

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



Review of the 9 cycles of the EU Youth Dialogue (2010-2022)

Executive summary

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EU Youth Dialogue

[The EU Youth Dialogue \(EUYD\)](#) is the biggest youth participation instrument of its kind. The goal of the dialogue is to involve young people and their opinions, on a regular basis, in the EU policy making. It was introduced in 2010 as the “structured dialogue” with young people under the [EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018](#). It continues to be one of the main policy instruments of the [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#), confirming EU’s commitment to youth participation as its key priority.

Each EUYD cycle takes 18 months. The cycle is coordinated at EU level by the European Steering Group, including the Trio of Presidencies of the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the European Youth Forum. The European Steering Group (with support from researchers) gives National Working Groups guidelines and a methodology for consultations through which they collect young peoples’ opinions in all Member States.

The European Commission provides funding for the process, participates in the governance of the EUYD and contributes to determining the priorities of the cycle. The funding for the National Working Groups and the European Steering Group is ensured through the Erasmus+ programme.

In addition to the consultations in all Member States, each Presidency also organises the EU Youth Conference where young people share their views on the priorities of the cycle and provide a set of recommendations for policymakers. The EU Youth Dialogue results from the national level dialogue and the EU conference are reflected in Council Resolutions and/or Conclusions, therefore ensuring that the youth voices are included in the EU policies.

Since its start in 2010 until 2023, nine cycles of EU Youth Dialogue have been carried out. From 2019 the themes of the EUYD were mainly based on the [European Youth Goals](#) (adopted during the 6th EUYD cycle). The total number of young people participating in the EU Youth Dialogue cycles 6-9, in the period 2018-2023 exceeds 131 000.¹

Methodological note

This review of the European Union Youth Dialogue was conducted in 2023 by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership at the request of the European Steering Group for the 10th cycle of the dialogue, and in particular Belgium.

The review of the EUYD is based on the analysis of existing documents and policies at EU level and in six selected countries within the 6th, the 7th and the 8th cycles (in the period 2018-2021) and individual and group interviews. The review focused on the *relevance*, *effectiveness* and *impact* of the process at EU level.

Interviews were conducted with (i) members of the European Steering Groups for the EU Youth Dialogue cycles 6, 7 and 8, including representatives of the European Commission, the Trio of Presidencies and the European Youth Forum; (ii) members of the National Working Groups from eight countries; and (iii) researchers who supported the European Steering Groups. This was complemented

¹ As reported by the National Working Groups. The number of young people participating in each cycle was not consistently recorded before the 6th cycle.

with the case studies of the process in six Member States: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Spain, and Sweden, to understand the process at the national level².

The main findings and conclusions of the review

The review shows that in terms of its *relevance*, the EU Youth Dialogue is appropriate for the meaningful engagement of young people. Overall, it is perceived as a very good opportunity to structure youth engagement activities and to ensure that young people are consulted on a continuous basis. It is also an important opportunity for young people to get involved in the debate about EU policy and issues relevant for them and their peers.

In terms of its *effectiveness*, the EU Youth Dialogue include perspectives of thousands of young people who took part in the national consultations organised by National Working Groups and the EU Youth Conferences organised by the Presidencies of the Council of the EU, and which are brought together into the resulting Council resolutions. These Council resolutions are considered by all EU institutions in formulating policies relevant for young people. Examples of such outcomes include the Youth Guarantee, resulting from the consultations on youth unemployment, the eleven European youth goals and the Commission youth check. The Commission has put forward initiatives such as the European Year of Youth and established networks of youth ambassadors in order to address young people's growing interest to contribute to EU policymaking. Therefore, the effectiveness of the EUYD is high.

However, it is important to note that the EU Youth Dialogue influence on the EU policy is not always visible for all stakeholders, because the resulting policy documents or strategies do not always mention that such decisions are based on the outcomes of consultation with young people. On the other hand, the EUYD has a potentially profound effect on national, regional or local youth policies, because the Youth Councils and youth organisations successfully use the results of the dialogue in their advocacy efforts.

In terms of its *impact*, the EU Youth Dialogue has had an important role in promoting youth participation in the EU since the process started in 2010. The Flash Eurobarometer on Youth and Democracy 2022 shows that 13% of young people in Europe were aware of the possibility to participate in the EU Youth Dialogue and 37.8% of young people felt that they have their voice heard on the future of Europe, to some or to a large extent.³ There is a recognition that the EU Youth Dialogue contributes to a general trend of increasing opportunities for youth participation by increasing the quality of youth engagement and the number of participation opportunities offered by (or with the participation of) public institutions, at EU and national level. Moreover, it contributes directly to a better understanding and integration of young people's needs in the design of EU youth policies. It has a similar impact of bringing youth voices in the policy debate at national, regional and local level, especially when the respective authorities are involved in the dialogue.

² The countries and cycles under the review focus have been selected considering their influence on the EU youth policy (for cycles), the diversity of the youth sectors (for countries) and the availability of information about them (for both).

³ European Commission (2022) *Special Eurobarometer 502 Youth and Democracy in the European Year of Youth*. European Commission, Brussels. Data available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2282>.

Participating in the EU Youth Dialogue also has a great impact on the youth leaders, the young ambassadors and the young delegates participating in the consultations and the EU Youth Conferences. In this case there is a positive feedback loop including the EU Youth Dialogue in the development of the sense of active (European) citizenship among European youth leaders. In most countries and at the EU level, the EU Youth Dialogue is co-managed by youth organisations (Youth Councils, European Youth Forum, other youth non-governmental organisations) and the public authorities. This supports both the meaningful youth engagement, and the translation of consultation results in policy decisions.

The EU Youth Dialogue is increasingly more inclusive and successful in bringing voices of young people from minority groups, young people with disabilities, etc. to the policy processes. This is a direct result of the focus which the EU Youth Strategy, the EUYD and National Working Groups place on social inclusion, and cooperation with different organisations representing the youth minority groups, working with schools, local authorities and social workers.

In general, the review finds that the stakeholders at the EU and national level are ensuring a good level of relevance of the EU Youth Dialogue and that the process is effective for EU and national youth policies. However, a few elements of the process can be improved:

- Youth engagement process would be even more meaningful if young people taking part in the dialogue were informed about the ways in which results from the consultation process were translated into policies at the national or European level. This feedback is currently very limited, but it is considered important by young people and youth organisations.
- Involvement of policymakers from other fields (besides the youth policy governance structures) in the EUYD would ensure better youth mainstreaming across sectors. While this cross-sectorial cooperation can be observed in some cycle and countries, it is yet to be universally implemented, and the EU Youth Dialogue can contribute to this process.
- The role of International Nongovernmental Youth Organisations (INGYO) should be clarified, and funding should be allocated to support their capacity to contribute to the dialogue.
- The visibility of the EU Youth Dialogues could be improved in order to reach more young people.
- The connection between the cycles could be reinforced, in terms of planning and promotion of activities and EUYD feedback and follow-up, to allow young people to better understand how the dialogue is integrated in decision making.
- The monitoring and data collection about the EU Youth Dialogue can be further improved. The handover document from one European Steering Group to the next is useful, but it cannot cover all data and the information needed for smooth transition from one cycle to the other. In addition to the monitoring process and the indicators proposed in this report, a more structured and regular process of reflection on the previous cycle should be planned.

Recommendations

In order to improve the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the EUYD, and the quality of the process, a number of recommendations can be made:

A. *Concerning the activities of the European Steering Group:*

- The activities of the European Steering Group should be further clarified, by providing each new European Steering Group with a roadmap and detailed calendar of activities and decisions to be taken.
- The European Steering Group should provide the National Working Groups with a clear set of recommendations about how to organise the dialogue in a more meaningful and inclusive way and with a clearer guidance in the implementation stage. These recommendations should be accompanied by capacity building activities for the NWGs, which can be organised by the members of the European Steering Group.
- The monitoring of the EU Youth Dialogue should be improved, with additional data collected by the National Working Groups and centralised by the European Steering Group, according to the proposals included in this report.

B. *Concerning the resources for the EU Youth Dialogue:*

- In general, additional resources should be allocated for some activities of the EU Youth Dialogue, including the work of the International Nongovernmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs).
- The National Working Groups should make plans and efforts to use the entire budget allocated to them through the Erasmus+ grants and to meaningfully engage as many young people as possible.

C. *Concerning the overall organisation of the cycles:*

- Representatives of at least one country in the next Trio of Presidencies should participate in the ESG meetings in the last six months of each cycle, to ensure better handover and continuity.
- National Working Groups should follow the guidance and exchange information on good practices in order to ensure a better continuity of the EU Youth Dialogue from one cycle to the next.

D. *Concerning the themes for the EU Youth Dialogue and the opportunity to increase its relevance and effectiveness beyond current expectations:*

- In addition to the European Youth Goals, the EU Youth Dialogue could be better linked to key upcoming Commission initiatives. In its Communication on the European Year of Youth the Commission has expressed interest in aligning the dialogue's focus more closely with the Commission work programme.

E. *Concerning the participants and the inclusiveness of the EUYD:*

- To further increase the inclusion potential of the EU Youth Dialogue to include hard to reach youth and NEETs, the European Steering Group and the National Working

Groups should take on board the recommendations of the [review of the EUYD inclusion levels](#) conducted in 2023.

- Capacity building activities should be organised by the National Working Groups as introduction to the EU Youth Dialogue events and information/education materials should be distributed (infographics, short videos) to prepare young participants in the EU Youth Dialogue.

F. *Concerning the visibility of the EU Youth Dialogue:*

- The European Steering Group should develop a communication plan about the EU Youth Dialogue.
- The National Working Groups' reports should be made available to the public.
- Policies, decisions and documents including the recommendations from the EU Youth Dialogue should be made available in a more accessible and youth friendly way and/or in variety of formats.
- A systematic review of all policy recommendations formulated within the EU Youth Dialogue should be carried out at regular intervals to provide young people with information on the effectiveness and impact of the dialogue.