



## Questions and Answers: Youth Action Plan in EU external action for 2022-2027

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### **Why does the EU propose a Youth Action Plan in EU external action?**

Young people are key for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. They not only represent a growing share of the population in many of the EU's partner countries, but they are also driving change for a sustainable future. They are increasingly concerned, as their future is put at risk by inequalities, climate change and a conflict-ridden world. They legitimately demand swifter and more courageous solutions to global challenges and want to be heard and involved in decision-making processes.

The EU has a major responsibility to address young people's needs and aspirations, providing them with the opportunities and a seat at the decision-making table they deserve.

The Youth Action Plan is the EU's operational roadmap for engaging young people in EU external action. It will improve the way we work for and with young people worldwide.

### **What are the priorities?**

The main priority is to shape external action *in partnership* with young people, to ensure their ownership and hence accelerate progress towards the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and other international commitments, such as the Paris Climate Agreement and the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

To make the EU's external action more relevant for youth and children worldwide, we will strengthen three pillars of action: 1) Engage: Increase young people's voices in policy and decision-making at all levels; 2) Empower: Fight inequalities and provide young people with the skills and resources they need to prosper and fulfil their potential 3) Connect: Foster opportunities for young people to network and exchange with their peers.

### **What is new in the Youth Action Plan in EU external action?**

The Youth Action Plan will enhance the EU institutional engagement with young people globally. This will be achieved through, for instance, the Youth Sounding Board for EU International Partnerships and youth advisory structures of EU Delegations, the set-up of a platform for regular dialogue with youth organisations as a new element of the Policy Forum on Development, and mandatory consultations of youth organisations in partner countries in the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)-Global Europe programming process. The Youth Action Plan will also contribute to the implementation of the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

At the same time, the Youth Action Plan promotes youth mainstreaming in external action and builds on the current and future targeted actions across the three pillars: engage, empower, connect, which mirror the three core areas of action of the EU Youth Strategy. The Youth Action Plan in EU External Action will launch new initiatives under each of the pillars, including three key flagships. They are:

- The **Youth and Women in Democracy Initiative** worth €40 million will increase the voice and leadership of young people, youth activists and youth-led organisations worldwide, by strengthening their rights, empowerment, and participation in public and political affairs. The initiative will support grassroots organizations and young activists in the institutional oversight, anti-corruption, citizen election observation, democratic reform advocacy, civil education, promotion of the right to vote, freedom of association and assembly and human rights.
- The **Youth Empowerment Fund** is a new pilot initiative worth €10 million that will provide direct financial support to youth-led initiatives in partner countries focusing on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at local level, in particular on environment and climate change and the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised youth.
- The **Africa-Europe Youth Academy** will channel financial support of €50 million to formal and

informal learning opportunities and exchanges for young people willing to improve their leadership skills and create networks of change-makers in Africa.

### ***Will there be a dedicated budget for the Youth Action Plan? Or additional funding?***

The implementation of the Youth Action Plan will be funded mainly through the existing instruments, notably the geographic programmes of the NDICI-Global Europe Instrument and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), including their contribution to Erasmus+ Programme. The thematic programmes of NDICI-Global Europe Instrument --the Global Challenges, Civil Society Organisations, Human Rights and Democracy and Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention-- will also play a role. Humanitarian funding will also contribute to the Youth Action Plan.

### ***How will the Youth Action Plan in EU external action be implemented?***

The Youth Action Plan identifies priorities, objectives and actions that will be integrated in the programming of bilateral, regional and global funds under the NDICI-Global Europe and IPA, as well as in political and policy dialogues. Many of them will be implemented together with EU Member States through initiatives at country and regional level. The Youth Sounding Board for EU International Partnerships and the youth advisory structures of the EU Delegations will play an important role in this regard. Youth organisations and other stakeholders working on youth will also be involved through several mechanism, programmes and initiatives to ensure successful implementation of the Youth Action Plan.

The implementation reports will track change towards strengthening youth engagement in EU policy-making in external action, and progress towards YAP objectives across thematic priorities.

The Youth Action Plan is global in nature, but will also be implemented through tailor-made approached adapted to the needs and circumstances of youth in specific regions, e.g. in the EU's enlargement and neighbourhood countries, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific.

### ***How will the European Commission and the European External Action Service follow up on and monitor the implementation of the Youth Action Plan in EU external action?***

Evidence-based policy-making is one of the main principles of the Youth Action Plan's implementation.

The Youth Action Plan provides concrete targets that the EU commits to achieve within a set deadline, as regards for instance the establishment of youth advisory boards by EU Delegations, mandatory consultation of youth organisations in programming or youth employment impact assessments of investments supporting the agri-ecology, green and digital transitions, including under the Global Gateway strategy.

A monitoring framework will be developed within the first year of the Youth Action Plan implementation, in cooperation with experts and youth partners, based on gender and age-disaggregated data and youth-specific indicators.

Moreover, in the humanitarian context, the humanitarian gender-age marker will also ensure that youth perspectives are included in EU-funded humanitarian aid.

The evaluation of the Youth Action Plan's implementation will provide insights to feed into the next programming period.

### ***What has the EU achieved on meaningful youth participation worldwide so far?***

Several initiatives have already been launched and are ongoing. In 2021, the European Commission set up the first Youth Sounding Board for EU International Partnerships. It is a group of 25 young people from all around the world, selected through a public call, which advises the Commission on how to improve youth participation and empowerment in its external action. The Youth Sounding Board has been closely involved in the consultation process and drafting of the Youth Action Plan and will also participate in monitoring its implementation. In the Neighbourhood and Western Balkans, regional Youth Labs have contributed to engaging young people in policy making processes.

At country level, several EU Delegations have set up youth advisory structures for consulting young people on the EU's policies and programmes. Some examples include the Team Europe Youth Sounding Board in Zimbabwe, the strategic partnership with Consortium Jeunesse in Senegal, the Youth Sounding Boards in Nepal, Nigeria and Ethiopia, the Youth Network in Mauritius, the Youth Advisory Panel for Palestine or the OCT Youth Network.

In countries of the EU's Neighbourhood and in the Western Balkans, a network of Young European Ambassadors is also working closely with the EU Delegations. Many more youth advisory structures

are about to be established by several EU Delegations. The Young European Ambassadors Programme also provides regular opportunities to young people for networking and exchanges with their peers.

Youth organisations have also played an active role in the consultations with civil society organisations for the multiannual country programmes.

At regional level, several successful initiatives have been supported to engage young people with decision-makers, for example the Young Leaders' summit at the margins of the ASEM Summit and the EU-ASEAN Young Leaders Forum or ahead of the 6th EU-AU Summit. In the EU's Eastern Partnership countries, Youth Policy Labs on "Youth participation in society and economy" are currently being implemented and as from 2023, we will support the development of more structured youth dialogue through EU4Youth - Youth Engagement and Empowerment.

In the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, the EU keeps strengthening its partnerships with Union for Mediterranean and Anna Lindh Foundation, both actively engaged in the field of youth. They cover the Southern Neighbourhood but also Mauritania, Turkey, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia Herzegovina.

The EU is also supporting the participation of young people at multilateral level, for example in UN processes. Recently, the EU has funded the youth engagement processes for the UN Transforming Education Summit that took place in September; it also launched the first youth participation cohort of the EU@UN Youth Delegates Programme ahead of UNGA.

### ***What has the EU achieved on meaningful youth empowerment worldwide so far?***

A large number of the EU programmes contribute to the social and economic empowerment of young people. A clear example is the EU leading role in education. The EU is committed to invest at least 10% of the overall funding of NDICI-Global Europe in education in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. A total of 80 EU Delegations in partner countries have education as a priority. The commitment is also valid for education in emergencies and protracted crisis, with an allocation of 10% of EU humanitarian aid funding.

The EU is also supporting youth employment, for example through the implementation of the EU Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkans and through activities aiming at addressing the challenges of the NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training) and boost entrepreneurship in the neighbourhood countries.

Another important area is youth-friendly access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, where the EU is leading global efforts.

Finally, facilitating youth mobility and exchanges is a priority for the Commission, who has already provided opportunities to hundreds of thousands of young people through the Erasmus+ Programme along the years. This will continue being a priority: for example for Africa alone, the EU will invest €970 million until 2027 on Youth Mobility through NDICI-Global Europe funds.

### ***Were young people and youth and civil society organisations consulted in the elaboration of the Youth Action Plan?***

A consultation took place including youth organisations and organisations working with youth, as well as children rights organisations. In addition, the Youth Sounding Board has also provided their input in the form of the report, ['Meaningful Inclusion of Youth: A Promising Future'](#). The Special Advisers on Youth of Commissioner Urpilainen also supported the efforts. The results of the consultation confirmed that the Youth Action Plan needed to focus on meaningful youth participation.

### ***Does the Youth Action Plan only cover youth or also children? What is your definition of youth?***

The Youth Action Plan builds on the external dimension of the EU Youth Strategy, as well as the global dimension of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, representing one of its deliverables. It defines youth from 0-30 with a particular focus on the transition from childhood to adulthood, from education and training to active work life. In line with the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, it promotes and nurtures a culture of meaningful participation in the early years and creating the much needed space for children with a focus on adolescents. In statistics, the EU considers the Eurostat definition of young people between 15 and 29 years. Child rights organisations have also been consulted for the Youth Action Plan.

### ***How will youth organisations be involved in the implementation of the Youth Action Plan?***

The Youth Action Plan aims to engage young people and youth organisations along the policy cycle. At central level, for example, the Youth Action Plan envisages the establishment of a regular dialogue

with youth organisations as a new feature of the Policy Forum on Development, which is the result of a Structured Dialogue, which brings together Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Local Authorities (LAs) from the European Union and partner countries with European Institutions and bodies. Its main features will be defined in partnership with youth organisations by 2023.

### ***How will the Youth Action Plan support children in armed conflict?***

The Children in Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda has played an important role in meeting recent challenges relating to youth, particularly those between 15 and 17 years of age that are covered by the CAAC mandate. The EU will update its Guidelines on Children in Armed Conflict (2008) and its implementation plan (2010), to reflect the changing nature of crises and conflict, and the needs associated with these developments.

### ***Why is evidence-based policymaking one of the principles of the Youth Action Plan?***

The EU is strongly committed to evidence-based policymaking and action. The Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission has contributed to the Youth Action Plan and published 2 different reports in [May 2022](#) and [October 2022](#), mapping the existing international data on youth. The reports trace the evolution of international, EU and national youth policies and programmes and describes the extent to which they are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

They offer a map of international data on youth across a series of main thematic areas, assessing the availability and accessibility of over 250 official and non-official indicators. They also highlight gaps and recommend steps to take towards greater coherence in, and more complete coverage of, international youth data with a particular focus on the priority topic of youth participation. The Youth Action Plan will aim to improve this situation, advocating for age-disaggregated data, the development of youth-specific indicators and the promotion of youth-oriented and youth-led research and data collection.

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