit to Brussels to explore the functioning of the European Institutions, four online webinars to deepen their knowledge and competences, and several facilitated dialogue sessions with top EU political leaders.

They will have a great opportunity to discover the EU – LOCATION/COMMUNITY partnership and engage with EU political leaders. They will also meet and network with a wide range of like-minded young people and with key EU actors, broadening their own personal and professional networks and horizons. Members of the Sample Youth Structure will actively participate in crafting the network by contributing to its activities and co-selecting priorities and topics to be addressed.

In short, Sample Youth Structure members will learn, debate, engage, participate and co-lead activities on youth perspectives of the EU-LOCATION/COMMUNITY with their peers and with other actors.

Who will be members of the Sample Youth Structure?

The LOCATION/COMMUNITY Youth Network will be composed of 25 (or any suitable number) young people (aged 20-28) representing LOCATION/COMMUNITY (COULD BE PLURAL FOR MANY LOCATIONS).

How to become a member?

The Sample Youth Structure will mirror the reality in LOCATION/COMMUNITY and will therefore be highly diverse. It will bring together a wide range of youth profiles and backgrounds, opinions and experiences, areas of interest and knowledge, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Members of the Sample Youth Structure will be selected via an open call for applicants. Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed, before the selection of the 25 (or any suitable number) members is confirmed.

You can find out more about the application procedure in the call for candidates [ADD LINK](#)

Annex C – sample application form

Application to become a member of SAMPLE YOUTH ADVISORY BODY

#	Format of the question/ answer	Text/ Question
-	-	<p>Introduction to the application:</p> <p>Welcome to the application form to become a member of the SAMPLE YOUTH ADVISORY BODY</p> <p>We are delighted that you are interested in engaging in this new initiative aimed at strengthening the ties between young people living in LOCATION/COMMUNITY and the EU and enhancing the knowledge and involvement of young people in THEMATIC OR GEOGRAPHICAL AREA.</p> <p>Before submitting your candidacy, please check that you are eligible by reviewing the eligibility criteria in the call for applicants (add link).</p> <p>The application form is made up of 2 sections: general personal information and questions related to the eligibility criteria (link to LOCATION/COMMUNITY, motivation and engagement)</p> <p>Upon submission, you will receive a confirmation by email.</p> <p>In case of doubts or technical problems, do not hesitate to contact us by email at EMAIL</p> <p>Privacy statement regarding this call can be found via the following link</p>
SECTION 1: General Personal Information		
1	Short answer	First name (as stated in your passport / identity card)
2	Short answer	Surname (as stated in your passport / identity card)
3	Short answer	Email
4	Date	Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY) – Note: Activate the form so that it detects non-eligible applicants according to age
5	Box ticking	Gender – Note: Add boxes: male/female/other/no response
6	Box ticking	Do you identify as belonging to a minority or vulnerable group (on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation, socio-economic status or any other criterion)? – Add boxes: YES/NO – If “YES”, add short text box (optional): Please provide details.
7	Short answer	Citizenship (Nationality)
8	Short answer	Current place of residence (city/country)
9	Short answer	Educational background (Diplomas and fields of study): please list your educational background, validated degrees or degrees in process.
10	Short answer	If any, please briefly describe your professional experience (employer, position and role, years of experience)

SECTION 2: Affiliation, motivation and other experiences		
11	Box ticking	Which LOCATION/COMMUNITY do you wish to represent within the YOUTH ADVISORY STRUCTURE? – Add boxes for EACH LOCATION
12	Box ticking and short text (150 words)	What is your link to this LOCATION/COMMUNITY? – Add boxes for nationality, residence, educational, employment, civil society engagement, other – Please describe (short answer, 150 words)
13	Long text (300 words)	What is your motivation to join the YOUTH ADVISORY STRUCTURE? What would you like to contribute and to gain from the experience of being a member of the network?
14	Long text (300 words)	Are you engaged in your local community? If so, what are your experiences and current engagements, such as volunteering, activism, active participation, entrepreneurship, etc.?
15	Short text (150 words)	Would you like to add something else concerning your application?
-	-	Thank you for your interest and application! – Note: submission automatically activates the sending of confirmation of submission by email, in which the timeline for the results is highlighted.

Annex D – Sample scoring and selection procedure

Selection procedure:

- 1) Online application form
- 2) Interview

1) Online application form

Question	Scoring	Comments
Primary LOCATION/COMMUNITY (Drop-down list)	N/A	The young person is supposed to represent a given location and/or community (e.g. part of a country, a city, or an ethnic/national/religious group)
Secondary LOCATION/COMMUNITY (if applicable)	N/A	As above
Criterion 1: LOCATION/COMMUNITY LINK What is your link to this OCT? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add boxes for nationality, residence, educational, employment, civil society engagement, other • Please describe (short answer, 150 words) 	YES/NO	Young person explains their link to the community they have selected
Criterion 2: MOTIVATION What is your motivation to join the YOUTH ADVISORY STRUCTURE?	1-2-3 1 point – poor 2 points – good 3 points – very good	
Criterion 3: CONTRIBUTION What would you like to contribute and to gain from the experience of being a member of the YOUTH ADVISORY STRUCTURE?	1-2-3 1 point – poor 2 points – good 3 points – very good	
Criterion 4: ENGAGEMENT Are you engaged in your local community? If so, what are your experiences and current engagements, such as volunteering, activism, active	1-2-3 1 point – poor 2 points – good 3 points – very good	

participation, entrepreneurship, etc.		
Diversity criteria Education/work	(Optional: 1 point)	Only if significant, e.g. someone with no formal education, or someone with a long track record of volunteering
Other issues to consider / added value	No scoring, text only	Any additional info e.g. special needs etc.

2) Interviews for shortlisted candidates

Interview script:

- 1) Panel chair to welcome the interviewee and introduce the panel
- 2) Panel chair introduces YOUTH ADVISORY STRUCTURE objectives and activities
- 3) Panel chair introduces the selection process (dates, steps)
- 4) Panel chair introduces the flow of the interview: number of questions and their contents
- 5) Interviewee starts answering questions
- 6) Interviewee can ask the panel a question
- 7) Panel chair thanks the interviewee
- 8) Panel chair outlines the next steps
- 9) Interview over

Interview questions (flexible list):

- A) Please present yourself
- B) Please describe your motivation to join the network and learning objectives
- C) Please identify one challenge young people in your location/community face and ways of resolving it
- D) Please describe your engagement in your local community
- E) Please describe your experience in team work and/or intercultural teams

Interview scoring:

Question	Scoring	Comments
Interview Criterion A: MOTIVATION What is your motivation to join the YOUTH ADVISORY STRUCTURE?	1-2-3 1 point – poor 2 points – good 3 points – very good	
Interview criterion B: CONTRIBUTION	1-2-3 1 point – poor 2 points – good	What would the young person want to contribute and gain

<p>What would you like to contribute and to gain from the experience of being a member of the network?</p>	<p>3 points – very good</p>	<p>from their participation in the network? Do they contribute something unique, valuable from the point of view of objectives? Can they gain new skills, perspectives, experiences?</p>
<p>Interview criterion C: ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>Are you engaged in your local community? If so, what are your experiences and current engagements, such as volunteering, activism, active participation, entrepreneurship, etc.</p>	<p>1-2-3</p> <p>1 point – poor 2 points – good 3 points – very good</p>	<p>Is the young person engaged in their community? Is this engagement aligned with the advisory body’s objectives, themes, target groups?</p>
<p>Communication skills</p>	<p>1-2-3</p> <p>1 point – poor 2 points – good 3 points – very good</p>	<p>Is the candidate a good communicator? Do they speak the relevant language well?</p>
<p>Presentation skills</p>	<p>1-2-3</p> <p>1 point – poor 2 points – good 3 points – very good</p>	<p>Can the candidate present their ideas clearly? Are they able to present to online audiences?</p>
<p>Overall good fit</p>	<p>Yes/no/maybe</p>	<p>Overall assessment: would the candidate be a good fit for the youth advisory structure?</p>

Annex E – Sample of code of ethics: rules and values



Youth Sounding Board (YSB) members shall maintain the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct and integrity, which include honesty, truthfulness, fairness and incorruptibility, in all matters affecting their duties and responsibilities.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENGAGEMENT

- Refrain from any action which may reflect negatively on their position as YSB members and that might have a negative impact on the reputation and image of the European Commission;
- Always act with impartiality, objectivity and professionalism and ensure that expression of personal views and convictions does not compromise or appear to compromise the performance of their duties and responsibilities with DG INTPA;
- Respect human rights and act with understanding, tolerance, sensitivity and respect for diversity. Treat all YSB members with respect, regardless of race, sex, sexual identity, religion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, disability, birth or other status;
- Carry out assigned tasks to the best of their abilities;
- Respect cultural differences, maintain the dignity and protect the right to privacy and confidentiality of others, DG INTPA partners, DG INTPA staff and other YSB members;
- Follow DG INTPA Youth team's communication guidelines;
- Inform DG INTPA Youth team as soon as possible of any charges or convictions brought against them;
- Inform DG INTPA Youth team as soon as possible of any safety concerns;
- Participate objectively and impartially in the work of YSB, refraining from using the YSB to pursue any commercial or exclusively private interests, any exclusive interest of organisations and entities that the YSB member is affiliated with, or political agenda;
- Respect and maintain the confidentiality of personal and privileged information both during and after their assignment;

CONFIDENTIALITY

As a YSB member, you have an obligation not to disclose, without prior authorisation from the European Commission, information received in connection with your mandate, unless that information has already been made public, is accessible to the public or is specifically provided for consultation purposes. This includes, but is not limited to, personal information of other YSB members, consultants or staff.

All the meetings of the YSB will be held under Chatham House Rule: agreed information might be used, but it is not allowed to disclose who made what comment.¹ Unauthorised disclosure of information, intentionally or through negligence, notably to somebody who should not know about this information constitutes a breach of the Terms of Reference you have signed and will be dealt with accordingly.

You also have a duty to respect the privacy and confidentiality of other YSB members, who are entitled to remain anonymous, as well as members of the public you come into contact with during your mandate, for example through missions or meetings. You should respect online privacy as well. In particular, you should not tag any European Commission beneficiary, staff member or YSB member in posts, or publish information about them, their photographs or videos on any social media platform without their informed written consent. Permission should always be given by the individual concerned before sharing their personal information.

¹**Chatham House Rule:** Participants can use the information received for the purpose of the YSB as outlined above, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

Annex F - Youth Advisory Structure - list of possible costs and expenses for smooth implementation

Below is a simplified table that outlines the range of costs and expenses that should be considered for the smooth and seamless organisation and implementation of the Youth Advisory Structure. Please note that these expenses may vary depending on the specific needs and requirements of the advisory body and the location of the meeting. It is crucial to establish a clear budget and monitor expenses to ensure that the advisory body stays within its financial means.

In cases such as travel, accommodation and other costs, it may be useful to consider calculating an average lump sum that is similar to, but not necessarily the same as, the EC per diem mechanism.

Cost/Expense	Description
Travel expenses	Depending on the location and frequency of the meetings, travel costs must be considered for members who come from outside the city where the meeting takes place. It is recommended to choose a location that results in the lowest total cost. This cost includes airfare, train or bus tickets, and any other transportation costs associated with attending meetings.
Accommodation expenses	In some cases, particularly when meetings last for more than one day, such as in the case of trainings or workshops, it may be necessary to allow for overnight stays in the city where the meeting is taking place. This consideration should take into account the potential overnight costs for those traveling long distances to attend the meeting. This cost includes the expense of hotels, bed & breakfast, or other suitable lodging during the meeting.
Communication expenses	It is crucial to ensure that Youth Advisory Structure members always have appropriate online access, without any financial burden on their part. Depending on the country and the different existing mobile and landline communication plans, a lump sum should be considered to ensure seamless communication. This can include, for example, a top-up to cover the average or full cost of communication during each member's term. This cost should allow members to use teleconferencing, video conferencing, internet services, and other communication tools.
Catering expenses	During the meetings, catering costs must be taken into consideration. For those who require accommodation, dinner and breakfast expenses should also be financially planned.
Venue rental	This includes the cost of renting a venue for the meeting. The meeting venue should be selected based on the most efficient use of the budget,

with due consideration given to accessibility for individuals with special needs. It is also recommended to ensure that the venue is located in an area that can be easily accessed by public transportation.

Staff and facilitator expenses

In case of need, possible outsourcing should be considered in terms of hiring external staff for the overall coordination of the YAS. Overall, this includes the cost of staff and facilitators to manage the meeting logistics, such as event planning, communication, and coordination.

Admin, materials and supplies

This includes the cost of printing, distributing, and providing materials such as handouts, flipcharts, markers, name tags, certification, and other supplies needed for the meeting.

Public relations expenses

This includes the cost of promoting the advisory body through marketing and public relations campaigns to increase visibility and recognition. Examples may include producing T-shirts, roll-ups, giveaways, and notebooks with the YAS logo or a catchy motto. It may also include organising celebratory events such as the launch of the YAS or any public event that directly aims to promote YAS, its activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Insurance

This includes the cost of liability insurance to cover any accidents or other unforeseen incidents that may occur during the meeting or activity related to YAS's overall tasks and responsibilities.