

FOLLOW-UP OF THE BELGIAN EU PRESIDENCY-YOUTH NOTE OF 2010

THE EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY AGENDAS ON
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

STATE OF THE ART - UPDATE 2023

Title: The European and International Policy Agendas on Children, Youth and
Children's Rights

Author: Follow-up of the Belgian EU Presidency – Youth note 2010

Background document of the Council Conclusions on the European and International
Policy Agendas on Children, Youth and Children's Rights

Colophon

AUTHORS

Follow-up of the Belgian EU Presidency - Youth note 2010

EDITORIAL TEAM

Jan Vanhee, Joost Van Haelst, Deirdre Perquy and Pauline Coenen

Flemish Government, Department for Culture, Youth and Media

Cristina Bacalso, Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR).

Thanks for the advice and concrete suggestions from the CDEJ and the Joint Council on Youth, the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) and the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership.

DEPOT NUMBER: D/2023/3241/400

PUBLISHER

Flemish Government, Department for Culture, Youth and Media

Context

The Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010 - 2018) stipulates that the following general initiative should be considered in all the fields of action identified: “including, where appropriate, a children’s policy dimension, having regard to their rights and protection taking into account that the life and future prospects of young people are significantly determined by the opportunities, support and protection received during childhood”.

This perspective aligns closely with the EU’s broader commitment to safeguarding the rights and well-being of children, as outlined in the EU Strategy for the Rights of the Child. This strategy places a strong emphasis on ensuring that children across Europe enjoy their rights to participation, protection, and provision of basic needs. By integrating a children’s policy dimension into various fields of action, the EU seeks to create an environment where young people can thrive and develop to their full potential.

Moreover, this approach also resonates with the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy. By recognising the critical role that early experiences and protections play in shaping the trajectory of young people’s lives, the EU aims to foster a supportive environment that empowers youth and equips them with the skills and opportunities they need to succeed.

However, it should be noted that the European and international agendas on policy in respect of children, youth and children’s rights are not always entirely clear to the Youth Council. Therefore, the overview of these (European and international) agendas needs a regular update. With this publication we make a renewed contribution.

Content

1. Introduction	7
2. European Union	9
2.1. Children and youth in general EU Policy	9
2.2. EU policy agenda on children('s rights)	10
2.2.1. Legal basis	10
2.2.2. Decision-making body	11
2.2.3. Historical overview	11
2.2.4. Main Policy Document	12
2.3. EU policy agenda on youth	17
2.3.1. Legal basis	17
2.3.2. Decision-making body	17
2.3.3. Historical overview	18
2.3.4. Main policy document	20
3. Council of Europe	25
3.1. Council of Europe policy agenda on children('s rights)	25
3.1.1. Legal basis	25
3.1.2. Decision-making body	26
3.1.3. Historical overview and main policy document	26
3.2. Council of Europe policy agenda on youth	29
3.2.1. Legal basis	29
3.2.2. Decision-making body	29
3.2.3. Historical overview	30
3.2.4. Main policy document	31
4. United Nations	33
4.1. UN policy on children('s rights) and youth	33
4.1.1. Historical overview	33
4.1.2. Main policy document	33
4.2. UN policy on children('s rights)	38
4.2.1. Legal basis	38
4.2.2. Decision-making body	38
4.2.3. Historical overview	38
4.2.4. Main policy document	39
4.3. UN policy agenda on youth	41
4.3.1. Legal basis	41
4.3.2. Decision-making body	41
4.3.3. Historical overview	42
4.3.4. Main policy document	42

Executive summary

Various policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights have been adopted at the European and international level. This study offers an inventory of the main policies of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations in which children and youth are the focus and that are aimed at influencing government policies. The text updates the note 'The European and International Policy Agendas on Children, Youth and Children's Rights', issued by the Belgian EU Presidency in 2010. The analysis focuses solely on those policies to be taken into consideration by the European Union Member States internally and thereby excludes EU external policy. Furthermore, most of the analysed policy agendas are characterised by their non-binding character.

Children and youth are identified in the renewed social agenda of 2008 as one of the priorities within European Union policy¹. Policy initiatives on education, employment and poverty reduction consider children a priority. The Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union (2008), which entered into force on 1 December 2009, states for the first time that the European Union shall promote the protection of the rights of the child and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, in article 24, states that Children shall have the right to such protection and care as is necessary for their well-being. To fulfil this, the European Commission put in place an 'EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child' (2011-2014), focusing on promoting child-friendly justice and safer internet, protecting children from violence, and addressing discrimination and social exclusion. The current 'EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child', published on 24 March 2021, focuses on measures within six key actions: participation, socio-economic inclusion, health and education, violence, child-friendly justice, digital and information society, and a global dimension. The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child aims to develop EU instruments and national policies. The Council recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee complements the key action on socio-economic inclusion of this strategy by aiming at "preventing" and "combating" social exclusion among children.

EU competence in the field of youth is enshrined in Article 6 of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2008). In November 2018, the European Union Council of Youth Ministers adopted a Resolution on the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, based on the European Commission's Communication of May 2018 'Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy'. EU youth policy fosters youth participation in democratic life, in line with Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It also supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society. During the 6th cycle of the Structured Dialogue with youth in 2017-2018, 11 European Youth Goals were developed. They reflect the views of European youth and represent the vision of those active in the Structured Dialogue. The EU Youth Strategy should contribute to realising this vision of young people by mobilising EU level policy instruments as well as actions at national, regional, and local level by all stakeholders. In December 2021, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union designated 2022 to become the European Year of Youth, aiming to mainstream youth policy across all relevant EU policy fields.

¹ Unlike children's rights, which Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 2000 and other articles explicitly define, youth is not mentioned as a distinct category, except in relation to admission to employment (Article 32). While children's rights would only cover young people up to the age of 18, the full range of rights covered under the Charter would be seen as applying to all people the EU, including young people over the age of 18.

At the level of the Council of Europe, the Warsaw Declaration of 2005 expresses the commitment of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe to eradicate violence against children, whereas the Warsaw Action Plan lists as one of its goals ‘Building a Europe for Children’. Consequently, the programme ‘Building a Europe for and with children’ (2006-2011) was launched, with two interconnected objectives: promoting children’s rights and protecting children from violence. The fourth Strategy within this programme, the ‘Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child’ (2022-2027), entitled “Children’s Rights in Action: from continuous implementation to joint innovation”, has been adopted at the beginning of 2022 and continues to prioritise freedom from violence, equal opportunities and social inclusion, participation, access to and safe use of technologies and child-friendly justice for all children, and has an added focus on children’s rights in crisis and emergency situations.

With respect to the Council of Europe policy agenda on youth, the Warsaw Action Plan of 2005 includes the objective of ‘developing youth co-operation’. Typical of the Council of Europe is the system of co-management in the field of youth policy. This means that representatives of youth organisations and government officials formulate policy proposals together, which are then adopted by the Committee of Ministers. In November 2008, the Committee of Ministers adopted a resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe, with as general objective “to provide young people ... with equal opportunities and experience, which enables them to develop the knowledge, skills and competences to play a full part in all aspects of society”.

Recently, in May 2023, a summit was held in Reykjavík with a declaration stating, among other things, that “throughout its history, the Council of Europe’s standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law have been pivotal to ensuring and strengthening individual freedoms, peace, and prosperity in our Member States. As we work to promote the rights of the child, we underline the importance of education to give children and young people the necessary references to grow up embracing our democratic values in culturally diverse societies and take an active part in the protection of our cultural heritage.”

“The Council of Europe will increase its transparency and co-operation with its stakeholders, with strengthened visibility and sufficient resources. This should include a youth perspective in the Organisation’s intergovernmental and other deliberations as youth participation in decision-making processes improves the effectiveness of public policies and strengthens democratic institutions through open dialogue.”

A declaration on the situation of the children of Ukraine was annexed to the Reykjavík declaration.²

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its three Optional Protocols - the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000), the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000) and the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure (2011) offer a comprehensive normative framework to assess the policy agendas on children (and youth). The four key principles of the Convention are non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child. After ‘A world fit for children’ (2002), the United Nations have not adopted a new policy document exclusively

² <https://rm.coe.int/4th-summit-of-heads-of-state-and-government-of-the-council-of-europe/1680ab40c1>.

focusing on children or children’s rights. For 15 years, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were a guiding force on many issues affecting the lives of children, young people, and their families. With the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of September of 2015, world leaders have set a transformational course for the future of human development with references to youth as well as children’s rights policies.

In 1965, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples. In 1995, the United Nations strengthened its commitment toward young people by adopting the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The Programme of Action “focuses in particular on measures to strengthen national capacities in the field of youth and to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for full, effective and constructive participation in society”. A Supplement to the Programme of Action was adopted in 2007, including five additional priority areas.

1. Introduction

The first issue of ‘The European and International Policy Agendas on Children, Youth and Children’s Rights’, was conducted under the Belgian EU Presidency in 2010. The study provides an overview of the main policy agendas on children (‘s rights) and youth of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. The publication was updated in 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2021. In this report we provide a historic overview, as well as a state of the art of the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children’s rights, that set out the beacons for the current and future policy on children(‘s) rights or youth of the organisation concerned.

The selection of policy agendas (on children’s rights and youth) is based on five criteria.

1. A primary objective of the policy agenda is children, youth and/or children’s rights.
2. The analysis is restricted to agendas that aim at influencing government policies, by providing guiding principles.
3. The selected policy agendas are those of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.³
4. The policy agenda needs to be taken into consideration by the European Union Member States internally, thus excluding EU external policy.
5. The policy agenda needs to be in effect and adopted before 31 December 2023.

As a result of the above criteria, the scope of this study is limited. A focus on those agendas that have children and youth as their primary objective, obscures the fact that there has been attention for children and youth issues in other policy areas, such as migration, poverty (e.g. at European Union level) and education (e.g. within UNESCO⁴). Certain initiatives taken at the various *vertical policy levels* with respect to children, youth and children’s rights remain hidden. This entails the risk of an imbalanced assessment of the actual attention for the interests and rights of children and youth within the three selected organisations. What is presented here shows by no means the full and actual breadth of attention that is paid to children(‘s) rights or youth in all European and international policy agendas.

- The personal field of application of the policy agendas is based on the criterion of age. At the three levels, children are coherently defined as human beings ‘below the age of eighteen years’, in accordance with Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).⁵ With respect to youth, the age limit varies. The concept of ‘youth’ is respectively defined as comprising young people from 13 to 30 years (in European Union youth programme Erasmus+, there is no common definition in policy documents)⁶, from

³ Not included are, for instance, the initiatives of the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. More information: <https://www.unesco.org/en/education>

⁵ UN Doc. A/44/49.

⁶ The definition of ‘youth’ varies among Member States of the European Union. As an instrument for implementing the EU Youth Strategy and according to Article 6 (2) of Decision 1719/2006, the Erasmus+ programme targets “young people from 13 to 30”. The European Solidarity Corps Programme, however, targets young people from 13 to 35.

13 to 30 years (Council of Europe)⁷ and from 15 to 24 years (United Nations)⁸.

The discussion of the different policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights follows the same structure:

- Legal basis
- Decision-making body
- Main policy document
 - Institution responsible for (monitoring) implementation
 - Time frame
 - Objectives of the policy agenda on children/youth
 - Agenda - Thematic priorities
 - Approaches, methods and instruments
 - References to policies on children('s rights)/youth respectively

Where relevant, a brief historical overview is included.

⁷ Council of Europe Glossary on Youth (<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary>) For the purposes of European youth policies the age 13 to 30 years is used by the European Commission and Council of Europe. References: Council of Europe and European Commission Research Partnership: Report of the Research Seminar 'The Youth Sector and Non-formal Education/Learning: working to make lifelong learning a reality and contributing to the Third Sector', Strasbourg 28-30 April 2004.

⁸ For statistical purposes, the UN defines persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth, without prejudice to national definitions. This definition was made during preparations for the International Youth Year (1985) and endorsed by the General Assembly (see A/36/215 and resolution 36/28, 1981).

2. European Union

The European Union is an economic and political partnership between 27 European countries, with the central objective to provide peace, prosperity, democracy, and freedom for its citizens in a fairer, safer world. The Union is founded on the principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and the principles common to the Member States.⁹ The action of the European Union is limited by the principle of conferral of competences; at the same time the use of these competences is governed by the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Those competences not conferred upon the Union in the Treaties remain with the Member States.¹⁰

2.1. Children and youth in general EU Policy

Changing social realities in Europe (technological advances, globalisation, an ageing population, etc.) resulted in a public consultation launched by the Commission in 2007, in order to deliver direct and concrete results for the citizens of Europe. In 2007, this consultation resulted in the Communication ‘**Opportunities, access and solidarity: towards a new social vision for the 21st century Europe**’ (also called Social Vision Communication)¹¹. This communication provides an overview of changes in European society and drafts a new vision on how to respond to these issues. It calls for more investment in children’s education and welfare and for more resolute action in promoting equal opportunities and guaranteeing access to basic social services, like education and health care. The European Commission adopted a Communication on a ‘**Renewed social agenda: opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe**’ in July 2008.¹² The Commission published a broad range of proposals in the ‘**Social Package**’ on 2 July 2008, built around this ‘Renewed Social Agenda’. The ‘Renewed Social Agenda’ completes the Lisbon Strategy¹³ for the period 2008-2010 and was intended to enhance wellbeing and quality of life, create opportunities, provide access, and demonstrate solidarity. It covers not only “traditional” social policy domains (employment and social protection) but covers a wide range of policy areas including education and youth, health, immigration and intercultural dialogue. One of the seven priorities¹⁴ of the renewed social agenda is ‘**Children and Youth – Tomorrow’s Europe**’. The personal field of application of this policy agenda is children and youth (comprising young people from 13 to 30 years). The following initiatives are listed as part of the renewed social agenda:

- a Communication from the Commission on ‘Improving competences for the 21st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools’¹⁵
- a Green Paper on ‘Migration and Mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems.’¹⁶

⁹ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union (2008) art. 6.

¹⁰ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2008) art. 5.

¹¹ COM(2007) 726 final.

¹² COM(2008) 412 final.

¹³ The Lisbon Strategy proposes an integrated approach with a view to responding to transformations in the employment market and European society, http://ec.europa.eu/archives/growthandjobs_2009/index_en.htm

¹⁴ The six other priorities of the renewed social agenda are: (i) investing in people, more and better jobs, new skills; (ii) mobility; (iii) longer and healthier lives; (iv) combating poverty and social exclusion; (v) fighting discrimination; and (vi) opportunities, access and solidarity on the global scene.

¹⁵ COM(2008) 425 final.

¹⁶ COM(2008) 423 final.

- a Communication from the Commission on developing the open method of coordination on youth: 'An EU Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities'. (see below)
- a comprehensive approach to child poverty, based on quantitative targets, inspired by the European strategy on inclusion and social protection

On 6 May 2009 the European Parliament proposed a resolution on the Renewed social agenda. This considers *“that there should be a better link at the EU level between economic, environmental and social policies, with reaffirmation of the original Lisbon Strategy goals and the need to ensure that economic and employment policies actively contribute to the eradication of poverty and social exclusion”*. The Renewed Social Agenda, including its actions, is revised in 2010, together with the Lisbon strategy¹⁵. The successor of the Lisbon Strategy is the Europe2020 strategy. The 2010 Communication **‘Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’** (Europe 2020 strategy) envisaged a Europe where children would have a better education and access to the services and resources they need to grow up.

The new comprehensive EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child¹⁷ and the European Child Guarantee¹⁸ are major policy initiatives put forward by the European Commission to better protect all children, to help them fulfil their rights and to place them right at the centre of EU policy making.

2.2. EU policy agenda on children(‘s rights)

2.2.1. Legal basis

Article 24 of the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 2000** is devoted exclusively to children’s rights, and reads as follows¹⁹:

1. Children shall have the right to such protection and care as is necessary for their well-being. They may express their views freely. Such views shall be taken into consideration on matters which concern them in accordance with their age and maturity.
2. In all actions relating to children, whether taken by public authorities or private institutions, the child’s best interests must be a primary consideration.
3. Every child shall have the right to maintain on a regular basis a personal relationship and direct contact with both his or her parents, unless that is contrary to his or her interests.

¹⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0142>

¹⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en>

¹⁹ Emphasis added. According to Article 3 (3) para. 5 of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union (2008) the Union shall in its relations with the wider world contribute to “the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child.” However, as noted in the introduction, EU external policy is not included in this study.

Furthermore, other children’s rights are stated in article 7 on right to private and family life, article 14 on right to education, article 32 on the prohibition of child labour and the protection of youth in employment and article 33 on family and professional life. The Charter gained binding legal effect (equal to the Treaties) after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009. The Lisbon Treaty put an end to the many years of debate on whether the European Union had any competence in the field of children’s rights. Indeed, pursuant to Article 3 (3) para. 2, the European Union *“shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child”*.²⁰

2.2.2. Decision-making body

EU Member States develop their own national policies on children and children’s rights. Nonetheless, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2012 consolidated version) includes two explicit references to children. The European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, are competent to adopt measures for:

- combating trafficking in persons, in particular women and children²¹
- establishing minimum rules concerning the definition of criminal offences and sanctions in the area of, among others, trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of women and children.²²

At European Union level, decision-making in relation to children(’s rights) is linked to the substantive field in which measures are taken, such as asylum and migration or education. A compilation of EU law and policy documents relevant to children(’s rights) is attached as an annex to the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and shows the broad spectrum of legislation and policies that relate to children’s rights.

2.2.3. Historical overview

In its Communication on **Strategic Objectives 2005-2009**, the European Commission recognised children’s rights as a main area of concern: *“A particular priority must be effective protection of the rights of children, both against economic exploitation and all forms of abuse, with the Union acting as a beacon to the rest of the world”*.²³ In March 2006, the European Council asked the Member States that all children with different social backgrounds would be given equal opportunities and that child poverty would be rapidly and significantly reduced. In July 2006, the European Commission issued the Communication ‘Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child’.²⁴ The communication was accompanied by an impact assessment²⁵ and a preliminary inventory of European Union action affecting children’s rights.²⁶

²⁰ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2008) art. 79(2)(d).

²¹ Art. 79, (2) d) TFEU

²² art. 83, (1) TFEU

²³ COM(2005) 12 final

²⁴ COM(2006) 367 final

²⁵ SEC(2006) 888

²⁶ SEC(2006) 889

The Communication ‘An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child’ was adopted on 15 February 2011.²⁷ The actions proposed were to be carried out within different time frames, until 2014. The purpose of the EU Agenda is to reaffirm “*the strong commitment of all EU institutions and of all Member States to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of the child in all relevant EU policies and to turn it into concrete results*”. This EU Agenda includes eleven concrete actions in four areas where the EU can bring real added value. These areas are child-friendly justice, the protection of children when they are vulnerable, children in the EU’s external action²⁸ and child participation and awareness raising. Review on the progress made in the implementation of the EU Agenda is included in the Commission’s Annual Reports on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights from 2011 until 2014.

In the resolution of 27 November 2014 on the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child²⁹, the European Parliament calls on the Commission to present “*an ambitious and comprehensive child rights strategy and action plan for the next five years*”. The Council Conclusions on children’s rights were adopted on 4-5 December 2014³⁰, and called on the Commission to develop a renewed EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child in line with Better Regulation principles.³¹ The Commission confirmed to “*continue the process of coordinating and mainstreaming of rights of the child in all EU legislative proposals, policies and financial decisions, in particular through the inter-service group on rights of the child, training on the Charter of Fundamental Rights, inter-service consultations, and other bilateral and ad hoc means. In this context, the Commission is reflecting on the appropriate follow-up to the action plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014)*”.³²

Among others, in 2017 the Commission issued the Communication on the protection of children in migration.³³

With the setting up of the new European Commission in 2019, President Von der Leyen sent a mission letter to Vice- President for Democracy and Demography, Ms. Dubravka Šuica. One of her mandates was to be the Commission’s lead for protecting children’s rights. It had to prepare a comprehensive strategy on the rights of the child. It should include actions to protect vulnerable children, protect their rights online, foster child-friendly justice and prevent and fight violence.

The European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2019 on children’s rights on the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child³⁴ calls on the Commission “*to present a strategy to support and protect children everywhere, with no exception, including a specific budget and a child marker in the allocation of the Commission’s budgets that would enable EU investment in children to*

²⁷ COM(2011) 60 final

²⁸ External EU policy falls outside the ambit of this study.

²⁹ 2014/2919(RSP) , <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52014IP0070>

³⁰ 17016/14.

³¹ Better regulation for better results — An EU agenda, COM(2015) 215 final, 19.05.2015.

³² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2015-005691_EN.html?redirect

³³ COM(2017) 211 final.

³⁴ 2019/2876(RSP).

be measured and monitored and would ensure accountability”. The new comprehensive EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee are currently two main policy initiatives by the European Commission. These policy documents have been drafted after extensive consultations with citizens, stakeholders and over 10,000 children.³⁵

2.2.4. Main policy document

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child³⁶ is adopted on 24 March 2021, together with a Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee³⁷ (see below).

INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Within the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Unit C2 ‘Fundamental Rights Policy’³⁸ of Directorate C ‘Fundamental Rights and Rule of Law’ is primarily responsible for children’s rights (see Annex1). The Directorate-General for Justice has a coordinating role on the rights of the child among the Commission’s services. The European Commission coordinator for the Rights of the Child cooperates with other services, including through an inter-service group, to ensure that the Rights of the Child are duly considered in all relevant policies and actions, in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In order to help with the mainstreaming and coordination of initiatives at national level and among key stakeholders to ensure better implementation of existing EU and international legal obligations the strategy envisaged the establishment of the EU Network for Children’s Rights. Building on the work of the existing informal expert group on the rights of the child, which was set up in 2013, the Network aims to reinforce the dialogue and mutual learning between the EU and Member States on children’s rights, and to support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy. It is composed of national representatives and will include in some of its activities international and non-governmental organisations, representatives of local and regional authorities and children, among others³⁹. It was officially launched on 31 March 2022. The second meeting took place in March 2023⁴⁰.

The Commission monitors the implementation of the strategy at EU and national level, and reports on the progress at the annual European Forum on the rights of the child. The European Forum on the Rights of the Child is an annual event for the promotion of children’s rights, which was established after the adoption of the 2006 Communication ‘Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child’. The Forum is composed of a diversity of members, namely Member State representatives, Ombudspersons for children, EU institutions, international organisations, civil society, academics, and practitioners. The 14th European

³⁵ ChildFund Alliance, Eurochild, Save The Children, UNICEF, World Vision (2021), Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future. <https://www.unicef.org/eu/reports/report-our-europe-our-rights-our-future>

³⁶ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-strategy-rights-child-and-european-child-guarantee_en#documents

³⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0137&qid=1647980233530>

³⁸ Formerly Unit C2 Fundamental Rights and Rights of the Child.

³⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0142>

⁴⁰ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-network-childrens-rights_en

Forum on the rights of the child was dedicated to ‘**Bringing children at the centre: Empowering, protecting and including children**’. As it was the first forum since the adoption of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child in March 2021⁴¹.

Children’s opinions and views are included in the monitoring and evaluation, notably through the Children’s Participation Platform. The commission set up this Platform as a safe space for children and teenagers to have their say on the European laws and policies that concern them. The first General Assembly meeting took place in June 2023 in Brussels⁴².

TIME FRAME

The strategy aims to cover the period from 2021 without setting an end date.

OBJECTIVES

This strategy aims to provide a comprehensive framework for all new and existing EU legislative, policy and funding instruments and thus mainstreaming children’s rights through all relevant EU policies.

AGENDA - THEMATIC PRIORITIES

The Strategy proposes a series of actions across six thematic priorities⁴³ and specifically considers the needs of certain groups of children in vulnerable situations.

- *Thematic area 1: EU actions to empower children to be active citizens and members of democratic societies.* Among other actions, the European Commission set up an EU Children’s participation platform. It recommends Member States to establish, improve and provide adequate resources for new and existing mechanisms of child participation at local, regional, and national level and increase awareness and knowledge of the rights of the child, among others.
- *Thematic area 2: EU actions to fight poverty, promote inclusive and child-friendly societies, health and education systems.* Delivering on this priority, the European Commission proposed a Council recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee, aimed - as explained by the President Ursula von der Leyen - at making sure that “every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to the most basic of rights like healthcare and education”.⁴⁴ The recommendation⁴⁵ aims at preventing and combating social exclusion by guaranteeing for children in need access to quality key services, such as early childhood education and care, education (including school-based activities), healthcare, nutrition (including at least one healthy meal each school day), and housing. The main focus is on creating equal opportunities for inclusive and universal access for all children, more specifically those in poverty and in a disadvantaged situation.
- *Thematic area 3: EU actions that help children grow free from violence.* The European Commission will

⁴¹ https://commission.europa.eu/events/european-forum-rights-child-2021-10-26_en

⁴² <https://eu-for-children.europa.eu/home>

⁴³ The last request for national updates of the EU Network for Children’s Rights regarding the implementation of the Strategy has included a request for updates on a seventh thematic area titled “Embedding a child perspective in all EU actions”.

⁴⁴ Political Guidelines for the European Commission 2019-2024.

⁴⁵ COM(2021) 137 final (L 223/14, (EU) 2021/1004).

work on an initiative aimed at supporting the development and strengthening of integrated child protection systems. It calls EU Member States to raise awareness of, and invest in capacity building and measures for (i) a more effective prevention of violence, (ii) protection of victims and witnesses, including with the necessary safeguards for child suspects or accused; as well as to improve the functioning of child protection systems at national level, among others.

- Thematic area 4: EU actions to support justice systems that uphold the rights and needs of children. The European Commission key actions include the strengthening of the implementation of the 2010 Guidelines on Child-friendly Justice with the Council of Europe as well as proposing a horizontal legislative initiative in 2022 to support the mutual recognition of parenthood between Member States. The recommendations for EU Member States include the support of judicial training providers and all relevant professionals' bodies to address the rights of the child and child friendly and accessible justice in their activities, among others.
- Thematic area 5: EU actions to ensure that children can safely navigate the digital environment and harness its opportunities. European Commission key actions cover the adoption of an updated Better Internet for Kids Strategy in 2022⁴⁶. Member States Recommendations ensure effective equal access to digital tools and high-speed Internet connection, digital literacy, accessible online educational material and education tools etc. for all children as well as to support the development of children's basic digital competences. The Strategy also covers actions for the ICT companies.
- Thematic area 6: EU actions supporting, protecting, and empowering children globally, including during crisis and conflict. On the key actions for the European Commission, measures include funding on education, including in emergencies, as well as actions to address child labour, such as an action to make supply chains of EU companies free of child labour, notably through a legislative initiative on sustainable corporate governance. The European Commission also prepared a Youth Action Plan in EU External Action 2022 to promote youth and child empowerment and participation around the world.

APPROACHES, METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

Three general principles should ensure that EU action is exemplary in ensuring respect of the provisions of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with regard to the rights of children. These principles are:

- Making the rights of the child an integral part of the EU's fundamental rights
- Building the basis for evidence-based policy making
- Cooperation with stakeholders.

The Commission will mainstream a children's rights perspective in all relevant policies, legislation, and funding programmes. For the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy, the following methods and instruments are proposed:

- Training and capacity building to EU staff and increased internal coordination through the team of the Commission's Coordinator for the Rights of the Child.
- Development of a mainstreaming checklist on children's rights.

⁴⁶ COM(2022) 212 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2022:212:FIN>

- Development of more reliable and comparable data for making evidence-based policies, amongst others through the research and innovation framework programme Horizon Europe (2021-2027).
- Establishment of an EU Network for Children’s Rights, to reinforce the dialogue and mutual learning between the EU and Member States on children’s rights, and support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy. It will be composed of national representatives and will include in some of its activities international and non-governmental organisations, representatives of local and regional authorities and children, among others.
- Establishment of an EU Children’s Participation Platform, jointly with the European Parliament and child rights organisations, upon discussion at the EU Network for Children’s Rights meeting in March 2023. The EU Children’s Participation Platform had its first general assembly on 26 June 2023, aiming to connect existing child participation mechanisms at local, national and EU level, and to involve children in decision-making processes at EU level, making the involvement of Member States and of all stakeholders, at all levels, essential to its implementation.
- Collaboration with regional and local authorities, and with other relevant institutions, regional and international organisations, civil society, and ombudspersons for children.
- Contribution of EU funding for Member States initiatives to protect and fulfil the rights of the child. In particular in relation to tackling child poverty, Member States that have a rate of child-at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion higher than the EU average (in 2017- 2019) will have to earmark 5% of the ESF+ for combatting child poverty.

Furthermore, for the effective governance, monitoring and reporting of the European Child Guarantee the following methods and instruments are proposed:

- Nomination of national Child Guarantee Coordinators who should be equipped with adequate resources and mandate enabling the effective coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the European Child Guarantee recommendation;
- Development, within six months from the adoption of the recommendation (i.e. before mid-March 2022) of national action plans that should cover the period until 2030. The action plans should include targeted categories of children in need to be reached by corresponding integrated measures, quantitative and qualitative targetsto be achieved in terms of children in need to be reached by corresponding measures, taking into account regional and local disparities, measures planned or taken in implementing this Recommendation, including at regional and local level, and the necessary financial resources and timelines, other measures planned or taken to address child social exclusion and to break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage, and national frameworks for data collection, monitoring and evaluation;
- Regular reporting on the progress in implementing the European Child Guarantee recommendation: every two years by the Member States to the Commission and by the Commission to the Council 5 years after the adoption of the recommendation (mid-2026).

REFERENCES TO YOUTH POLICIES

Certain actions in the EU Strategy of the Rights of the Child refer to youth policy or the youth sector. The EU YouthDialogue, for example, should ensure that the views and experiences of young people and youth organisations are taken into account when drafting youth policies. The Strategy also supports the

implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. Furthermore, the strategy invites members “to implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee⁴⁷ and promote the involvement of young people in Youth Guarantee services”.

At last, youth empowerment globally is promoted through a Youth Action Plan (2022) as part of Thematic area 6: The Global dimension.

2.3. EU policy agenda on youth

2.3.1. Legal basis

Europe has a limited legal basis for taking action in youth policy (and youth work). Since 1992 youth is included as a policy area, following the signing of the **Treaty on European Union (Treaty of Maastricht)**⁴⁸. In the chapter ‘Education, vocational training and youth’, Article 126, §2 encourages “the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors”.

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as entered into force since 1 December 2009, enshrines EU competence in the field of youth in Article 6, which states:

The Union shall have competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States. The areas of such action shall, at European level, be: (e) education, vocational training, youth and sport.

Articles 165 and 166 are the basis for EU action in the youth field. Article 165, 2 of Title XII on ‘Education, Vocational Training, Youth and Sport’ specifies that Union action shall be aimed at ‘encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors’, as already included in the Maastricht Treaty. However, it is added that Union action shall also aim at ‘encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe’.⁴⁹

Article 166 of the TFEU states that “the Union shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organization of vocational training”.

Article 214, 5 creates a framework for young people to contribute to EU humanitarian aid operations by

⁴⁷ The reinforced Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all Member States to ensure “that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good quality offer of employment continued education apprenticeship traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. All EU countries have committed to the implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee in a Council Recommendation of October 2020. The Recommendation is based on a Commission proposal, part of the Youth Employment Support package. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11320-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

⁴⁸ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

⁴⁹ As regards vocational training policy, Union action shall aim to “facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people.” Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2008) art. 166, 2.

establishing the European Solidarity Corps.

2.3.2. Decision-making body

Youth policies are in the first place developed at national level by the different EU Member States. At European Union level, a framework for co-operation has been established. The main decisions in this respect are taken by the Council of Youth Ministers. The meetings of the Council are prepared by the Youth Working Party⁵⁰, which brings together representatives from the ministries of youth of the EU Member States, and by COREPER⁵¹.

2.3.3. Historical overview

The first youth mobility/exchange programme was introduced in 1988. Until 2001, the activities of the European Union in the youth field consisted mainly in the implementation of specific programmes. In 2001, the European Commission issued the **White Paper ‘A New Impetus for European Youth’**, which incorporated the results of wide consultation exercise within the EU.⁵² The White Paper proposed a new framework for European cooperation in the youth field, based on two approaches: first, the application of the **open method of coordination** in the specific field of youth, and second, paying more attention to the ‘youth dimension’ in the development of other relevant policies, such as education, lifelong learning, mobility, employment and social integration, and combating racism and xenophobia. For the application of the open method of coordination, the European Commission suggested four thematic priorities: participation, information, voluntary service among young people, and a greater understanding and knowledge of youth. In its Resolution of 27 June 2002, the Council of the EU endorsed the Commission’s White Paper.⁵³ Common objectives on participation by and information for young people were adopted by the Council of the EU in 2003.⁵⁴ In 2004, the European Commission similarly proposed common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth⁵⁵ and for voluntary activities among young people.⁵⁶ In the years thereafter, the Council of the EU issued various resolutions on the implementation of these common objectives.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/youth-working-party/>

⁵¹ COREPER is composed of the ‘permanent representatives’ from each member state and coordinates and prepares the work of the different Council configurations, ensures consistency of the EU’s policies and works out agreements and compromises which are then submitted for adoption by the Council. More information: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/coreper-i/>

⁵² COM(2001) 681 final.

⁵³ Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field (2002/C 168/02). For an evaluation, see Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of 24 May 2005 meeting within the Council on the evaluation of activities conducted in the framework of European cooperation in the youth field (2005/C 141/01).

⁵⁴ Council resolution of 25 November 2003 on common objectives for participation by and information for young people (2003/C 295/04). See also COM(2003) 184 final.

⁵⁵ COM(2004) 336 final.

⁵⁶ COM(2004) 337 final.

⁵⁷ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of 24 May 2005 meeting within the Council on implementing the common objectives for youth information (2005/C 141/03); Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on implementing the common objectives for participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active European citizenship (2006/C 297/02); Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 16 May 2007 on implementing the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people (2008/C 241/01) and Corrigendum (2008/C 292/06).

In March 2005, the European Council adopted the **European Youth Pact**, as an instrument to contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon goals of boosting jobs and growth. The Pact⁵⁸ focused on three areas:

- employment, integration and social advancement
- education, training and mobility
- reconciliation of working life and family life.

Among the measures to reconcile working life and family life, the improvement of childcare facilities is explicitly mentioned. In November 2005, the **European framework for cooperation in the youth field** was updated to take the European Youth Pact into account.⁵⁹ This framework of cooperation was set to expire in 2009.

In 2005 the Council of Youth Ministers adopted a resolution calling upon Member States to develop '*structured dialogue with young people and their organizations on policy actions that affect them, with the involvement of researchers in the youth field*'. From 2007 to 2013, the **Youth in Action programme**⁶⁰ aimed at '*active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance and involving young people in shaping the future of the European Union*'. The Youth in Action programme is now enclosed in the **Erasmus+ framework** for 2021-2027⁶¹, and targets young people between 13 and 30 years. It promotes mobility, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people.

In April 2009, the Commission presented a Communication entitled '**An EU Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities**'.⁶² This Strategy was in line with the goals set out in the **renewed social agenda** published in 2008. (see 1.1.1.) Creating more opportunities for youth in education and employment, improving access and full participation of young people in society and fostering mutual solidarity between society and young people were identified as primordial. The Communication proposed a strategy for future youth policies in Europe, and invited Member States and the Commission to cooperate in the youth field through a **renewed open method of coordination**. As an objective it proclaimed that '*youth work should be supported, recognized for its economic and social contribution and professionalized*'. Adopting a cross-sectoral approach, it is mentioned that youth policies can contribute to delivering results in areas such as '*child and family policy, education, gender equality, employment, housing and healthcare*'. After the publication 'Investing and Empowering', the Council of Youth Ministers adopted the Resolution on a Renewed Framework for Cooperation in the Youth Field 2010-2018.⁶³

⁵⁸ Presidency Conclusions of the European Council, Brussels, 22-23 March 2005 (7619/05), Annex 1.

⁵⁹ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting active citizenship (2005/C 292/03). See also COM(2005) 206 final.

⁶⁰ https://youth.europa.eu/home_en

⁶¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013.

⁶² COM(2009) 200 final.

⁶³ 2009/C 311/01.

It should be mentioned that in the same time period, the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 established the Youth Guarantee (and the “Reinforced” Youth Guarantee in 2020), which is one of the best-known examples of youth-related policy under DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. However while the EU Youth Strategy and EU Youth Goals highlight employment as a specific concern for young people, the two policies have little reference to each other.

Furthermore, in December 2016 the European Union launched a new mobility programme ‘**European Solidarity Corps**’⁶⁴, to create opportunities for young people to volunteer or work on projects in their own country or abroad that benefit communities and people around Europe. The Council adopted a Regulation establishing the European Solidarity Corps Programme. The most recent programme runs from 2021-2027.⁶⁵ The actions of the European Solidarity Corps are consistent with and complementary to the relevant policies, instruments, and programmes at Union level in general, and in particular the Erasmus+ programme.

The Commission proposed to review and develop the Youth cooperation in its Communication May 2018 ‘**Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy**’.⁶⁶ The main proposals have been endorsed in the Council resolution of 26 November 2018.⁶⁷

In the **Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Youth (2022)**, specific reference has been made to the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child’, and the European Child Guarantee, which set a new standard for child and teen representation and recognise children and young people as active citizens and agents of change.⁶⁸

2.3.4. Main policy document

The **EU Youth Strategy** is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018.⁶⁹ EU youth cooperation shall make the most of youth policy’s potential. It fosters youth participation in democratic life, in line with Article 165(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It also supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society.

The **European Youth Goals**⁷⁰, that are an integral part of the EU Youth Strategy, have been developed by young people for young people under the 6th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue process, and represent the areas where change still needs to happen, in order for young people to live to their full potential.

⁶⁴ For more information: https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

⁶⁵ Regulation (EU) 2021/888 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the European Solidarity Corps Programme and repealing Regulations (EU) 2018/1475 and (EU) No 375/2014.

⁶⁶ COM (2018)269.

⁶⁷ COM(2018)269.

⁶⁸ Decision (EU) 2021/2316 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 December 2021 on a European Year of Youth (2022)

⁶⁹ 2018/C 456/01, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL>

⁷⁰ https://europa.eu/youth/strategy/european-youth-goals_en

These opportunities are underpinned by significant EU investment, in particular through programmes such as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, the European Social Fund Plus, Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Justice Programme, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development. These funding programmes make a significant EU contribution towards enabling youth to pursue their personal, social, and professional fulfilment.

INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION

The European Commission’s Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture (EAC) comprises a Youth unit within Directorate B (Youth, Education and Erasmus+). Unit EAC.B.3 is in charge of youth policy aspects, European Solidarity Corps, the Youth chapter of Erasmus + and the Traineeship Office.

TIME FRAME

The renewed framework aims to cover the period from 2019 until 2027.

OBJECTIVES

The EUYS creates a framework capable of responding to the challenges faced by young people throughout the EU, while investing in a **common and coherent Union response**, complementary to the Member States’ efforts and initiatives in tackling these present challenges. In line with Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, the EUYS aims to **increase social and civic engagement and participation in democratic life** for all young people.

The Strategy strives to:

- Enable young people to be architects of their own lives, support their personal development and growth to autonomy, build their resilience and equip them with life skills to cope with a changing world;
- Encourage and equip young people with the necessary resources to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change inspired by EU values and a European identity;
- Improve policy decisions with regard to their impact on young people across all sectors, notably employment, education, health and social inclusion;
- Contribute to the eradication of youth poverty and all forms of discrimination and promote social inclusion of young people.

AGENDA - THEMATIC PRIORITIES

The Council agrees on working on **effective, focused and joined-up implementation within and across sectors while tackling core areas of the youth sector through engaging, connecting and empowering:**

- (a) *Engage* means that there should be meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural, and political participation of young people in the development, implementation and assessment of policies that

concern them, such as the EU Youth Strategy and national youth strategies. The EUYS requests to support and foster (new and alternative; digital forms of) **inclusive democratic participation, active involvement** of young people and youth organisations in the development, implementation and evaluation of policy, support for the **creation and development of youth representation**, investing in and following **the EU Youth Dialogue** and developing **learning opportunities** around participation for young people.

- (b) *Connect* focusses on creating **solidarity** within the European Union and on building the European Union's future development through mobility and exchanges, cooperation, and cultural and social activities at European level. This means that young people and youth workers should gain access to **volunteering**

in civil society, solidarity activities, support schemes, etc. and share best practices and further develop **effective validation systems and recognition of skills and competences** acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

- (c) *Empowerment* implies that young people feel encouraged taking their lives in their own hands. The EUYS emphasizes that Youth Work delivers a non-formal learning setting with unique benefits to empower young people. Quality, innovation and recognition of youth work should be further developed and implemented, further synergies with the work of the Council of Europe should be encouraged, the quality of youth work development on all levels (local, regional, national and European) should be supported and easily accessible contact points for young people should be established.

The Council resolution acknowledges the European Youth Goals⁷¹ identified in the dialogue process and underlines that the EUYS should contribute to realising this vision of young people. Following non-binding goals were identified:

- connecting EU with youth;
- equality of all genders;
- inclusive societies;
- information and constructive dialogue;
- mental health and wellbeing;
- moving rural youth forward;
- quality employment for all;
- quality learning;
- space and participation for all;
- sustainable green Europe;
- youth organisations and European programmes.

APPROACHES, METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

⁷¹ <http://www.youthgoals.eu/>

In order to achieve the objectives of the EUYS, all policies and activities concerning young people should be firmly anchored in the international system of human rights and should follow the principles of **equality and non-discrimination, inclusion and participation**. The lives of young people are shaped by policies rooted in various policy areas and determined at different levels of implementation. In order to ensure durable impact of youth policy, the **global, European, national, regional and local dimension** needs to be interlinked and policies should aim to tackle youth-relevant issues by **mainstreaming initiatives across policy areas and by supporting specific initiatives in the youth sector**.

For the effective implementation of the framework of cooperation, the following methods and instruments are proposed:

- (a) *Evidence-based policy making and knowledge building in the youth field.* A deeper understanding of the needs of young people through continuous research, knowledge development and outreach to young people and youth organisations with the support of the Youth Wiki, youth research networks and cooperation with international organisations.
- (b) *Mutual learning and dissemination.* Mutual learning between Member States, the European Commission, expert groups and relevant stakeholders as a basis to further youth policy in core and cross-sectoral areas.
- (c) *Participatory governance.* Involvement of young people and their representative organisations in the different phases of implementation of the EUYS through an EU Youth Strategy Platform.
- (d) *Mobilising EU programmes and funds.* Effective use of EU programmes and funds, such as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020, etc.
- (e) Monitoring of EU funding, by monitoring spending on youth through using existing mechanisms as appropriate.
- (f) *Communication* on the purpose and the content of the EUYS in a comprehensive way and youth-friendly language.
- (g) *Future National Activities Planner (FNAP)* will allow Member States to share their priorities (in line with the EUYS) on a voluntary basis, to increase transparency in the implementation of youth policies at regional, national and EU level and identify appropriate partners for mutual learning activities and responding to individual needs of Member States.
- (h) The *new EU Youth Dialogue* aims to include more decision-makers and young people, especially those not-listened-to and/or with fewer opportunities, to foster their engagement and political participation. Furthermore, more regular exchange between EU Youth Dialogue National Working Groups and the European Commission should be facilitated.
- (i) An *EU Youth Coordinator* to enhance cross-sectoral cooperation, knowledge development and exchange on youth issues within the European Commission services.
- (j) *Equal access to quality Youth Information services and platforms*, including inter alia the European Youth Portal, notably with the support of European-wide organisations and promoting young people's rights, opportunities, youth services and EU programmes.
- (k) *The EU Work Plans for Youth will present priorities and actions* for triennial working periods within the EUYS, drawing on the guiding principles and priorities of the EUYS. The Council will set these EU Work Plans together with the Commission, beginning with a work plan for 2019-2021. The

plans will allow addressing youth issues in other Council configurations and their preparatory bodies in other areas.

- (l) *Monitoring, reporting, evaluation.* The Commission will report on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy every three years, based on information provided by Member States and the Youth Wiki. Progress will be monitored in the EU Youth Strategy Platform, with the assistance of youth organisations and other relevant stakeholders. The Dashboard of EU Youth Indicators can be used to monitor the overall situation of young people in Member States. A policy review of EU funded research projects should be conducted from 2019 on to extract relevant findings for the youth policy area.
- (m) *Mid-term Review* of the EUYS by the Council on the basis of an evaluation report of the Commission by 31 December 2023. It shall review as appropriate this Resolution in the year 2024, in order to adjust it to possible new developments and needs.

REFERENCES TO CHILDREN(S RIGHTS) POLICIES

The EUYS does not contain explicit references to children’s (rights) policies. The Council does explicitly emphasize that all actions undertaken within this EUYS should affirm the international standards of human rights, and thus specifically **children’s rights. Equality, non-discrimination, and participation** are underlying requirements for all policies and activities concerning young people.⁷² These general requirements are also guiding principles within the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. The EUYS also emphasises that young people should have equal access to quality **youth information on their rights.**⁷³

⁷² COM(2018)269, p. 4.

⁷³ COM(2018)269, p. 13.

3. Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an international organisation composed of 46 member states⁷⁴, covering almost the whole European continent. Its basic objective is to create a common democratic and legal area throughout the whole of the continent, ensuring respect for its fundamental values: human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

3.1. Council of Europe policy agenda on children(‘s rights)

3.1.1. Legal basis

The **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)** of 1950 sets out civil and political rights and freedoms. The rights of children are not specifically mentioned in the Convention. However, pursuant to Article 1, the Convention applies to everyone within the jurisdiction of the States Parties, thus also to children. In an increasing number of cases brought before the European Court of Human Rights, issues of children’s rights have been addressed.⁷⁵

The **European Social Charter (ESC)** was adopted in 1961 and revised in 1996. The Charter complements the ECHR by guaranteeing social and economic human rights. In the revised Charter, two provisions exclusively address children’s rights, namely Article 7 (the right of children and young persons to protection) and Article 17 (the right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection). The European Committee of Social Rights monitors compliance by the States Parties with the ESC.

The Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention) of 2007 requires the criminalisation of all kinds of sexual offences against children. It sets out that states in Europe and beyond shall adopt specific legislation and take measures to prevent sexual violence, to protect child victims and to prosecute perpetrators. The so-called “Lanzarote Committee”, Committee of the Parties to the Convention, regularly monitors whether Parties effectively implement the provisions. The Committee is also charged with identifying good practices, in particular during capacity-building activities (conferences, study visits, etc.).

The **European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment** was adopted in 1987. Other **Council of Europe Conventions** address particular aspects of children’s rights, namely:

- European Convention on the Legal Status of Children born out of Wedlock (1975)
- European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions concerning Custody of Children and on the Restoration of Custody of Children (1980)

⁷⁴ On 16 March 2022, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided that the Russian Federation ceased to be a member of the Council of Europe as from 16 March 2022.

⁷⁵ All the Court’s judgments and a large selection of decisions, information on communicated cases, advisory opinions, press releases, legal summaries and Commission decisions and reports are published in the HUDOC database: https://echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=caselaw&c=#n14597620384884950241259_pointer

- European Convention on the Exercise of Children’s Rights (1996)
- Convention on Contact concerning Children (2003)
- Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005)
- European Convention on the Adoption of Children (Revised) (2008)
- Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence(2011).
- In the **Warsaw Declaration** of 2005, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe declared their commitment to ‘*eradicating violence against women and children, including domestic violence*’.⁷⁶ The **Warsaw Action Plan** states as regards the strengthening of human rights in the information society, that ‘*the Council of Europe shall ... continue its work on children in the information society, in particular as regards developing their media literacy skills and ensuring their protection against harmful content*’. Also, and more importantly, one of the goals catalogued under the third main task of the Council of Europe of ‘Building a more humane and inclusive Europe’ in the Warsaw Action Plan is ‘Building a Europe for children’.

3.1.2. Decision-making body

The decision-making body of the Council of Europe is the **Committee of Ministers**, which is composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of all Council of Europe Member States or their permanent diplomatic representatives in Strasbourg.

3.1.3. Historical overview and main policy document

As a response to the Warsaw Declaration and Action Plan, the programme ‘**Building a Europe for and with children**’ was launched in 2006, with two interlinked aims: the promotion of children’s rights and the protection of children from violence. Since 2009, this has been guided by four consecutive Strategies on the Rights of the Child. The first one, the **Stockholm Strategy** for the years 2009-2011, was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 November 2008.⁷⁷ The second one, the **Monaco Strategy**, was adopted on 15 February 2012, for the years 2012-2015. The third one, the **Sofia Strategy** 2016-2021, was adopted on 2 March 2016⁷⁸.

The fourth one called “**Children’s Rights in Action: from continuous implementation to joint innovation**”, for the years 2022-2027⁷⁹, has been adopted by the Committee of Ministers in February 2022, and has been launched under the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers in April 2022. This is currently the main policy document. It guides the intergovernmental work on the rights of the child undertaken by the Council of Europe until 2027.

At the 4th Summit of the Council of Europe, held on 16 and 17 May 2023, Heads of State and Government from the organisation’s 46 member states have adopted a **Declaration on the situation of children of Ukraine** as part of the [Reykjavik Declaration](#) “**United around our values**”. The Summit hosted by the Icelandic Presidency of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers has been a historic opportunity for European leaders to reaffirm their common commitment to the Council of Europe’s core values and to refocus its mission in the light of new threats to human rights, including to the rights of the child,

⁷⁶ CM(2005)79 final.

⁷⁷ CM(2011)171 final.

⁷⁸ CM(2015)175.final.

⁷⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/council-of-europe-strategy-for-the-rights-of-the-child-2022-2027-child/1680a5ef27> .

and democracy, and to further support its member State Ukraine through concrete measures to help achieve justice for the victims of the Russian aggression.

In the declaration is stated, among other things: “Throughout its history, the Council of Europe’s standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law have been pivotal to ensuring and strengthening individual freedoms, peace and prosperity in our member States. As we work to promote the rights of the child, we underline the importance of education to give children and young people the necessary references to grow up embracing our democratic values in culturally diverse societies and take an active part in the protection of our cultural heritage.”

INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Since January 2020, the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child is supervised by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF), which is an intergovernmental body responsible for the standard-setting activities in the field of the rights of the child and providing a forum for exchanges on common challenges and good practices in this area. Additionally, it oversees the implementation of the Strategy for the Right of the Child, ensures that the rights of the child are mainstreamed into all relevant Council of Europe committees and bodies, and supports member States in protecting and promoting children’s rights.

The **Children’s Rights Division**, which belongs to the Directorate-General Democracy and Human Dignity (DG II), is providing the Secretariat of the CDENF and coordinates the implementation of the subsequent Strategies for the Rights of the Child withing the organisation through an Inter-Secretariat Task Force on the Rights of the Child, where representatives of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights and approximately 30 other operational entities in charge of steering and expert committees, monitoring bodies and the relevant institutions and bodies participate. The Head of the Children’s Rights Division is also the Council of Europe Coordinator on the Rights of the Child. The Task Force meets twice a year with a view to encouraging exchange and mutual update on progress achieved and challenges met with regard to the rights of the child within the Council of Europe.

TIME FRAME

The current Strategy contains the programme objectives for six years, from **2022 until 2027**.

OBJECTIVES

The Strategy aims to remedy the gaps in children’s legal protection in law and practice. It follows a comprehensive human rights approach based on the understanding that all children’s rights are indivisible and interdependent.⁸⁰

AGENDA - THEMATIC PRIORITIES

The Council of Europe’s work on the rights of the child is based on the UNCRC and its four general principles of non- discrimination, best interests of the child, right to life, survival and development and

⁸⁰ Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) para 22.

the right to be heard.⁸¹

The new Strategy identifies six strategic objectives building partly on previous priority areas remaining relevant (“continuous implementation”) and for the other part including new action aimed at responding to new areas of concern (“joint innovation”).

The six strategic objectives are:

- freedom from violence for all children;
- equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children;
- access to and safe use of technologies for all children;
- child-friendly justice for all children;
- giving a voice to every child and
- children’s rights in crisis and emergency situations.

The particular thematic focus of the intergovernmental work on the rights of the child is also expressed by the subordinate committees and working groups sub-structures working in 2022-2023 under the supervision of the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF):

- Committee of Experts on the rights and the best interests of the child in parental separation and in care proceedings (CJ/ENF-ISE)
- Committee of Experts on the prevention of violence (ENF-VAE)

APPROACHES, METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

The Council of Europe delivered this Strategy through a continued focus on implementation of existing standards, partnerships, communication, and evaluation. The programme’s working methods served the following objectives:

- making the standards work for children
- involving all relevant stakeholders
- communicating children’s rights
- evaluating performance

The budget is composed of the Council of Europe’s ordinary budget and member states’ voluntary contributions. Amid-term evaluation with the possibility for adjustments has always been carried out after three years, which is a practice to be continued under the new Strategy. The Secretariat will also report to the Committee of Ministers every two years on the implementation of this Strategy.

REFERENCES TO YOUTH POLICIES

The new Strategy also refers to the Youth Sector Strategy 2030 as a key reference. Under “1.1 Key references of the Council of Europe”, the Strategy of the Rights of the Child 2022-2027 mentions that it will aim at supporting and finding synergies with priorities and actions proposed by the Youth Sector Strategy 2030.

⁸¹ UN Doc. CRC/GC/2003/5, §12.

3.2. Council of Europe policy agenda on youth

3.2.1. Legal basis

In the **Warsaw Action Plan of 2005**, the third principal task of ‘Building a more humane and inclusive Europe’ includes the objective of ‘developing youth co-operation’. The Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe declared in this respect:

“We will intensify our efforts to empower young people to actively participate in democratic processes so that they can contribute to the promotion of our core values. The Council of Europe Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation are important instruments to this effect. We will integrate a youth perspective in all Council of Europe activities. To promote diversity, inclusion, and participation in society, we decide to launch a Europe-wide youth campaign, in the spirit of the “European Youth Campaign against racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance” (1995). The Council of Europe will further develop its unique position in the youth field. It will continue to assist member states in developing national and local policy instruments and actively promote youth exchanges and youth mobility in Europe.”

3.2.2. Decision-making body

Characteristic for the Council of Europe, and unique at the international level, is the system of co-management that it employs in the policy field of youth, with the aim of enhancing youth participation. Such **co-management** entails that representatives of **youth organisations together with government officials** think about the priorities for the youth sector and jointly formulate policy proposals. The Committee of Ministers then adopts these proposals. Concretely, the following decision-making bodies can be distinguished ([see Figure 1](#)):

- o *The European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ)* is composed of government officials, who represent the state institutions responsible for youth matters in the 50 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention;
- o *The Advisory Council on Youth* consists of 30 representatives of youth organisations and networks, who give input with respect to all youth sector initiatives of the Council of Europe;
- o *The Joint Council of Youth* brings the CDEJ and the Advisory Council on Youth together in a co-decision body to agree on the priorities, aims and budgets for the youth sector;
- o *The Programming Committee on Youth* brings together eight members each of the CDEJ and the Advisory Council on Youth in a “subsidiary co-decision body”, to decide and follow up on the activities of the European Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation.

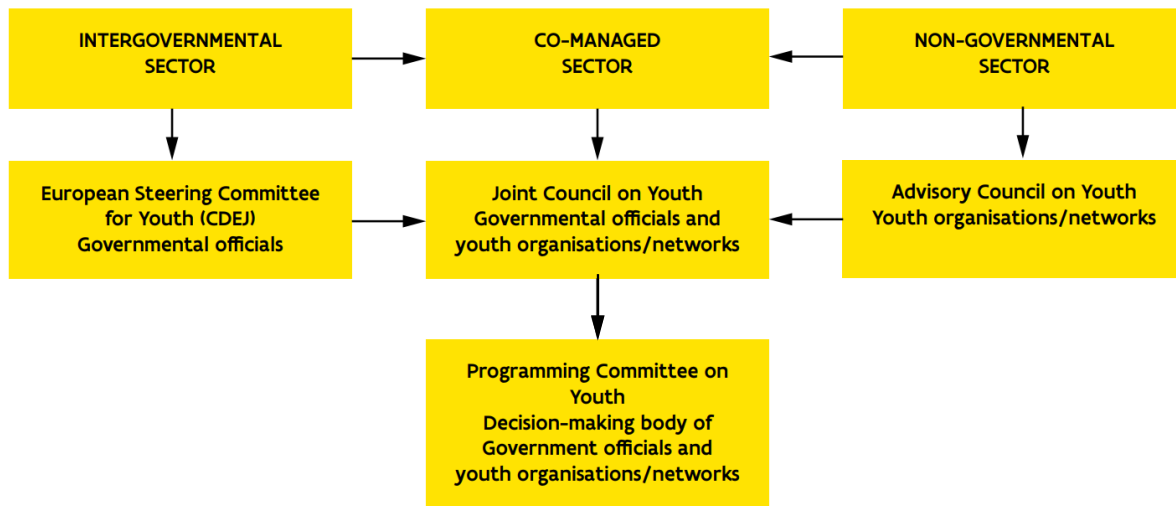


Figure 1: The Council of Europe system of co-management in the youth field⁸²

3.2.3. Historical overview

The Council of Europe has already been active in the youth field for a long time. In 1972, the European Youth Centre was established in Strasbourg. In 1998, the Committee of Ministers adopted a resolution on the Youth Policy of the Council of Europe.⁸³ On 25 November 2008, the Committee of Ministers adopted a new **resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe**.⁸⁴ This resolution takes various previous documents into account, namely the Warsaw Action Plan, the Final Declaration adopted by the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, held in Kyiv (Ukraine) in October 2008⁸⁵, and the Recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly of 2008 on ‘Refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe’.⁸⁶ On May 2017, the Committee of Ministers adopted the new Recommendation to the Council of Europe member states on youth work.⁸⁷ The recommendations set out in this document are aimed at advancing youth work, *‘in providing sufficient resources, particularly at the local level and supporting the exchange of good practices and promoting equal access to youth work.’*

As mentioned above, on 16 and 17 May 2023, the Council of Europe Summit was held in Reykjavík. This was the fourth time in the 74-year history of the Council of Europe. The leaders decided to establish a Register of Damage caused by the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine and agreed to strengthen the Council of Europe and its work in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law by adopting a declaration on the situation of the children of Ukraine, democracy principles, recommitting to the European Convention on Human Rights and developing tools to tackle emerging

⁸² <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/home>

⁸³ Resolution CM/Res(98)6 on the Youth Policy of the Council of Europe. See also, among others, Recommendation 1585 (2002) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, on Youth policies in the Council of Europe.

⁸⁴ Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe.

⁸⁵ Final Declaration: “The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020”, adopted by the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, held in Kyiv (Ukraine) on 10 and 11 October 2008.

⁸⁶ Recommendation 1844(2008) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, on Refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe.

⁸⁷ CM/Rec(2017)4.

challenges in the area of technology and the environment.

The declaration stated, with regard to youth, the following: *"We set the Council on a new path of increased transparency and co-operation with its stakeholders, with strengthened visibility and sufficient resources. This should include a youth perspective in the Organisation's intergovernmental and other deliberations as youth participation in decision-making processes improves the effectiveness of public policies and strengthens democratic institutions through open dialogue. We also call for a review and further reinforcement of the Organisation's outreach to, and meaningful engagement with, civil society organisations and national human rights institutions."*⁸⁸

At the same summit, the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy⁸⁹ have been adopted, in which principle 8 refers to the importance of participation of young people in democratic life and decision-making processes.

3.2.4. Main policy document

On 22 January 2020, the Committee of Ministers adopted a new **resolution on Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030**.⁹⁰ This resolution defines the framework for the Council of Europe youth sector to *"enable young people across Europe to actively uphold, defend, promote and benefit from the Council of Europe's core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law"*.

INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Youth Department, which forms part of the Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation of the Directorate-General of Democracy (DGII) of the Council of Europe, is responsible for the implementation of the Council of Europe youth policy (see Annex 1). The Youth Department *'elaborates guidelines, programmes and legal instruments for the development of coherent and effective youth policies at local, national and European levels'*. The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) will take stock of the implementation of the Strategy.

TIME FRAME

The Strategy will be the framework, from **2020 until 2030**.

OBJECTIVES

Actively upholding, defending, promoting, and benefiting from the Council of Europe's core values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, by:

- strengthening young people's access to rights
- deepening youth knowledge and expertise
- broadening youth participation

⁸⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/4th-summit-of-heads-of-state-and-government-of-the-council-of-europe/1680ab40c1>.

⁸⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/4th-summit-of-heads-of-state-and-government-of-the-council-of-europe/1680ab40c1>

⁹⁰ Resolution CM/Res(2020)2 on the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030.

AGENDA - THEMATIC PRIORITIES

The four priorities of the Council of Europe youth policy and action are:

- Revitalising pluralistic democracy: a stronger contribution to young people’s democratic citizenship and active participation
- Access to rights: guaranteeing better access for young people to their rights
- Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies: diverse young people living free of discrimination, of violence, of exclusion, and are contributing to peaceful and inclusive societies
- Youth work: youth work and non-formal education/learning strengthen young people’s autonomy and democratic citizenship.

APPROACHES, METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

To implement these priorities, the following approaches, methods, and instruments are proposed:

- intergovernmental co-operation at pan-European level on the preparation and implementation of youth policy
- assistance to youth policy development in member States through bilateral and multilateral support measures
- capacity building of young multipliers (youth leaders and youth workers) through the European Youth Centres and their education and training programmes
- good governance and youth participation, via the co-management system
- shared decision taking by young people and government representatives
- financial support to the development of youth civil society, by the European Youth Foundation
- innovation in youth work, youth policy and youth research
- co-operation between policy makers, practitioners, and researchers in the field of youth
- quality development and standard setting in the field of youth policy
- co-operation with the European Union and partnerships with other stakeholders and services
- youth mainstreaming and cross-departmental co-operation inside the Council of Europe
- proactive outreach to and engagement of young people experiencing disadvantage
- anticipating future trends, challenges, and opportunities

The periodical assessment of the strategy will be guaranteed through the successive programmes and budgets of the Council of Europe up to 2030.

REFERENCES TO CHILDREN(S RIGHTS) POLICIES

Resolution CM/Res(2020)2 on the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 makes scant mention of children’s rights or policies. Only in the preamble does the resolution mention the “Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)”, among several other strategies relating to areas such as gender, disability, and discrimination.

4. United Nations

The United Nations is an intergovernmental organisation composed of 193 Member States, committed to maintaining international peace and security and promoting better living standards and human rights.

4.1. UN policy on children(’s rights) and youth

4.1.1. Historical overview

In 2000, world leaders adopted the **United Nations Millennium Declaration**⁹¹, which called on the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols and set out a series of time-bound targets to be achieved by 2015, known as the **Millennium Development Goals**.⁹² For 15 years, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were a guiding force on many issues affecting the lives of children, young people and their families. During this time, progress was made in reducing preventable child deaths, getting more boys and girls into schools, reducing extreme poverty, and ensuring more people have access to safe water and nutritious food. However, progress was uneven and many of the most pressing issues for the world were not adequately covered in the MDGs. The Millennium Declaration and the associated Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) essentially shaped a social service delivery agenda of primary relevance to developing countries.

4.1.2. Main policy document

In September 2015 the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution entitled ‘**Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**’⁹³, also called the post-2015 development agenda (hereafter 2030 Agenda or SDGs), at the UN Sustainable Development Summit. The 2030 Agenda adopts a general and comprehensive set of universal Sustainable Development Goals and targets. The 2030 agenda is the result of an intensive public consultation, including opinions of governments, civil society, the private sector, academics, the UN system and concerned individuals.⁹⁴ The SDGs are people-centred, transformative, universal, and interlinked. Implementing the SDGs requires collaboration and partnership between developing and developed countries, but also between governments, NGO’s, private and public sector, academics, and society in its whole.⁹⁵⁹⁶

INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The implementation of this Agenda and its Goals and targets will be followed- up and reviewed until 2030 on a voluntary and country-led basis. Monitoring and evaluating of the progress on the implementation of the Goals and actions are primarily focused on a **national level** and organised by the **governing bodies of the Member States**. Complimentary monitoring also exists on a regional and global level. The United Nations **High-level Political Forum** on Sustainable Development (HLPF), is the

⁹¹ For more information: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

⁹² This resolution is not legally binding, in order to prevent legal obstruction and complexity.

⁹³ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/291/89/PDF/N1529189.pdf?OpenElement>

⁹⁴ UN Doc. A/RES/70/1. (see also: A/68/970 and A/68/970).

⁹⁵ UN Doc. A/RES/70/1.

⁹⁶ The UN Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace and Security can also be mentioned here.

main platform with a central role in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the SDGs on a **global level**. The establishment of the HLPF was mandated in 2012 by the outcome document ‘*The Future We Want*’ of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).⁹⁷

The Forum meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council for eight days and every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the General Assembly for two days. It provides for the full and effective participation of all States members of the United Nations and States members of specialized agencies. In addition, the United Nations Children’s Fund - UNICEF - monitors the SDGs so that it delivers for all children globally.

TIME FRAME

The Resolution ‘**Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**’ was adopted on 25 September 2015 and is valid until 2030.

OBJECTIVES

The SDGs want to build further on the outcomes of the MDGs. Member states aim to **end all forms of poverty**, and to ensure that ‘no one will be left behind’. The SDGs address the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It seeks to realise the human rights of all, and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. World leaders further reaffirmed their vision of a ‘*world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation*’.⁹⁸

THEMATIC PRIORITIES

The SDGs set out 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets that are based on five pillars (5 P’s): People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. It is important to note that all SDGs are integrated and indivisible and should be understood as such. The achievement of the Goals and targets will have a beneficial influence on children and young people. Furthermore, some of the Goals and targets are explicitly directed towards children and young people and their rights:

People



- o Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

⁹⁷ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/733FutureWeWant.pdf>

⁹⁸ UN Doc. A/RES/70/1.

Target 2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

- o Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
 - Target 1: By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round*

Target 2: By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and older persons

- o Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
 - Target 2: By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births*

- o Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Target 1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Target 2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

Target 4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship

Target 5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

Target 6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

Target 4.a: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability, and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

- o Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Target 1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

Target 2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Target 3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

Target 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Planet



Prosperity



- o Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Target 5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

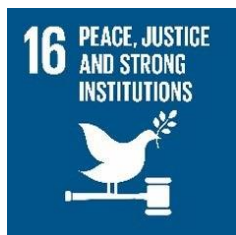
Target 7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms

Target 8.b: By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization

- o Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Target 7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

Peace



- o Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels
Target 2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children
Target 9: By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

Partnership



APPROACHES, METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

The Goals and targets of the SDGs will be monitored and reviewed using a **set of global indicators**. The 2030 agenda mandates the UN Statistical Commission to set a global SDG indicator framework for following and reviewing SDG goals and targets. The Statistical Commission established an Inter-Agency & Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG)⁹⁹ to outline this framework. The Statistical Commission approved an official list of global SDG indicators in March 2017 and was adopted by the General Assembly in July 2017.¹⁰⁰ It has classified the 232 global indicators based on methodological development and data availability. Several indicators must be broken down according to relevant categories such as gender, age, geographical location, etc. For some indicators there is already broad methodological agreement, while for others further work is needed. Countries will need to develop a set of national indicators that align with this framework and build upon existing monitoring methods used by the national statistical office or system. The Resolution states that the indicator framework¹⁰¹ will be adjusted annually and reviewed comprehensively by the Statistical Commission in 2020 and 2025, and that it will be completed by regional and national indicators developed by Member States.

⁹⁹ The IAEG comprises of 28 member states representing all regions of the world, with regional and international agencies as observers. A rotating mechanism is put in place. The UN Statistical Division acts as the secretariat and coordinates inputs from the UN system.

¹⁰⁰ UN Doc./A/RES/71/313.

¹⁰¹ The official indicator list includes the global indicator framework as contained in A/RES/71/313, the refinements agreed by the Statistical Commission at its 49th session in March 2018 (E/CN.3/2018/2, Annex II) and 50th session in March 2019 (E/CN.3/2019/2, Annex II), changes from the 2020 Comprehensive Review (E/CN.3/2020/2, Annex II) and refinements (E/CN.3/2020/2, Annex III) from the 51st session in March 2020, and refinements from the 52nd session in March 2021 (E/CN.3/2021/2, Annex).

https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202021%20refinement_Eng.pdf

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022¹⁰² provides a global overview of progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, using the latest available data and estimates. It tracks the global and regional progress towards the 17 Goals with in-depth analyses of selected indicators for each Goal. The Report highlights the severity and magnitude of the challenges before us. The confluence of crises, dominated by COVID-19, climate change, and conflicts, are creating spin-off impacts on food and nutrition, health, education, the environment, and peace and security, and affecting all SDGs.

In §39, the Resolution explains that “(t)he scale and ambition of the new Agenda requires a revitalized **Global Partnership** to ensure its implementation. We fully commit to this. This Partnership will work in a spirit of global solidarity, in particular solidarity with the poorest and with people in vulnerable situations. It will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system, and other actors and mobilizing all available resources”.

4.2. UN policy on children ('s rights)

4.2.1. Legal basis

Already in 1924, the League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations, adopted the **Geneva Declaration** of the Rights of the Child. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 paid attention to the particular needs of children, providing in its article 25 that '[m]otherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance'. In 1959, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the **Declaration on the Rights of the Child**, which consisted of ten principles.¹⁰³

4.2.2. Decision-making body

Within the United Nations system, the General Assembly is the main policymaking organ. It comprises all 193 Member States of the United Nations.

4.2.3. Historical overview

In 1989, the CRC was adopted (see above). At the **World Summit for Children** of 1990, two policy documents were adopted: The World **Declaration** on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a **Plan of Action** for implementing this Declaration in the 1990s.¹⁰⁴ The political leaders committed themselves to a ten-point programme to safeguard the rights of children and improve their living

¹⁰² <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>

¹⁰³ UN Doc. A/4354.

¹⁰⁴ UN Doc. A/45/625, Annex.

conditions, around ten action points.¹⁰⁵

In 1996, a mid-decade review of the progress on implementation of the World Summit Declaration and Action Plan was carried out.⁸² In 2001, the Secretary-General presented its report ‘We the Children: End-decade review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children’.⁸³ Some 155 countries had drafted national programmes of action aimed at implementing the goals of the World Summit for Children, and more than 100 states had carried out monitoring surveys.

At the special session of the UN General Assembly on children in 2002, the document ‘A world fit for children’¹⁰⁶ was adopted. For the decade 2002-2012, world leaders stressed their commitment to complete the unfinished agenda of the World Summit and to create a world fit for children, which was described as follows:

“A world fit for children is one in which all children get the best possible start in life and have access to a quality basic education, including primary education that is compulsory and available free to all, and in which all children, including adolescents, have ample opportunity to develop their individual capacities in a safe and supportive environment. We will promote the physical, psychological, spiritual, social, emotional, cognitive, and cultural development of children as a matter of national and global priority.”

Promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS were identified as priority areas of action.

4.2.4. Main policy document

At the thirtieth anniversary of this Declaration, on 20 November 1989, the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC) was adopted by the General Assembly and opened for signature.¹⁰⁷ The CRC is a legally binding instrument, setting out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children. As of October 2015, there are 196 Parties to the CRC, turning it into the most universally ratified human rights convention.¹⁰⁸ In 2000, the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC) and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC) were adopted.¹⁰⁹ In 2011, the General Assembly approved a third Optional Protocol on a communications procedure (OPIC).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ (1) Promoting ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, (2) Enhance children’s health, (3) Take measures to eradicate hunger, malnutrition and famine, (4) Strengthen the role of women, promote maternal health and family planning, (5) Work for respect for the role of the family, (5) Provide basic education and reduce illiteracy, (7) Ameliorate the plight of children in especially difficult circumstances, (8) Protect children during armed conflicts, (9) Work for common measures to protect the environment, (10) Work for the alleviation of poverty and the revitalization of economic growth.

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/7321/file/A%20world%20fit%20for%20children.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ UN Doc. A/44/49.

¹⁰⁸ https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&clang=en

¹⁰⁹ UN Doc. A/RES/54/263.

¹¹⁰ A/RES/66/138.

INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the CRC and its Optional Protocols. The Committee clarifies its interpretation of the provisions contained in these instruments by issuing General Comments¹¹¹.

TIME FRAME

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989, its first two Optional Protocols in 2000. The third Optional Protocol was adopted on 19 December 2011 and opened for signature on 28 February 2012. It entered into force on 14 April 2014.

OBJECTIVES

The four core principles of the CRC are non-discrimination (art. 2); the best interests of the child (art.3), survival and development (art. 6) and respect for the views of the child/participation (art. 12).¹¹²

THEMATIC PRIORITIES

In its general guidelines regarding the form and content of initial reports and periodic reports to be submitted by States Parties, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has grouped the articles of the Convention into seven clusters:

1. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6)
2. Definition of the child (art. 1)
3. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)
4. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, 13-17 and 37 (a))
5. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9-11, 18, paras. 1 and 2; 19-21, 25, 27, para. 4 and 39)
6. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29 and 31)
7. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32-36, 37 (b)-(d), 38, 39 and 40).

APPROACHES, METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

States Parties undertake to submit to the Committee reports on the measures they have adopted to implement the rights protected by the CRC, initially within two years of the entry into force of the treaty, after that every five years.¹¹³ The Committee gives its feedback to the States Parties in the form of concluding observations.

On 2 February 2023, the Committee decided that the simplified reporting procedure will be the standard reporting procedure for periodic reports under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and for initial reports under the Optional Protocols as from 1 January 2024. The Committee will send the State party

¹¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc/general-comments>

¹¹² UN Doc. CRC/GC/2003/5, §12.

¹¹³ CRC, art. 44, 1.

that did not opt out of the simplified reporting procedure a request for specific information, known as List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR) containing up to 30 questions. The State party's replies to the LOIPR constitute the State party's report to the Committee¹¹⁴.

Based on the third Optional Protocol on a communication procedure (OPIC), the Committee is able to consider individual complaints (or communications) from children and their representatives concerning alleged violations of the CRC and its first two Optional Protocols. In addition, OPIC also provides interstate communications and inquiry procedures. In its sixty-second session (14 January - 1 February 2013) the Committee adopted rules of procedure.¹¹⁵

Two conventions of the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** address the issue of child labour: ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973) and ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999). The ILO warned that progress in putting a halt to the worst forms of child labour is slowing down, and that renewed energy must be invested.¹¹⁶ In response, at the Global Child Labour Conference in May 2010, more than 450 delegates from 80 countries agreed on a roadmap, which characterizes the effective abolition of child labour as a “moral necessity”. In November 2010, the Governing Body (the executive body of the ILO) endorsed the Global Plan of Action for achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labour by 2016, which includes the aforementioned roadmap.

The United Nations did not adopt a new policy document after ‘A world fit for children’, that is exclusively directed towards children or children’s rights. Current policy on children (‘s rights) can be found in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

4.3 UN policy agenda on youth

4.3.1. Legal basis

In 1965, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the **Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples**.¹¹⁷ According to this non-binding instrument, young people shall be brought up “*in a spirit of peace, justice, mutual respect and understanding*” (Principle I) and “*in the knowledge of the dignity and equality of all men, without distinction as to race, colour, ethnic origins or beliefs*” (Principle III). Associations of young people are encouraged to promote the purposes of the United Nations (Principle V).

4.3.2. Decision-making body

Within the United Nations system, the General Assembly is the main policymaking organ. It comprises

¹¹⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc/reporting-guidelines>

¹¹⁵ For the rules of procedure see:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/62/3&Lang=en

¹¹⁶ Accelerating action against child labour. Report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 99th session, 2010, ILO/10/19

¹¹⁷ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/195840?ln=en>

all 193 Member States of the United Nations.

4.3.3. Historical overview

In 1979, the General Assembly decided to designate 1985 as the **International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace**.¹¹⁸ The year offered a ‘*useful and significant opportunity for drawing attention to the situation and the specific needs and aspirations of youth, for increasing co-operation at all levels in dealing with youth issues, for undertaking concerted action programmes in favour of youth and for improving the participation of young people in the study, decision-making processes and resolutions of major national, regional and international problems*’.¹¹⁹ From 1980 to 1984, several plenary meetings of the UN General Assembly focus on preparations for the International Youth Year and marks the first time that this policy-making organ is devoted to the topic of youth. Significantly, in a 1985 Secretary-General Report, the UN defines young people as a broad population made up of different subgroups, rather than a single demographic category, for the first time. At the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, in 1995, the United Nations strengthened its commitment towards young people by adopting the **World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY)** to the Year 2000 and Beyond.¹²⁰

4.3.4. Main policy document

The WPAY is the key instrument of global youth policy, providing “*a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people*”¹²¹. The WPAY is the first policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support (by the UN and associated agencies) aimed at improving the situation of young people around the world, focusing in particular on measures to strengthen national capacities in the field of youth.

INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION

The **United Nations Programme on Youth** is the only part of the United Nations Secretariat with the explicit mandate to address youth issues. The United Nations Focal Point on Youth is in charge of monitoring progress and constraints in achieving the goals of the WPAY. It resides under the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA DISD).¹²¹ It has various publications on youth, among which the World Youth Reports.¹²² The Division for Social Development furthermore provides support to the Commission for Social Development (CSocD). As advisory body to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on key social development issues and

¹¹⁸ UN Doc. A/RES/34/151.

¹¹⁹ UN Doc. A/RES/40/1.

¹²⁰ UN Doc. A/RES/50/81.

¹²¹ <https://social.desa.un.org/>

¹²² The World Youth Report 2003 examined the global situation of young people. The World Youth Report 2005 was entitled ‘Young People

today, and in 2015’. The World Youth Report 2007, ‘Young people’s transition to adulthood: Progress and challenges’, provided a regional overview of the challenges faced by young people in the different priority areas. The World Youth Report 2010 focused on youth and climate change; the World Youth Report 2012 was entitled ‘Youth Employment: Youth Perspectives on the Pursuit of Decent Work in Changing Times’. The World Youth Report 2013 was entitled ‘Youth and Migration’. The World Youth Report 2015 has been about youth civic engagement. The 2020 Report was about social entrepreneurship and the 2030 agenda.

policies, the CSocD is responsible for the implementation and follow-up of the WPAY.¹²³ The Commission currently has 46 members, with memberships based on equitable geographical distribution and for four-year terms.

TIME FRAME

The WPAY is divided into three phases. The first phase included the drafting of the WPAY and its adoption by the UN General Assembly. The second phase concerned worldwide implementation to the year 2000. In the third phase, from 2001 to 2010, the focus was on *“further implementation and evaluation of progress made, and obstacles encountered”*; and suggestions should be formulated as regards *“appropriate adjustments to long-term objectives and specific measures to improve the situation of young people”*. In 2007, the UN General Assembly adopted the **Supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond**, which expanded on the five additional priority areas. ^[OBJ] The Supplement contains various references to ‘children and youth’. Interestingly, with respect to armed conflict, a series of proposals for action aims at ‘protecting youth under age 18 from direct involvement in armed conflict’ and is thus in fact limited to a specific age group within youth that coincides with the international definition of ‘children’, i.e. minus 18 years old. Resolution 66/121 of 19 December 2011 on policies and programmes involving youth reaffirmed the World Programme of Action for Youth, including its fifteen interrelated priority areas, and called for further implementation on all levels.

At the first Global Forum on Youth Policy in 2014, led by the UN Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth, the co-conveners committed in the Baku Commitment to Youth Policies for *“further promoting and supporting the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth”* and *“promoting synergies between youth policies and broader development policies and frameworks, particularly in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and means of implementation thereof”*.

OBJECTIVES

The Programme of Action *“focuses in particular on measures to strengthen national capacities in the field of youth and to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for full, effective and constructive participation in society”*.

AGENDA - THEMATIC PRIORITIES

The WPAY covers **fifteen youth priority areas** and contains principal issues, specific objectives, proposals for action in each of these areas. The fifteen identified fields of priority are education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, substance abuse, juvenile justice, leisure-time activities, girls, and young women and the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making, as well as globalisation, information and communication technologies, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, and intergenerational issues¹²⁴. The WPAY includes various references to ‘children and

¹²³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/united-nations-commission-for-social-development-csod-social-policy-and-development-division.html>

¹²⁴ In August 1998, in the eve of the 21st century, several commitments on those policy fields were stated in the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, as part of the outcomes of the I World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth.

youth’ and ‘street children’ and refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the context of the protection of girls and young women from economic exploitation and hazardous work. Nevertheless, no structural links with policies on children’s rights have been established.

The World Youth Report 2003 examined the global situation of young people.¹²⁵ In the first ten chapters, the different priority areas of the WPAY were reviewed. In the five following chapters, more recent issues were addressed. These new themes were thereafter formally acknowledged by the UN General Assembly as additional priority areas for youth development: globalisation, information and communication technology (ICT), HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, and intergenerational issues.¹²⁶

In the World Youth Report ‘Young People today, and in 2015’ of 2005 the fifteen priority areas were grouped into three clusters, ‘representing the broad contexts in which today’s youth deal with challenges and concerns that many of them share in spite of the vast differences in their cultures, societies and communities’.¹²⁷ The first cluster ‘youth in the global economy’ includes the topics of globalisation, education, employment, and hunger and poverty; the second cluster ‘youth in civil society’ comprises the issues of environment, leisure, participation in decision-making, intergenerational relations, and ICT; whereas the last cluster ‘youth and their well-being’ focuses on concerns relating to health, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, the situation of girls and young women, and youth in armed conflict.

APPROACHES, METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

According to the WPAY, “implementation of the WPAY is ultimately the responsibility of Governments with the support of the international community and in cooperation, as appropriate, with the non-governmental and private sectors”. In the implementation, Governments should “promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes”. As regards the implementation of the WPAY at national level, the Programme (moreover) urges or calls on governments to:

- Formulate and adopt an integrated national youth policy as a means of addressing youth-related concerns;
- Undertake special efforts to develop and disseminate model frameworks for integrated policies and to identify and organise an appropriate division of responsibilities among governmental and non-governmental entities concerned with youth-related issues.
- Strengthen national capacities for data collection and dissemination of information, research and policy studies, planning, implementation, and coordination.
- Establish or strengthen national coordinating mechanisms for integrated youth policies and programmes.
- In a report of the Secretary General of 2007, the advancements and difficulties as regards the participation of young people in the global economy were analysed.¹²⁸ In its resolution on ‘Policies and programmes involving youth: youth in the global economy’, the UN General Assembly formulated various

¹²⁵ UN Doc. A/58/79-E/CN.5/2003/4.

¹²⁶ UN Doc. A/RES/58/133.

¹²⁷ UN Doc. A/60/61-E/2005/7. See also UN Doc. A/RES/60/2.

¹²⁸ UN Doc. A/62/61-E/2007/7. See also UN Doc. A/62/61/Add.1-E/2007/7/Add.1, elaborating on goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the global economy.

recommendations towards Member States in this respect.¹²⁹ A report of the Secretary General of 2009 focused on the implementation of the two other clusters, the well-being of youth and their role in civil society.¹³⁰ Again, the UN General Assembly extracted various policy recommendations from this report with respect to the eleven priority areas¹³¹:

In December 2009, the UN General Assembly decided to proclaim the year commencing on 12 August 2010 the **International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding**, among others to commemorate the twenty- fifth anniversary of the International Youth Year of 1985.¹³² Until 11 August 2011, a wide range of activities took place throughout the world, guided by the United Nations Framework approach. This system’s approach focused on three key areas: creating awareness (to increase commitment and investment in youth); mobilising and engaging (to increase youth participation and partnerships); and connecting and building bridges (to increase intercultural understanding among youth).

REFERENCES TO CHILDREN(‘S RIGHTS) POLICIES

The World Programme of Action for Youth contains some references to ‘street children’ and ‘children and youth’ but does not establish links with existing policies on children(‘s) rights.

¹²⁹ UN Doc. A/RES/62/162.

¹³⁰ UN Doc. A/64/61-E/2009/3.

¹³¹ UN Doc. A/RES/64/130.

¹³² UN Doc. A/RES/64/134.

Annex 1: European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children’s rights: state of the art

FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE		POLICY AGENDAS ON CHILDREN’S RIGHTS		
		European Union	Council of Europe	United Nations
Legal basis / framework of reference	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/2007) - Article 3 (3) al. 2 of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union (2008) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Convention on Human Rights (1950) - European Social Charter (1961/1996) - Council of Europe conventions relevant to children - Warsaw Declaration and Action Plan (2005) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and three Optional Protocols - ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973) - ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999)
Decision-making body		<p>For trafficking and sexual exploitation of children: European Parliament and Council of the European Union</p> <p>For other measures that impact on children(’s rights): linked to the substantive field and according to the EU inter-institutional procedures</p>	Committee of Ministers, supported by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDEF)	<p>United Nations General Assembly</p> <p>International Labour Conference</p>
Key reference / Main policy document		<i>EU Strategy for the Rights of the Child</i>	<i>Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) “Children’s Rights in Action: from continuous implementation to joint innovation”</i>	<i>‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG’s)’</i>
Type of document	Convention (binding)	Communication from the Commission (non-binding)	Decision of the Committee of Ministers (taken at meeting of Ministers’ Deputies) (non-binding)	Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (non-binding)
Institution responsible for (monitoring) implementation	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child	<p>Unit C2 - Fundamental rights policy of the Directorate General for Justice and Consumers of the European Commission</p> <p>+ other services of the relevant Directorate General</p>	The Council of Europe’s work on the rights of the child will continue to be coordinated by the Children’s Rights Division within the Directorate General of Democracy. The Inter-Secretariat Task Force on Children’s Rights will facilitate this task.	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
Extra information	<p>Core principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-discrimination (art. 2) - Best interests of the child (art. 3) - Survival and development (art. 6) - Respect for the views of the child (art. 12) 	Protecting, promoting, and fulfilling children’s rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To remedy the gaps in children’s legal protection, and even more between law and practice. - Strong political commitment paired with the allocation of sufficient resources and a broad societal awareness of the rights of the child are needed to ensure that children are seen and treated as full rights-holders. 	A post-2015 development agenda on people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership

<p>Agenda (Thematic priorities)</p>	<p>Clusters of articles for reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General measures of implementation - Definition of the child - General principles - Civil rights and freedoms - Family environment and alternative care - Education, leisure, and cultural activities - Special protection measures <p>On 2 February 2023, the Committee decided that the simplified reporting procedure will be the standard reporting procedure for periodic reports under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and for initial reports under the Optional Protocols as from 1 January 2024.</p>	<p>Six thematic areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation and active citizenship - Socio-economic inclusion, health, and education - Freedom of violence - Child-friendly justice - Digital and information society - Global dimension including during crisis and conflict. 	<p>Strategic objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal opportunities for all children - Participation of all children - A life free from violence for all children - Child-friendly justice for all children - Rights of the child in the digital environment 	<p>Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - End poverty in all its forms everywhere - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all - Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation - Reduce inequality within and among countries - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development - Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

<p>Approaches, methods, and instruments</p>	<p>Reports of the State Parties to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.</p> <p>Three communications procedures: complaints (or communications) from individuals or representatives, the inquiry procedure and inter-State communications (optional protocol on a communications procedure, OPIC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training and capacity building to EU staff and increased internal coordination through the team of the Commission's Coordinator for the Rights of the Child. - Development of a mainstreaming checklist on children's rights. - More reliable and comparable data. - EU Network for Children's Rights - Collaboration with regional and local authorities, and with other relevant institutions, regional and international organisations, civil society, and ombudspersons for children. - Contribution of EU funding for Member States initiatives to protect and fulfil the rights of the child. Member States that have a rate of child at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion higher than the EU average (in 2017- 2019) will have to earmark 5% of the ESF+ for combatting child poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making the standards work for children - Involving all relevant stakeholders - Communicating children's rights - Evaluating performance 	<p>Voluntary and country-led follow-up, based on a set of global indicators and in a global partnership.</p>
<p>References to young people and/or youth policies</p>	<p>No references to young people or youth policies</p>	<p>The mentioned EU Youth Dialogue should ensure that the views and experiences of young people and youth organisations are taken into account when drafting youth policies.</p>	<p>The radicalization of children and youth is mentioned as an issue of concern that calls for more investments into education for tolerance and intercultural dialogue.</p>	<p>Various references to "young people", but no references to youth policies</p>
		<p>The Strategy also supports the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. Furthermore, the strategy invites members "to implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee and promote the involvement of young people in Youth Guarantee services".</p> <p>At last, youth empowerment in the external action will be promoted through a Youth Action Plan (2022).</p>	<p>As part of the strategic objective of promoting child participation, it is stated that "action will be undertaken to facilitate exchange of experiences on rights-based child participation in co-operation with the Council of Europe youth sector, child and youth organizations, ombudspersons for children and child advisory bodies".</p>	

Cooperation with other policy levels		<p>The Commission will strengthen cooperation among the main stakeholders, making optimal use of existing networks and international organisations or bodies involved in children’s rights. To this end, the Commission brings the stakeholders together in a European Forum for the Rights of the Child. The Forum includes all the relevant stakeholders (including Member States, UN agencies, the Council of Europe, civil society, and children themselves), and contributes to the design and monitoring of EU actions and act as an arena for exchange of good practice. Furthermore, the EU Commission organises regular meetings of the informal Member States expert group meeting on the rights of the child to establish closer cooperation between the Commission and Member States on various issues relating the protection and promotion of the Rights of the Child.</p>	<p>Cooperation with member States, EU, international organisations (such as UNICEF, CBSS, OIF), civil society, ombudspersons for children, academic networks, the private sector, and children themselves.</p> <p>The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), are other valuable partners in this respect.</p>	<p>“The interlinkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized.”</p>
Responsibilities of States Parties / Appeal to the Member States	<p>Undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social, and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international cooperation.</p>			<p>Implementation of the plan by all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership</p>



POLICY AGENDAS ON YOUTH

	European Union	Council of Europe	United Nations
Legal basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arts. 6 and 165,2 of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union of 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warsaw Action Plan (2005) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965)
Decision-making body	<p>Council of Youth Ministers</p>	<p>Committee of Ministers, supported by a system of co-management between the following institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) - The Advisory Council on Youth - The Joint Council of Youth - The Programming Committee on Youth 	<p>United Nations General Assembly</p>

Key reference / Main policy document	<i>European Council of Youth Ministers' resolution of 26 November 2018 on the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027</i>	<i>Resolution CM/Res(2020)2 on the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030</i>	<i>World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY)</i>
Type of document	Resolution of the Council of Youth Ministers (non-binding)	Resolution of the Committee of Ministers (non-binding)	Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (non-binding)
Institution responsible for implementation	The European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture (EAC) comprises a Youth unit within Directorate B (Youth, Education and Erasmus+). Unit EAC.B.3 is in charge of youth policy aspects, European Solidarity Corps, the Youth chapter of Erasmus + and the Traineeship Office.	Directorate of Youth and Sport, part of Directorate General IV - Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport	Commission for Social Development UN Programme on Youth, part of Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat of the United Nations
Time frame	2019-2027	2020-2030	1995-2010; reaffirmed in 2011 without specific timeframe
Objectives of youth policy	Increase social and civic engagement and participation in democratic life.	To enable young people across Europe to actively uphold, defend, promote, and benefit from the Council of Europe's core values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To strengthen national capacities in the field of youth - To increase the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for full, effective, and constructive participation in society
Agenda (Thematic priorities)	Working on effective, focused and joined-up implementation within and across sectors while tackling core areas of the youth sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage: meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural, and political participation of young people in the development, implementation and assessment of policies that concern them. - Connect: creating solidarity within the European Union through mobility and exchanges, cooperation, and cultural and social activities at European level. - Empowerment: young people feel encouraged taking their lives in their own hands. 	Four priorities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revitalising pluralistic democracy - Access to rights: guaranteeing better access for young people to their rights - Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies - Youth work 	Priority areas (2000) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education - Employment - Hunger and poverty - Health - Environment - Drug abuse - Juvenile delinquency - Leisure-time activities - Girls and young women - Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making Additional priority areas (2007) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Globalisation - Informations and communications technology - HIV/AIDS - Armed conflict - Intergenerational issues
	European Youth Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - connecting EU with youth; - equality of all genders; - inclusive societies; - information and constructive dialogue; - mental health and wellbeing; - moving rural youth forward; - quality employment for all; - quality learning; - space and participation for all; - sustainable green Europe; - youth organisations and European programmes. 		

<p>Approaches, methods, and instruments</p>	<p><u>Guiding principles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equality and non-discrimination - Inclusion - Participation - Global, European, national, regional, and local dimensions - Dual approach (Specific initiatives in the youth field and mainstreaming initiatives) <p><u>Instruments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence-based policy making and knowledge building in the youth field - Mutual learning and dissemination - Participatory governance - Mobilising EU programmes and funds - Monitoring of EU funding - Communicating about EUYS - Future National Activities Planner (FNAP) - EU Youth Dialogue - EU Youth Coordinator - Equal access to quality Youth Information and Support - EU Work Plans for Youth - Monitoring, reporting, evaluation. - Mid-term Review 	<p>Implementation through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intergovernmental co-operation at pan-European level on the preparation and implementation of youth policy - assistance to youth policy development in member States through bilateral and multilateral support measures - capacity building of young multipliers (youth leaders and youth workers) through the European Youth Centres and their education and training programmes - good governance and youth participation, via the co-management system - shared decision taking by young people and government representatives - financial support to the development of youth civil society, by the European Youth Foundation - innovation in youth work, youth policy and youth research - co-operation between policy makers, practitioners, and researchers in the field of youth - quality development and standard setting in the field of youth policy - co-operation with the European Union and partnerships with other stakeholders and services - youth mainstreaming and cross-departmental co-operation inside the Council of Europe - proactive outreach to and engagement of young people experiencing disadvantage - anticipating future trends, challenges and opportunities 	<p>Means of implementation:</p> <p><u>At national level</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See “appeal to member states” <p><u>Regional cooperation</u></p> <p><u>International cooperation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data collection and dissemination of information - Research and policy studies - Planning and coordination - Technical cooperation, training, and advisory services - Outreach and partnership among specialized constituencies
<p>References to policies on children(‘s rights)</p>	<p>The EUYS does not contains explicit references to children’s policies. The Council does emphasize that all actions undertaken within this EUYS should affirm the international standards of human rights, and thus specifically children’s rights. Equality, non-discrimination, and participation are underlying requirements for all policies and activities concerning young people. These general requirements are also guiding principles within the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. The EUYS also emphasizes that young people should have equal access to quality youth information on their rights.</p>	<p>The 2030 Resolution on the youth strategy of the Council of Europe emphasises the values of democracy and human rights. The third priority of the strategy refers to the access to rights for young people.</p>	<p>Some references, mainly to “street children” and “children and youth”, but no links with policies on children(‘s rights).</p>
<p>Cooperation with other policy levels</p>	<p>Cooperation global, European, national, regional, and local dimension.</p> <p>Cooperation between young people, youth organisations, Member States, stakeholders, and experts.</p>	<p>Partnership with the European Commission in the youth field, which should continue to be supported as an example of good co-operation</p>	<p>See means of implementation “international cooperation”</p>

<p>Appeal to the Member States</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work together to enhance European cooperation in the youth field - Adopt, on the basis of national priorities, measures at national level which can contribute to achieving the overall objectives outlined in the renewed framework, as well as consider whether inspiration can be drawn from mutual learning at EU level, when devising national policies in the youth field and other related policy areas. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulate and adopt an integrated national youth policy - Develop and disseminate model frameworks for integrated policies and identify and organise an appropriate division of responsibilities among governmental and non-governmental entities concerned with youth-related issues - Strengthen national capacities for data collection and dissemination of information, research and policy studies, planning, implementation, and coordination. - Establish or strengthen national coordinating mechanisms for integrated youth policies and programmes.
------------------------------------	--	--	---