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EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027: Taking stock and the way forward

This European implementation assessment was prepared at the request of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) to support the drafting of the CULT implementation report on the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) 2019–2027. This evaluation consists of two parts.

Part I of this study, which was prepared internally, seeks to provide an overview of the latest key European Commission evaluations and Eurobarometer surveys, examines the outcomes of the Commission's Youth Policy Dialogues carried out during the first 100 days of the second von der Leyen Commission's mandate, and analyses Parliament's oversight of the EUYS through its resolutions. It ends with the main recommendations that young people expressed during consultations held by the rapporteur of the CULT report.

Part II of this study, which has been written by external experts, examines in more detail the implementation of the EUYS at the EU level and in six selected Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Germany, Lithuania and Portugal). It focuses on the relevance of the 11 European Youth Goals, youth mainstreaming, youth participation and the EUYS's role in improving access to quality education and training. Based on fresh data from interviews and a survey, Part II also provides recommendations on how to improve the EU EUYS after 2027, when it is up for review.

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Executive summary

The EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) 2019-2027 provides a framework of policy cooperation for European young people across the EU. Through its core themes – 'Engage, Connect, Empower' – the EUYS aims to promote democratic and social participation, equip young people with necessary life skills, increase youth participation in EU policymaking, and address the multiple challenges young people in the EU face today. At the request of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) and in view of the review and update of the EUYS after 2027, this European implementation assessment (EIA) is prepared to inform the preparation of the committee's EUYS implementation report. EIAs are prepared to provide evidence to the European Parliament's committees during the preparation of their implementation reports, as part of Parliament's commitment to the Better Regulation agenda and notably its 'evaluate first' principle.

Part I of this study acts as a scene-setter that (i) outlines the main findings of the latest European Commission evaluation, report and Eurobarometer surveys; (ii) examines the results of the first round of the Youth Policy Dialogues held by the second von der Leyen Commission; (iii) analyses Parliament's relevant resolutions in view of Parliament's oversight of the EUYS; and (iv) provides an overview of the main recommendations emanating from the consultations that the rapporteur for this report, Sabrina Repp (S&D, Germany), held with EU-based youth organisations.

The **European Commission's 2024 interim evaluation** of the implementation of the EUYS (covering the period from 2019 to 2022) is positive. It finds that the EUYS was instrumental in promoting youth participation, youth engagement along EU values, and active citizenship. The EUYS was labelled as a 'catalyst of change' capable of maintaining the focus on multiple aspects of youth policies and on keeping young people high on the political agenda. Allocated funds for its implementation were found to be sufficient and proportional to its objectives as a strategic framework, making it an efficient instrument, also deemed coherent with and aligned to other EU policies and objectives. Its EU added value stemmed from limiting risks of fragmentation of fundings and from providing a framework for better coordination and mainstreaming.

Building on the 2022 European Year of Youth, the Commission articulated its follow-up priorities in its **2024 communication on the EUYS**. The Commission committed to mainstreaming young people's perspectives across EU policies. This includes a newly defined youth impact assessment, youth dialogues with Commissioners, and more meaningful participation. The Commission also committed to prioritising those concerns identified by young people themselves (e.g. youth health, environment and climate, education and training, international cooperation, and employment and inclusion). Moreover, in the EU report on EUYS 2024, which is the most recent Commission report on EUYS implementation, the Commission takes stock of progress in youth participation and youth mainstreaming in EU policies under the EUYS, and it commits to young people's voices remaining central to EU policymaking. The Commission also commits to further supporting youth mainstreaming, and announces new initiatives under the pillars Engage, Connect and Empower.

The 2025 **Commission Flash Eurobarometer**, read in conjunction with the 2021 and 2024 **European Parliament youth surveys**, provides a comprehensive overview of youth perceptions, behaviours and positions on a wide array of topics. Whereas some priorities are constant, showing recurrent concerns on living standards, unemployment and climate change, some issues are increasingly raising concerns, echoing challenges faced globally. These include public health after the pandemic, the EU's defence following the war in Ukraine, and irregular migration as an echo to conservative political shifts worldwide. Although the young people surveyed expressed attachment to voting and

some forms of activism, many are sceptical regarding the impact their voice can have on decisionmaking at national and EU level.

During the first 100 days of the second von der Leyen Commission, the 27 European Commissioners held 28 **Youth Policy Dialogues** with young people from diverse backgrounds and sectors and from all over the EU. The aim was to gather ideas on the societal challenges facing Europe today to feed into the development of policies that impact young people in the EU. Young people's reflections concerned all EU policies, from the feasibility of fully autonomous European defence, the EU's current defence readiness, the war in Ukraine and the financing of defence projects, to ensuring that migration management upholds EU values. Young people pointed to interlinkages between sustainability, climate goals, competitiveness and economic policies, and proposed green taxation and rewarding innovation. They also proposed, among other issues, stronger democratic digital transition, more inclusion, and equality and equity, and expressed their strong support for EU enlargement.

Following the Youth Policy Dialogues, the Commission announced that the recommendations collected would feed into forthcoming legislative and non-legislative initiatives, and that future dialogues with young people would be more tightly tied to the Commission work programme. To reinforce youth participation, the Commission set up the **Citizens' Engagement Platform**, a new online debate forum to communicate the results of the Youth Policy Dialogues and prolong the discussions, and the **Youth Advisory Board**, a forum of young experts designed to provide feedback on Commission ideas and initiatives on aspects that matter to young people.

Part I shows that **Parliament has consistently included youth concerns in its resolutions, ensuring that the EU Youth Strategy is implemented effectively**. An examination of 225 resolutions across Parliament's committees shows that youth concerns raised at EU level are acknowledged and addressed cross-sectorally. Moreover, relevant Parliament resolutions, prepared by the CULT committee and analysed in this study, point to the persistence of significant challenges young people face, including on mental health, access to education, employment, and housing, but also limited participation in decisionmaking processes. These challenges disproportionately impact marginalised young people such as women, persons with disabilities, and people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or remote rural areas.

To remedy these divergences, Parliament calls, among other things, for fair remuneration for traineeships and apprenticeships, access to social protection, and the use of EU financial instruments to invest in the development of essential skills and entrepreneurship. Parliament advocates greater coherence in youth policies and the allocation of necessary resources to support them. Parliament urges greater consideration of local realities and collaboration with grassroots stakeholders to deliver tailored support. This includes enhancing accessibility to EU programmes for rural youth, young people 'not in employment, education or training' (NEETs), and marginalised communities, by reducing administrative barriers and raising awareness of these programmes. In addition, Parliament emphasises the need to improve youth participation in decisionmaking, ensuring EU policies address their needs while promoting social inclusion and encouraging political engagement.

Youth organisations and the European Economic and Social Committee put forward key recommendations during the stakeholder consultations the rapporteur for the CULT implementation report held with them. Key suggestions presented by young people include to:

- ensure that the European Youth Goals are aligned with the Commission work programme;

- use considerations of young people early in the Youth Checks and at every stage of policymaking;
- increase youth mainstreaming in EU policies by developing clear criteria for monitoring and integrate mainstreaming in the conditionality of EU funds and instruments;
- provide more EU funding for youth programmes, particularly Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps;
- further strengthen youth participation in all phases of policy development and the decisionmaking processes;
- ensure that youth participation is inclusive, so that the voices of young people from rural areas, isolated communities, minorities, young people with disabilities, and young people who are on a mobility scheme are also heard;
- reinforce the process of youth participation and make its outcomes transparent and accountable;
- boost volunteering to make it a key vector of employment;
- strengthen communication about EUYS-related programmes.

Part II of the study provides a detailed evaluation of the implementation of the EUYS at both the EU level and in six selected Member States, namely Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Germany, Lithuania and Portugal. This part of the study focuses on two horizontal aspects of the EUYS: (i) the relevance of the 11 European Youth Goals; and (ii) youth mainstreaming across EU strategies and policies. It also examines two specific cases: (i) youth participation; and (ii) the EUYS's role in improving access to quality education and training. The research is primarily based on semi-structured interviews with youth representatives, national authorities and the EU institutions, as well as a survey sent to relevant stakeholders at EU and national levels.

Part II finds that, in terms of **effectiveness**, implementation of the European Youth Goals varies across six EU Member States due to their non-binding nature, differing national priorities, and lack of a monitoring system. Youth mainstreaming has progressed since the European Year of Youth 2022 through new instruments such as the EU Youth Coordinator and Youth Check, but remains fragmented, with notable advancements in education and employment but less so in health and sustainability. The EUYS has improved youth inclusion and participation, particularly for marginalised young people, but under-representation persists among rural youth, migrants, and those not in education or training. Structural barriers in education hinder access to quality training, while youth work and volunteering build skills and civic engagement, facing challenges such as unstable funding.

On **relevance**, Part II finds that a dedicated EU youth policy framework is essential beyond 2027, maintaining focus on areas such as civic space, skills and EU citizenship. The European Youth Goals only partially address emerging issues since 2018, such as climate change, security and mental health, which have gained importance post-pandemic. On **efficiency**, Part II finds that, at the EU level, the EUYS does not impose significant additional burdens. However, at the Member State level, challenges arise from complex applications and financial constraints, with youth organisations facing unstable funding. On **coherence**, the EUYS shows internal coherence with its work plans and external coherence with other EU strategies, despite minor misalignments. Work plans are useful for implementing the European Youth Goals, but awareness among stakeholders is limited. While horizontal priorities align well, practical implementation still faces weaknesses, particularly in newer relevant areas such as affordable housing.

Based on fresh data elicited, Part II develops recommendations on how to improve the EU Youth Strategy after 2027, when it is up for review.

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List of acronyms

AFCO	European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs
AFET	European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs
AGRI	European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
AI	artificial intelligence
BIK+	Better Internet for Kids strategy
BUDG	European Parliament's Committee on Budgets
CERV	European Commission's Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme
CONT	European Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control
CoP	European Parliament's Conference of Presidents
CULT	European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education
DEVE	European Parliament's Committee on Development
DG	Directorate-General
DG EAC	European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG EPRS	European Parliament's Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services
DG INTPA	European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DROI	European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights
ECON	European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs
EEA	European Economic Area
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EIA	European Implementation Assessment
EMPL	European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
ENVI	European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
EP	European Parliament
ESC	European Solidarity Corps
ESF	European Social Fund
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
EUYD	EU Youth Dialogue
EUYS	EU Youth Strategy
EVAL	European Parliament's Ex-Post Evaluation Unit (in DG EPRS)

EVP	Executive Vice-President
EYE	European Youth Event
EYG	European Youth Goal
FEMM	European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
FISC	European Parliament's Subcommittee on Tax Matters
HR/VP	High Representative for the Union's Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Vice-President of the European Commission
IMCO	European Parliament's Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection
INTA	European Parliament's Committee on International Trade
ITRE	European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
JURI	European Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs
LIBE	European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFF	multiannual financial framework
NEET	young people 'not in education, employment, or training'
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OEIL	European Parliament's Legislative Observatory
PECH	European Parliament's Committee on Fisheries
PETI	European Parliament's Committee on Petitions
REGI	European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
SANT	European Parliament's Subcommittee on Public Health
SEDE	European Parliament's Committee on Security and Defence
TRAN	European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism
VET	vocational education and training
WHO	United Nations World Health Organization

PART I – EU Youth Strategy in institutional context: Developments, evaluations and oversight

1. Background

The European Union's Youth Strategy (EUYS) for 2019–2027 is a comprehensive framework that aims to support young people and improve their wellbeing by creating more and better opportunities for them in various areas, including in education and employment, and to foster active citizenship and participation in society.[1] It was adopted by the Council of the EU on 18 December 2018 and follows on the EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018.[2]

The EUYS focuses on **three focus areas of action – 'Engage, Connect, Empower'**[3] – that emphasise fostering youth participation, building networks and enhancing skills. These core areas directly link to the 11 European Youth Goals,[4] crafted by young people from all over the EU during a 2017–2018 dialogue process. These goals identify cross-sectoral areas affecting young people's lives that call for promoting active citizenship, social inclusion, and opportunities for personal and professional development among young people across the EU. The EUYS should contribute to turning these goals into reality.

To respond to these needs and implement the EUYS, the European Commission and the EU Member States have used several **instruments** (e.g. EU Youth Dialogue, European Year of Youth 2022 and its legacy, the EU youth stakeholders' group) and funding programmes (e.g. Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps). The EUYS is organised in **three-year work cycles**. The priorities for each cycle are set by the Council together with the European Commission in EUYS work plans. The current work plan runs from 2025 to 2027.[5] It aims to guide overall efforts in the last phase of the current EUYS, and offers insights for the next EUYS, after 2027.

At the EU level, the Commission assesses progress on the EUYS through its evaluations (the last one was conducted in 2024), the EU Youth Report, and public opinion surveys. These are examined in the next chapter. The Commission's Eurostat also provides data on the situation of young people

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1 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027, OJ C 456, 18 December 2018, pp. 1–22. Eurostat data covers young people between 15 and 29 years of age. See, for example, European Commission, Situation of young people in the European Union: Accompanying the document, European Commission report on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022–2024), COM(2025) 117, 24 March 2025.

2 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027, OJ C 456, 18 December 2018.

3 Engage: increasing the voice of young people in policy and decisionmaking at all levels; Empower: addressing inequalities and providing young people with the skills and resources they need to flourish and achieve their potential; Connect: fostering opportunities for young people to network and exchange with their peers.

4 These encompass (i) connecting the EU with youth; (ii) promoting equality of all genders; (iii) ensuring inclusive societies; (iv) improving access to information and constructive dialogue; (v) addressing mental health and wellbeing; (vi) moving rural youth forward; (vii) guaranteeing quality employment for all; (viii) providing quality education and training; (ix) creating opportunities for participation for all; (x) promoting a sustainable and green Europe; and (xi) supporting youth organisations and EU programmes.

5 Council of the European Union, Resolution of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the EU Youth Strategy Work Plan 2025–2027, 16131/24, 25 November 2024.

(notably through the EU youth dashboard).[6] As indicators and benchmarks need to be 'tailored to national circumstances',[7] the evaluation of EUYS implementation happens at Member State level through the evaluation of its relevant instruments. They each have different measurable targets. While it is beyond the scope of this study to assess implementation of the diverse EU youth instruments, Part II of the study evaluates the translation of EUYS objectives into relevant youth instruments.

Since the adoption of the EUYS 2019-2027, **young Europeans have been impacted** by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as the consequent inflation and increase in cost of living. Volatility, uncertainty and unprecedented change have been a constant for the 73 million young EU citizens, impacting their life opportunities. In this context, young people in the EU are concerned about several challenges the EU and the world face, such as youth unemployment,[8] access to and equity in the employment market,[9] environmental sustainability and climate change,[10] mental health,[11] social inclusion and poverty, and the rural-urban disparities.[12] Some of these challenges were also highlighted in the European Commission's 2024 interim evaluation of the EUYS.[13]

Against this backdrop, the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents (CoP) on 11 June 2025 approved the request of Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) to draw up an implementation report pursuant to Rule 53 of the Rules of Procedure on 'The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027'. The CULT implementation report will both respond to the European Commission's communication on the implementation of the EUYS (2022-2024)[14] and assess the implementation of the youth strategy for the 2019-2021 period, during which the European Parliament did not adopt an implementation report.[15] The CULT implementation report will also guide Parliament's overall efforts in the last phase of the current EUYS and offer insights for the next EUYS, after 2027.

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6 The Commission developed the EU youth dashboard, in line with the 2018 Council Resolution underpinning the EU Youth Strategy (see footnote 1), which includes mainly quantified indicators collected by Eurostat (e.g. number of young people participating in the EU Youth Dialogues and other forums). See Eurostat, Children and youth: EU youth dashboard.

7 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, OJ C 456, 18 December 2018, pp. 1–22.

8 Eurofound, Becoming adults: Young people in a post-pandemic world, 21 May 2024; Eurofound, Fifth round of the Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey: Living in a new era of uncertainty, 7 July 2021; Eurofound, Impact of COVID-19 on young people in the EU, 9 November 2021.

9 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, OJ C 456, 18 December 2018, pp. 1–22.

10 European Commission, Youth and democracy, Flash Eurobarometer 545, April 2024.

11 World Health Organization (WHO), World mental health report: Transforming mental health for all, 16 June 2022.

12 See, for example, O. Negru-Subtirica et al., How poverty affects youth development: From social inequalities to social inclusion, in O. Negru-Subtirica and E. Cocetti, Building inclusive societies by promoting social inclusion and reducing discrimination. Theories, research, and interventions, Editura ASCR, 2021.

13 European Commission report on the Interim evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, COM(2024) 162, 11 April 2024.

14 European Commission report on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022-2024), COM(2025) 117, 24 March 2025.

15 During the last legislative term (2019-2024), the European Parliament adopted resolutions on empowering European Youth (TA(2022)0045), in February 2022; on the European Year of Youth 2022 (TA(2021)0486), in December 2021; on the adoption of the Erasmus programme 2021-2027 (T9-0235/2021), in May 2021; and on the European Solidarity Corps programme 2021-2027. It also adopted resolutions on the implementation of all programmes under CULT remit, including the implementation of the current European Solidarity Corps 2021-2027 (2023/2018(INI)) (TA(2023)0410)

The CoP decision triggered the preparation of a European implementation assessment (EIA) by the Ex-Post Evaluation (EVAL) Unit of Directorate B – Impact Assessment and Foresight, within the Directorate General for European Parliament Research Services (DG EPRS), to accompany the work of the rapporteur in the CULT committee, Sabrina Repp (S&D, Germany). EIAs are prepared to provide evidence to the committees during the preparation of their implementation reports, as part of the European Parliament's commitment to the Better Regulation agenda and notably its 'evaluate first' principle.

1.1. Objectives and methodology of the first part of the study

This first part of the study, drafted internally by EPRS, acts as a scene setter that seeks to provide an overview of the latest European Commission evaluations, the Commission's report on the implementation of the EUYS, the Commission's flash Eurobarometer, and the European Parliaments' youth surveys. It then zooms into the first 100 days of the Commission's mandate and its implementation of the Youth Policy Dialogues. This first part also focuses on the European Parliament's oversight of the implementation of the EUYS, analysing the most relevant resolutions and opinions as of the beginning of the last (ninth) legislature until the time of writing (end of December 2025). This section also explores the extent to which youth mainstreaming has already taken place in Parliament. This first part ends with an overview of the key recommendations emanating from the CULT rapporteur's consultations with youth organisations, organised in support of the drafting of the implementation report on the EUYS.

Part I of the study is based on publicly available information, primarily on official documents of the European Commission and the European Parliament, as well as discussions and meetings organised specifically for the preparation of the CULT implementation report on the EUYS.

and the current Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027 (2023/2002(INI)) (TA(2024)0007). Parliament also adopted the resolution of 15 September 2020 on effective measures to 'green' Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps (TA(2020)0211); the resolution of 10 February 2021 on the impact of COVID-19 on youth and on sport (TA(2021)0045); the resolution of 8 March 2022 on the role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism (TA(2022)0057); the resolution of 6 April 2022 on the implementation of citizenship education actions (TA(2022)0114); the resolution of 19 May 2022 on establishing the European Education Area by 2025 – micro-credentials, individual learning accounts and learning for a sustainable environment (TA(2022)0217); the resolution of 23 June 2022 on the implementation of inclusion measures within Erasmus+ 2014-2020 (TA(2022)0265); and the resolution of 13 September 2022 on the impact of COVID-19 closures of educational, cultural, youth and sports activities on children and young people in the EU (TA(2022)0314). The European Parliament last adopted on 31 May 2018 an implementation report on the EU Youth Strategy 2017/2259 (INI) (TA(2018)0240).

2. European Commission's monitoring of the EU Youth Strategy: State of play

2.1. Interim evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy

The interim evaluation carried out by the European Commission covered the period 2019-2022[16] and assessed the EUYS against the five criteria for evaluations, in line the Better Regulation Guidelines: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value.[17] The Commission's evaluation of the EUYS draws on the evidence presented in an external study.[18] The general objectives of the EUYS consist in providing young people with the necessary skills to be the 'architects of their own life', and to foster their citizen engagement along the EU values of solidary, inclusion and democracy. The EUYS aims at fostering mainstreaming of youth policies in EU and Member States policies, while promoting and supporting social inclusion and youth participation in policymaking processes. The strategy's general objectives were translated into specific objectives along the three core areas – Engage, Connect, and Empower – integrating the 11 European Youth Goals and the EUYS's guiding principles. The EUYS is to embrace the variety of requests, expectations and challenges that youth face in a comprehensive European youth policy.

Since the EUYS is a cooperation framework, its governance and implementation have been supported by various policy initiatives, tools and financial programmes; all were designed and implemented under the umbrella of the three core areas mentioned above. To **engage young people**, activities and tools such as the EU Youth Dialogue, as well as the EU Youth Coordinator, foster youth participation in policymaking at EU and national levels. To **connect young people**, programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps support communication on youth issues, exchanges and mobility, to name a few. To **empower young people**, the European Youth Work Agenda supports and facilitates recognition of youth work and fosters youth information, for instance through youth organisations.

The Commission interim evaluation looked at the EUYS's performance in reaching those objectives and in fostering and mainstreaming coherent youth policies across EU and Member State policies. In parallel, it assessed the instruments and initiatives created to support its implementation. This comprehensive approach is necessary to comprehend the complexity of measuring the impact of a multi-faceted strategic framework.

The conclusions of the evaluation on the **effectiveness** of the EUYS are positive, despite the EUYS's limited ability to provide tangible and measurable impact. The current EUYS (2019-2027) was built on the findings of the evaluation of the previous EUYS (2010-2018).[19] As a result, it has been difficult to delineate outcomes from the previous and the current strategy.[20] Likewise, there has been no clear distinction between what could be attributed to the implementation of the EUYS and what

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16 European Commission Report on the Interim evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, COM(2024) 162, 14 April 2024.

17 See European Commission, Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox.

18 European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Kantar Public, Ramboll Management Consulting and Technopolis Group Support study for the interim evaluation of the EU youth strategy 2019-2027 – Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

19 European Commission, ICF Consulting Services Limited, Evaluation of the EU youth strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across EU – Final report 2010-2018, 2016.

20 For instance, participation of young people with fewer opportunities was considered under the previous strategy but draws currently more attention.

could be attributed to the implementation of the EU programmes. Nevertheless, in general terms, the evaluation underlined progress in promoting youth participation, youth engagement and active citizenship, albeit with differences between the Member States. Youth mainstreaming was assessed positively, in particular with specific and tangible developments at Member State level. The EU Youth Coordinator and EU Youth Dialogues have contributed to improving exchanges on youth issues, although interviews show a low level of awareness among young people who are not directly involved in the dialogues. With the increasing alignment of EU programmes with the EUYS, the EUYS has become more impactful. Youth work has benefited from the EUYS through increased recognition and inclusiveness and with the support of several tools. The EUYS has been labelled as a 'catalyst of change', making it possible to keep a focus on multiple aspects of youth policies, including in a horizontal manner. It has kept young people high on the political agenda, giving them visibility without omitting vulnerable categories of young people. The allocation of resources, design and implementation of a set of activities and tools kept youth policies up to date.

The evaluation concluded that the EUYS was **efficient**: costs for its implementation were small, sufficient and proportional to its objectives as a strategic framework. It did not lead to significant administrative burden. There was no individualised assessment of cost efficiency for each instrument, tool or programme, since they constitute a set of tools of which the benefits are interrelated. In general, the EUYS provided results for minimal costs at EU and national levels. The evaluation found that the EUYS can be improved through more targeted and increased allocation of resources to strengthen its implementation.

The evaluation stressed the **coherence** of the EUYS's objectives, priorities and values, which are largely aligned with other EU policies and strategies. Nevertheless, synergies must be reinforced through more concrete actions. Coherence of the EUYS was also established with external EU policies, and through its alignment with EU international obligations. Despite the multiplicity of instruments, stakeholders consider that they are complementary, and commend the benefits from EU programmes. Special mention is also made of the improvements in cooperation and coordination as a direct result of the European Year of Youth 2022.

Finally, the evaluation pointed to the **EU added value** of the EUYS: under its remit, funding programmes focused on EU common goals; Member States, the EU institutions and youth organisations cooperated better; knowledge and experience were shared; and youth-related issues remained on the EU policies agenda. The assessment noted that without the EUYS, there would be risks of fragmentation for EU funding, limited cross-sectorial cooperation, and reduced focus on youth policies.

2.2. Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022

The Commission's 2024 communication on the European Year of Youth 2022[21] addresses the key achievements and priority follow-up actions of the 2022 European Year of Youth. This was a Commission initiative designed to place the needs and participation of young people at the heart of EU policies.[22] The European Year of Youth is considered a success, in that it has allowed young people to have their voices heard. It was marked by broad participation from the EU institutions, Member States, youth stakeholders, and young people, as well as greater integration of young

[21] European Commission, Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022, COM(2024)001, 10 January 2024.

[22] Relevant stakeholders consulted for the preparation of the SWD accompanying the Communication of the Commission on the EYY, SWD(2024) 001, included national coordinators, youth organisations, youth-led organisations and national youth councils.

people's perspectives across EU policies. In this communication, the Commission commits to taking further steps as a legacy of the European Year of Youth and in accordance with the EUYS.

First, the Commission commits to **mainstreaming the youth perspective** across EU policies. To this end, within the framework of better regulation, a youth impact assessment will be implemented in four key steps: (i) the assessment of the relevance of certain initiatives for young people; (ii) the consultation of young people on relevant initiatives; (iii) the assessment of the impact of initiatives identified as particularly relevant for young people; and (iv) the Regulatory Scrutiny Board's special attention on the impact assessment on young people. In addition, the Commission plans to organise dedicated roundtables on mainstreaming youth perspectives.

The Commission states to have applied the **Youth Check**, which aims to assess the impact of EU policies on young people during the design phase of an initiative, to its 2025 commission work programme. (The modalities of this mechanism are further discussed in Part II of this study.) **However, questions remain as to the definition of 'the relevance of certain initiatives for young people', how (thoroughly) consultation with young people is conducted (for instance, who is consulted, and how to ensure representativeness), and the extent to which the young people's suggestions are taken onboard in new Commission initiatives.** Parliament's DG EPRS has conducted a quality assessment of the Commission's impact assessment concerning the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework (MFF) proposals. According to the Commission, since its launch, the Youth Check has been applied to 12 initiatives from its 2025 work programme, covering a wide range of policy areas such as social and employment policies, sustainability and agriculture, fundamental rights and democracy, and defence. However, DG EPRS found that, in practice, it appears that only a limited number of the seven MFF-related impact assessments examine the initiative's impact on young people.[23] The Commission has also created a dedicated webpage on the consultations in the Youth Check process. Nevertheless, youth organisations and the European Parliament continue to urge for more transparency in the consultations and for better feedback (see conclusions of Part I of this study.) In addition, the Commission plans to organise dedicated roundtables on mainstreaming young people's perspectives.

Mainstreaming will also involve steps to **foster meaningful participation of young people**. To do so, the Commission will strengthen existing instruments such as **youth dialogues**,[24] organise additional **Youth Policy Dialogues** between youth stakeholders and Commissioners on specific relevant initiatives, and strengthen its capacity to work with young people through networks and youth coordinators, for example. It will also develop initiatives and tools to support outreach and awareness raising among young people (such as the Youth Stakeholders Platform and the European Youth Portal), promote youth engagement in EU external action, and encourage Member States to appoint youth coordinators. Likewise, citizen panels convened following the Conference on the Future of Europe will include young people. The Youth Policy Dialogues conducted with European Commissioners during the first 100 days of the von der Leyen Commission II are examined in the next chapter. The youth dialogues are evaluated in Part II of this study.

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[23] I. Anglmayer and E. Kramer, MFF 2028-2034: Quality analysis of the Commission's impact assessments, EPRS, European Parliament (forthcoming, February 2026). This briefing complements the set of initial appraisals that DG EPRS has prepared on each impact assessment linked to the next MFF.

[24] The EU youth dialogue is the largest youth participation mechanism across the EU, a structured process for young people to influence EU policies affecting them by engaging with decisionmakers on key themes. It runs in 18-month cycles that involve national consultations, events and discussions to gather ideas for the EUYS, ensuring that young voices, particularly those with fewer opportunities, are heard in shaping policy. See EU, What is the EU Youth Dialogue?, 17 July 2025.

Second, the Commission commits to **addressing young people's concerns across key policy areas**. While all policy areas are of interest to young people, young people have identified five as a priority,[25] and the Commission is committed to focusing on these. This concerns first **youth health and wellbeing**, including children's health and the impact of digital transformation on young people. The Commission will support Member States through the Technical Support Instrument's 2024 flagship initiative on mental health.[26] Other health issues relate to vaccine-preventable cancers, smoke-free environments, and the specific needs of outermost regions.[27] The second priority area concerns the **environment and climate**. The Commission plans to work with instruments and initiatives, including at the Member State level, to foster and strengthen youth awareness and engagement in climate action projects. Regarding **education and training**, the third priority, the Commission will continue working towards a joint European degree, supporting digital education, and addressing the challenges faced by young people in rural and remote areas, the underrepresentation of girls in certain sectors, and skills mismatch and labour shortages. In the fourth area regarding **international cooperation and European values**, initiatives and instruments are designed to promote youth engagement globally, foster partnerships and exchanges, and encourage young people's active participation in the EU's external action. Finally, on **employment and inclusion**, the fifth priority, the Commission will actively support young people in vulnerable situations, whether social, economic, or geographic. It will address the framework for traineeships, and further implement initiatives and programmes that address these vulnerabilities, such as the ALMA initiative,[28] cohesion policy programmes, and the Talent Booster Mechanism.[29]

2.3. EU Youth Report 2024

The **EU Youth Report 2022-2024**,[30] **the second Commission report on EUYS implementation**,[31] provides an overview of progress under the EUYS and reaffirms the Commission's commitment to ensuring young people's voices remain central to EU policymaking. It also includes pointers for further action in the field of young people to promote their engagement and more opportunities for them.

When describing young people's current situation, their needs and concerns, the report mirrors findings from recent Commission Eurobarometer and European Parliament surveys on youth, analysed in the next section of this chapter. Young people are interested in political and community

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25 The Commission referred those key themes that youth identified as the ones the European Year of Youth should focus on. See European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer survey 502: 'Youth and democracy in the European Year of Youth', May 2022.

26 See European Commission, Mental health: Fostering well-being and mental health, 2024 Flagship Technical Support Project: Technical Support Instrument.

27 Here, the Commission refers to its work towards a cross-sectoral approach to mental health and its 2023 communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health. In its preparation, the Commission had collected specific contributions on the mental health of youth. As a result, the Commission identified 20 flagship initiatives and the funding instruments. Prevention initiatives concern: preventive cancer vaccines (papillomavirus), smoke-free environments, and needs of outermost regions.

28 ALMA stands for 'Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve'. It is an EU initiative, aiming at supporting young people that are not in any kind of employment, education or training (NEETs). See European Commission, ALMA, DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

29 See European Commission, Talent Booster Mechanism, DG Regional Policy.

30 European Commission Report on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022-2024), COM(2025) 117, 24 March 2025.

31 As required by the Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, OJ C 456, 18 December 2018.

participation; they take part in organised activities (e.g. volunteering) and are vocal about the environment and climate change, which they see as the most urgent global threats. The demographic decline of their generation in the EU population raises concerns about the lack of intergenerational fairness and of the sustainability of social security systems. Young people are also facing significant challenges such as unemployment (at approximately 10 % among young people, many of them NEETs),[32] risks of poverty and social exclusion (nearly 20 % of young people in the EU). Those challenges affect their mental health negatively, with almost half of young people reporting emotional or psychosocial problems in 2024. Other concerns relate to early leaving from education and training (9.5 % in 2023), particularly among young men (11 %), and lack of digital skills in an increasingly digitalised world (28% of young people in 2023, 38 % of whom have low education).

The report provides a snapshot on the cross-sectorial nature of EU youth policy. It highlights the need for strengthening mainstreaming across EU policies, and stresses EU ongoing efforts in that sense. Recent priorities are examined under the prism of the **three EUYS pillars** (Engage, Connect and Empower).

Under the '**Engage**' pillar, the report notes progress made on youth participation through the EU youth dialogues, although mechanisms for providing feedback to participants on their recommendations must be strengthened. Whereas synergies with other initiatives to foster youth participation can be developed further, the report welcomes recent initiatives such as the Better Internet for Kids strategy (BIK+). To engage, youth employment and skills are key, and as such reflected in the Commission 2024-2029 political guidelines, including plans to tackle skills and labour shortages.[33] The report also points to trainees' working conditions and the adoption, in 2024, of a proposal to improve them.[34]

Under the '**Connect**' pillar, the report points to Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps as key enablers of the EUYS for supporting learning mobility, exchanges and volunteering. In that vein, the 2024 Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move' sets new targets to enable more young people to learn abroad.[35] The report acknowledges challenges and opportunities in a digital environment, recalling provisions of the Digital Services Act for minors online. The next steps include an action plan against cyberbullying and an EU-wide inquiry on social media's impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Under the '**Empower**' pillar, the report addresses six thematic areas that are pivotal in fostering youth development and autonomy.

- Firstly, **youth work**, which is developed through several initiatives including the 2024 Council Resolution on Youth Work in an empowering Europe[36] and the European

[32] For an analysis on the NEETS, see N. Hanhkamper-Vandenbulcke et al., The implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee – Trends in EU Member States, impact, EU funding and governance, EPRS, European Parliament, December 2025.

[33] Such as specific initiatives under the European Year of Skills; see Communication from the Commission: labour and skills shortages in the EU: an action plan, COM(2024) 131, 20 March 2024.

[34] Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving and enforcing working conditions of trainees and combating regular employment relationships disguised as traineeships ('Traineeships Directive') COM(2024) 132/2, 20 March 2024; Proposal for a Council recommendation on a reinforced quality Framework Traineeship COM(2024) 133, 20 March 2024.

[35] Council Recommendation of 13 May 2024 'Europe on the Move' – learning mobility opportunities for everyone, OJ C, C/2024/3364.

[36] Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on youth work policy in an empowering Europe, OJ C, C/2024/3526, 3 June 2024.

Training Strategy for youth work,[37] as well as through the EU–Council of Europe Youth Partnership[38] and the preparation of the 4th European Youth Work Convention.[39]

- Secondly, **combating social exclusion** in all its forms aims to empower young people in their diversity, irrespective of their ethnic, economic, social status, sexual orientation, disability, or whether they live in an urban or rural area. In line with recent efforts,[40] the Commission will continue to work for more inclusive EU Youth Dialogues. Likewise, under Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, an increasing participation of NEETS is expected. Tools also exist to support young people in rural and remote areas.[41]
- Thirdly, because young people specifically face health and wellbeing challenges, the report stresses the Commission's **comprehensive approach to mental health**,[42] including four flagship initiatives addressing children's and young people's mental health.[43] A technical support instrument[44] exists to improve psychosocial support services for young people. The Commission works with the World Health Organization (WHO) to encourage sport and physical activities policies, in line with the Council Recommendation on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors.[45]
- Fourthly, on **education and training**, the report underlines the Commission's 2024 higher education package,[46] including a blueprint for a European degree and efforts to foster learning mobility. Other priorities include reducing underperformance in basic skills and early leaving from education and training,[47] as well as raising awareness among young people about cybersecurity education.[48] Programmes exist to support higher education graduates in artificial intelligence (AI), computing and advanced digital technologies,[49] and to address the underrepresentation of girls and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.[50]
- Fifth, on **culture**, EU initiatives help young people from diverse backgrounds to develop talents (e.g. Young Talent Award) or promote culture through events (e.g. annual Day of European Authors or European Capitals of Culture).[51]
- Finally, sixth, on **environment and climate**, the report notes that young people are included in EU climate-led policies through initiatives such as the Young Climate Pact

37 See European Training Strategy for Youth Work.

38 Council of Europe – Youth Partnership.

39 Council of Europe – Youth Partnership: Youth work.

40 Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023 on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion (2023/C 41/01); and Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on inclusive societies for young people, OJ C, C/2024/3808, 27 June 2024.

41 For further information, see European Commission's website on long-term vision for the EU's rural areas: key achievements and ways forward, and its report on the long-term vision for EU's rural areas, 27 March 2024.

42 European Commission, A comprehensive approach to mental health.

43 European Commission, Tracking framework for the implementation of the Commission Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health, 10 October 2024.

44 European Commission, Supporting mental health and care for the wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people.

45 Council Recommendation of 26 November 2013 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors 2013/C 354/01, 4 December 2013.

46 European Commission, Commission presents a blueprint for a European degree, DG EAC, 27 March 2024.

47 Council Recommendation of 28 November 2022 on Pathways to School Success and replacing the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving (Text with EEA relevance) (2022/C 469/01), 9 December 2022.

48 European Commission, Cyber Skills Academy, and for Digital Skills and Jobs Platform, see ENISA.

49 See European Commission, Digital Europe Programme.

50 See European Commission policies and initiatives on Women in Digital – Shaping Europe's digital future and Girls Go Circular – Digital and Entrepreneurial Skills for the Circular Economy.

51 See European Commission, European Capitals of Culture - Culture and Creativity.

Ambassadors[52] or the Young Energy Ambassadors[53] for the promotion of sustainable and clean energy. Young people's efforts on the conservation of the oceans are recognised under the EU4Ocean coalition.[54] A youth task force, set up in the realm of the Just Transition Platform,[55] supports young people in regions affected by the transition to climate neutrality.

The report reiterates the importance of support and engagement for EU youth-led actions through instruments such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps or the EU Youth Empowerment Fund for EU external actions. In that sense, EU youth policy mainstreaming goes beyond EU borders. Support for youth participation is provided through various regional programmes and partnerships and reinforced by the Youth Action Plan in EU external action 2022-2027.[56] Equally, such activities are organised in the framework of the EU enlargement process.[57] Initiatives also support youth employment and transnational mobility for the eastern countries or other regional partnerships.

EU youth policy mainstreaming is funded under the **2021-2027 MFF** through the allocation of specific and substantial funds earmarked for young people through such instruments as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the common agricultural policy 2023-2027, the Just Transition Fund, and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme.

Finally, EU youth policy triggers Member States' increasing interest in cooperating on youth participation, youth mainstreaming, digitalisation, learning mobility and the recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning, as well as communication and data. Peer learning and evidence building seem the preferred cooperation tools.

Looking back, the 2022 European Year of Youth was instrumental in strengthening youth participation and youth mainstreaming. **Looking forward**, in its political guidelines for 2024-2029, the Commission underlines the EU's commitment to empowering young people and addressing their concerns. Youth mainstreaming is needed more than ever and will rely on new processes, at the forefront of which are the **Youth Check impact assessments**. For a renewed framework for EU cooperation, the Commission is running a **new round of dialogues**, launched in 2025 and continuing through 2026, 'to engage young people and relevant stakeholders in reflections that will feed into the Commission's proposal for the next EU Youth Strategy post-2027'. The EU Youth Stakeholders Group and the EU Youth Dialogue will be mobilised. The European Youth Goals may also need a review to align with young people's recent concerns.

2.4. Commission Eurobarometer in concert with Parliament's youth surveys

In March 2025, the **European Commission published its Flash Eurobarometer**, based on fieldwork conducted in February 2025, providing an overview of young people's views on: (i) the strengths and challenges facing the EU; (ii) priority areas for the EU; (iii) values best representing the EU; (iv) the future of the EU; (v) the state of democracy in the EU; (vi) threats to democracy in the EU;

52 Under the European Climate Pact.

53 See European Commission, Young Energy Ambassadors.

54 See European Commission, EU4Ocean Coalition – Drive change together.

55 See European Commission, The Just Transition Platform.

56 European Commission, Youth Action Plan, DG for International Partnerships, 21 December 2023.

57 This also includes the candidate or potential candidate countries in the EEA or the European Universities initiative – European Education Area. The Youth Guarantee is also implemented in the Western Balkans.

and (vii) EU investment to support young people.[58] To better contextualise European youth concerns, some of the findings of this Eurobarometer are compared with those of Parliament's latest two youth surveys, one conducted in June 2021 and the most recent one conducted in September and October 2024. When comparing the **European Parliament's 2021 and 2024 youth surveys**[59] of young people aged 16 to 30, the analysis addresses youth perceptions, behaviours and positions on topics that are relevant for the study, and where data are comparable to some extent. These surveys gauged young people's priorities, perceptions and understanding of participation, be it through voting or activism in society, and volunteering. The surveys provide more details that help identify trends according to Member States, youth age category, and socioeconomic considerations. (Those are not addressed in this overview.) Some of the findings from the Commission's 2025 Eurobarometer on young people's views on EU challenges and priorities are mentioned when they mark a significant shift from previous trends.[60]

Between 2021 and 2024, the **topics young people considered the EU should prioritise** did not change, even if the support, expressed in percentages, differed slightly. Most respondents identified future priorities (on a five-year timeline) as follows: **poverty** was the top priority for 43 % of respondents in 2021, while 40 % in 2024 considered **cost of living and social inequality** as the priority to tackle. In 2025, there is a major change, with 31 % of young people surveyed considering **security and defence** as their first concern. **Combating climate change and protecting the environment** remains a concern for young people, in second place with 27 % of the support (as compared with 39 % in 2021 and 33 % in 2024). **Combating unemployment or lack of jobs** remained the third priority for 37 % of young people surveyed in 2021, and for 31 % of those surveyed in 2024. This, however, is not the case in 2025, when public health comes in second position (together with combating climate change), supported by 27 % of respondents. Public health, also among the priorities, ranked fourth both in 2021 (with 34 % of support) and in 2024 (with slightly less support but at the same, fourth, rank with 29 % of respondents). Concern for **irregular migration** has increased, featuring among the top five priorities for 26 % of young people surveyed for the 2025 Eurobarometer. This indicates a significant shift from 2021, when irregular migration was one of young people's least important concerns (mentioned only by 13 % of respondents), while in 2024, it was mentioned by 19 % of respondents. The need to improve **access to education and training** remains a concern but the percentage is lower (28 % in 2021 compared with 27 % in 2024 and 23 % in 2025). Nevertheless, figures on all those topics are not consistent across the EU but differ from one Member State to another, depending on the national social, economic and political context.

Young people responding to Parliament's 2024 youth survey deemed two topics crucial: housing (23 %) and the EU's defence and security (21 %). These topics were not mentioned in 2021 among the 10 priorities identified by young people. In 2025, when asked in which sector the EU should invest the most resources to support young people, the majority of respondents pointed to **affordable housing and cost of living** (38 %), followed by **education and training, skills development** (29 %), **mental health and wellbeing** (28 %), **health and healthcare access** (27 %) and **youth employment** (27 %).

Most respondents to these three surveys reported having **participated in political and civic activities or expressed their views on the most effective way to get their voices heard**. More

[58] European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer: EU challenges and priorities: young people's views, Flash Eurobarometer 556, March 2025.

[59] European Parliament, Youth survey 2021, September 2021; European Parliament, Youth survey 2024, February 2025.

[60] The Commission's Eurobarometer surveyed youth of the same age range as Parliament's youth surveys; European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer: EU challenges and priorities: young people's views, Flash Eurobarometer 556, March 2025.

specifically, they mentioned having voted in the last local, national, or European elections (39 % in 2024 and 46 % in 2021). This is in line with perceptions that voting is the most effective action for making one's voice heard, since most respondents (44 % in 2025 compared with 41 % in 2021 – no figure for 2024) indicated in all but one Member State (Belgium) that **voting is the top response**. In 2021, 42 % of respondents participated in the launch and/or signature of a **petition**; 30 % of those considered this political act an effective tool. In 2024, the number of young petitioners decreased to 26 % and then further to 22 % in 2025. Around a quarter of respondents to Parliament's 2021 youth survey participated in other forms of action: 25 % **boycotted** or bought certain products on political, ethical or environmental grounds (against 19 % in 2024); 24 % took part in **street protests or demonstrations** (against 16 % in 2024 – a significant decline, despite 33 % of respondents saying in 2021 that demonstrations are an effective tool in order to be heard). In 2025, 23 % of young people surveyed considered that joining a demonstration or a strike is an effective way to influence decisionmakers. This is followed by **joining or supporting political organisations**, with 22 % of respondents. By contrast, **joining a youth organisation** appeared of limited importance among the activities outlined in the survey on participation in political and civic activities. In 2021, in a list of 12 options, adhering to a youth organisation ranked seventh, with 14 % of young people having joined such organisations. Only 17 % of respondents indicated that it was an effective way to have one's voice heard. However, there were significant discrepancies between Member States, since this option ranked much higher in Malta (34 %) and, to a lesser extent, in Ireland, Cyprus and Romania (23 %, 22 % and 22 % respectively). In 2024, only 11 % of young people surveyed said they joined a youth organisation, whereas 20 % were **volunteers in a charity or campaign organisation**.

Despite their participation in political and civic activities, in 2021, most respondents felt they did not have much, or any, say over important decisions, laws and policies affecting them. The more distant the level of governance under consideration, the more this feeling increased, reaching 70 % for decisions, laws and policies affecting the EU. Although the question was formulated differently in 2024 (i.e. the reasons for never having contacted a politician about an issue), 30 % of young people believed that such contact would not have an impact, followed by 23 % who considered that decisionmakers do not listen to people 'like me'. Moreover, 18 % of respondents mentioned their lack of interest in politics. Regarding **volunteering**, almost a quarter of respondents (23 %) stressed the lack of time as a barrier for volunteering; 17 % said they were never asked to volunteer, and the same proportion of young people surveyed indicated a lack of interest. There is also a lack of understanding and awareness of volunteering opportunities (each 14 %).

3. European Commission's 2025 Youth Policy Dialogues

The first **Youth Policy Dialogues**[61] were organised during the European Year of Youth 2022, when each European Commissioner invited 12 to 15 young people to Brussels to take part in a policy dialogue. Later, during the European Youth Week 2024, the former Vice-President of the European Commission, Margaritis Schinas, and the Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Iliana Ivanova, each held a policy dialogue to collect insights into European young people's sensitivities and aspirations.[62]

As part of her ambition to strengthen the European social model during her second mandate, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, committed to organising annual Youth Policy Dialogues 'to ensure young people can use their voice to shape the future of the EU'.[63] This is framed in the Commission's promise to 'work to promote social fairness, strengthen social and regional cohesion, and ensure equal opportunities for all',[64] as well in recognition of the societal challenges facing Europeans today (lack of affordable housing, curtailed access to essential services, poverty and inequalities of opportunities). As the consultations between youth organisations and Sabrina Repp (S&D, Germany), rapporteur of the CULT implementation report on the EUYS, have shown, these are also persisting concerns for young people.[65] The recommendations emanating from these exchanges are discussed in the next chapter of Part I.

The high-level Youth Policy Dialogues are organised across the EU Member States. The first round took place during the first 100 days of the von der Leyen Commission II, and addressed the most prominent themes raised by young people. (The next section outlines how participants are selected.) Young people were able to continue discussing through an EU-wide online platform until June 2025, and to engage on the principal themes that young people raised during the Youth Policy Dialogues. This activity, which will take place annually, is designed to 'strengthen the voice of Europe's youth in shaping the policies that affect their lives' by providing them with opportunities for 'direct and meaningful interactions with European Commissioners on the policy initiatives the Commission is preparing'.[66]

These dialogues build on the results of the 2022 European Year of Youth and the Commission's subsequent commitment to introducing a Youth Check mechanism.[67] They complement other forums available to young people to share their views on existing EU policies or new initiatives, including the citizens' panels, the Youth Sounding Box,[68] the EU Youth Dialogues, the EU Children's

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61 See European Commission, Youth Policy Dialogues, 2024.

62 For further information, see European Communication, Report Policy Dialogue with European Commissioner Iliana Ivanova 'European degree & learning mobility' – 19 April 2024.

63 European Commission, Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model.

64 European Commission, Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model.

65 Stakeholders' consultation: The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, Rapporteur: Sabrina Repp (S&D, Germany), 11 November 2025 (9.00-12.30), European Parliament, Brussels.

66 European Commission, Giving youth a say in decision-making.

67 For further information on the 2022 European Year of Youth, see the dedicated website.

68 The Youth Sounding Board is a is a flagship initiative of the 'Engage' pillar of the Youth Action Plan in External Action. It brings together a group of young people who advise the Commissioner and the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) on youth participation and empowerment in EU external action. See European Commission, Youth Sounding Board.

Participation Platform,[69] or through public consultations and feedback available on the European Commission's 'Have Your Say' portal, and the European citizens' initiative. Moreover, the European Youth Week takes place every two years, alternating with the European Youth Event.[70] (The main initiatives are evaluated in Part II of this study.)

3.1. Conclusions from the Youth Policy Dialogues

In their mission letters, all European Commissioners were tasked with organising Youth Policy Dialogues within the first 100 days of the new mandate, coordinated by the Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, Glenn Micallef, and 'build[ing] on the Conference on the Future of Europe to instil a true and lasting culture of participative democracy'.[71] By 10 March 2025, all College members had delivered their first dialogues, 28 in total. The European Commission published the results of the dialogues in June 2025, with the aim of having them feed into the development of policies that impact young people in the EU. Overall, 41 Youth Policy Dialogues were organised since the beginning of the von der Leyen Commission II, as this dialogue process continues with a new round: 13 more such dialogues have been organised since March 2025, and two more are forthcoming (at the time of writing) (see Annex 1 at the end of Part I).

According to the **Commission's report on the outcomes of the Youth Policy Dialogues**,[72] participants' recommendations cover **five overarching themes** linked to the Commission's political priorities and other horizontal issues.

1. In the context of **a safe Europe**, young people addressed concerns on the feasibility of a fully autonomous European defence, the EU's current defence readiness, the war in Ukraine, the financing of defence projects, the fight against organised crime and terrorism, and migration management and border security. They called for improving public safety and addressing growing risks, including foreign hybrid threats (in particular from Russia), and for better balancing safety of law enforcement officials with the protection of migrants' human rights. Participants suggested that 'youth organisations play a key role in spreading alerts, conducting school simulations, and fighting disinformation'. To improve EU preparedness, young people urged the EU to strengthen military reserves, nursing workforce, inclusivity in the emergency response, as well as research and innovation. Across 24 Member States, young people underscored how crucial it is to involve them in peacebuilding efforts on the war in Ukraine.

2. In the context of **EU competitiveness and sustainability**, young people 'highlighted the interconnection between sustainability, climate goals, competitiveness and economic policies'. They urged for harmonising the EU's climate goals with its economic actions to foster green growth and competitiveness, calling for more funds for research on sustainable agricultural practices and climate adaptation tools, and more targeted support for young farmers and new entrants to the field. They put forward the idea of '**green taxation**', rewarding innovation, making clean technologies cheaper, and designing predictable regulations for businesses.

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69 The EU Children's Participation Platform brings together teens under the age of 18 to exchange with policymakers and decisionmakers on topics that affect their lives (e.g. cyberbullying prevention). See European Union, EU Children's Participation Platform.

70 For further information, see European Commission, Get involved; and European Commission, Have Your Say on Europe and its policies.

71 European Commission, Commissioners-designate (2024-2029), 17 September 2024.

72 European Commission, The Youth Policy Dialogues during the first 100 days of the new mandate of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, June 2025.

In their call for **enhancing environmental protection and clean energy transition**, participants advocated for 'thorough environmental assessments prior to ocean-based development, especially in renewable energy and deep-sea mining'. In parallel, accountability of high-polluting sectors such as fossil fuels should be strengthened through 'the phasing out of subsidies, the enforcement of stricter regulations and the promotion of circular economy'. Moreover, young people pointed to the need for financing climate-resilient infrastructure and improving electricity interconnections to ensure energy security and affordability, particularly for the most vulnerable consumers. For **sustainable tourism and transport** to excel, young people argued for expanding 'public transport, particularly rail, in underdeveloped areas, reducing train travel costs, improving ticketing systems, enhancing safety for all travellers, and promoting sustainable urban mobility through initiatives like hydrogen buses and cycling'.

3. In the context of a **democratic digital transition**, young people emphasised that – also at the local level and in rural areas – they should be more systematically included in consultations in all the relevant fields. They also pointed to the need for adequate funding that is accessible to them, as well. Participants called for more formal ways of enhancing young people's democratic engagement, such as 'quotas, lowering the voting age, more Youth Dialogues or involvement in local councils'. They expressed a particular interest in participating in Commission-led discussions on science initiatives, EU enlargement and AI. To boost digital finance, young people expressed the need for a simple digital pan-European savings product and an EU-wide finance app aggregator that would gather users' accounts in one place, where all financial operations could be done.

4. In the context of **supporting people, strengthening European societies and the EU social model**, young people raised concerns on inclusion and equality in general. They specifically highlighted the cost of living and lack of affordable housing, and the need to improve working conditions and strengthen the rights of employees (including gender equality and equity). Participants also called for providing training in various areas: energy, climate and ecological resilience, digital skills to boost financial literacy, and citizenship education to highlight the benefits of EU membership. They asked for career support for young people and workers moving into the green jobs and for vocational education and training (VET) to be promoted. In the context of improving EU healthcare, young people called for stricter smoking regulations and for further raising awareness of mental health issues.

5. On **global Europe**, several dialogues addressed the EU's role as an international and trade partner, climate diplomacy, social media platforms, enlargement, the Global Gateway strategy, human rights and global diplomacy. More specifically, young people called, on the one hand, for a careful balancing of bilateral trade relations with China, the United States and neighbouring countries (e.g. Türkiye and Ukraine) and, on the other, for maintaining a rules-based global order through bilateral and multilateral agreements. In that context, they asked 'to prioritise European values over purely political or economic interests, as well as the need to further economic cooperation with candidate countries'. To empower young leaders from diverse regions and create cooperation opportunities with young professionals, entrepreneurs and researchers to cooperate on initiatives relating to infrastructure, climate and digitalisation, participants recommended setting up a Global Gateway Youth Ambassadors programme and Youth-Led Innovation Hubs in partner countries. Young people also asked the Commission to hold global social media platforms accountable and to make sure they act transparently. Participants expressed strong support for further EU enlargement, which 'represents a gateway to greater freedom, democracy, and shared values'. To reduce disparities among young people, participants stressed the importance of 'mobility in fostering connections, emphasising that cultural exchanges and professional networking are key to strengthening a shared

European identity'. Finally, young people urged the Commission to collaborate more with them to address democratic deficits and enhance peace and the respect for human rights.

6. Young people also addressed other horizontal issues, advising the Commission to **communicate** its work **more simply and accessibly**.[73] Several cross-cutting issues emerged across the Youth Policy Dialogues, including 'preparedness, **regulatory simplification**, democratic empowerment, skills development, and climate diplomacy'.[74]

3.2. Format of policy dialogues and feedback to participants

Overall, about **400 young people were actively involved in the Youth Policy Dialogues, although most policy dialogues involved small numbers of youth**. (See Annex I for further information on each of the Youth Policy Dialogues.) Participants were young people aged 16 to 30, representing different socioeconomic backgrounds, interests, age groups, the gender balance, locations in the EU, rural or urban areas, organisations, or themselves as individuals. They were selected through various methods, depending on the lead European Commission Directorate-General (DG), and following guidance offered by the coordinating DG, that is, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC). The Commission considers that 'in all cases, inclusivity and diversity criteria were met'.[75] For example, participants comprised young people that had not previously participated in a Youth Policy Dialogue.[76] Moreover, the choice of participants in each Youth Policy Dialogue was tailored to the format and subjects of the discussions. For example, the discussion with the Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, Magnus Brunner, included participants from government, the United Nations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).[77]

Rather than a formal speech, the Commission aimed to keep the **in-person sessions interactive** and to foster genuine dialogue with spontaneous questions, reflections and follow-ups. For some Youth Policy Dialogues, participants had to submit their questions in advance, during the registration process.[78] The dialogues were also often organised in tandem with side events (e.g. workshops, thematic sessions, community-building activities and visits to EU institutions), to design a well-rounded programme that helps young people better understand the topics discussed during the dialogue.

On occasions, following the discussions, the European Commission covered the Youth Policy Dialogue on **social media**. In terms of specific follow-up with the participants, the Commission held '**debriefing sessions** with the moderators, **feedback meetings** with the participants', and provided **written replies** to participants after the dialogues.[79] However, it is not clear whether the Commission, through these follow-up activities, explained to young people if and how their views

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[73] European Commission, Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Magnus Brunner, European Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, 11 September 2025.

[74] European Commission, The Youth Policy Dialogues during the first 100 days of the new mandate of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, June 2025.

[75] European Commission, The Youth Policy Dialogues during the first 100 days of the new mandate of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, June 2025.

[76] European Union, Open Call for Youth Policy Dialogue with Commissioners Kadis and Micallef, 26 November 2025.

[77] European Commission, Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Magnus Brunner, European Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, 11 September 2025.

[78] European Commission, Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Magnus Brunner, European Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, 11 September 2025.

[79] European Commission, The Youth Policy Dialogues during the first 100 days of the new mandate of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, June 2025.

were taken onboard, and to what extent. This issue has been consistently raised by the European Parliament and young people, as the next two chapters show.

3.3. Follow-up activities and commitments

According to the European Commission, this platform for direct exchange between young people and top EU decisionmakers translates into action President von der Leyen's vision of placing young people at the heart of EU policymaking, as outlined in her political guidelines for 2024-2029.[80] In its report on the outcome of the Youth Policy Dialogues, the Commission commits to young people's priorities **feeding into concrete forthcoming Commission legislative and non-legislative initiatives in the 2026 Commission work programme**,[81] including the Union of Skills and the Digital Education Action Plan Review, the Roadmap on the Future of Digital Education and Training, the preparation of the European Democracy Shield, the Cultural Compass, the Citizens Energy Package, the Vision for Agriculture and Food, the New Pact on the Mediterranean, the European Ocean Pact, and the Generational Renewal Strategy in agriculture. The Commission also commits to **more closely linking future Youth Policy Dialogues to key initiatives in the Commission work programme**.

Moreover, the Commission has launched a new online debate on the **Citizens' Engagement Platform**,[82] with a two-fold objective: first, to provide information about the Youth Policy Dialogues; and second, to continue the conversation on the main takeaways of the Youth Policy Dialogues, reaching out to young people beyond the limited number of invited participants. Real-time e-interpretation into all 24 official EU languages allows for cross-national discussions to take place, and for the participation of a diverse audience. By early January 2026, the platform counted 76 contributions on issues such as the challenges facing democracy and shared values and how to overcome them; working in Europe; participating in global partnership projects; developing collaborative initiatives across Member States; awareness-raising campaigns to boost youth participation; and protecting mental health online.

Furthermore, the **Youth Advisory Board,** as announced in the Commission's political guidelines for the 2024–2029 mandate, was set up on 25 June 2025 through a Commission decision that outlines the Board's objectives.[83] The Commission considers this initiative 'a milestone for youth participation at the highest political level'.[84] The Board establishes an expert group of 30 young people (aged between 18 and 28 years) from the National Youth Councils in all EU Member States, the European Youth Forum, and observers from EU candidate and potential candidate countries.[85] Young people from the candidate countries may also be involved in the Board regarding Commission initiatives on EU enlargement, to ensure their voices and perspectives can contribute to shaping the EU's future. The Board's general objective is to provide feedback on ideas and initiatives developed by the Commission on aspects that matter to young people. Other goals include raising awareness of the Board's work among young representatives and facilitating communication between the

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80 European Commission, Europe's Choice, Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024–2029, 18 July 2024.

81 For an analysis of the 2026 Commission work programme, see I. Ioannides et al., 2026 Commission work programme: Forward planning and better regulation in focus, EPRS, European Parliament, November 2025.

82 See Citizens' Engagement Platform.

83 European Commission decision of 25.6.2025 setting up the President's Youth Advisory Board.

84 See President's Youth Advisory Board.

85 EU Delegation to Moldova, European Moldova Participates in the Youth Advisory Board in Brussels, 9 December 2025.

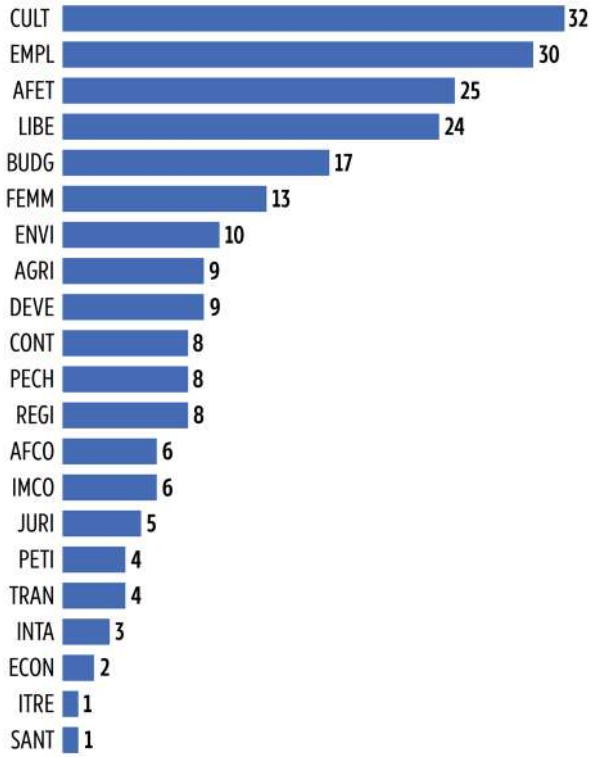
Commission and young people in all EU Member States. The Board held its first meeting on 3 December 2025, in Brussels, to discuss about social media and young people.[86]

[86] On the involvement of youth on social media issues, see T. Laaninen with J. Bol, Youth and social media, EPRS, European Parliament, December 2025.

4. European Parliament oversight of the EU Youth Strategy

Parliament's committees have largely taken into account young people's needs in their (legislative and non-legislative) resolutions. This chapter analyses 32 European Parliament resolutions that originated as CULT committee reports. It also concentrates on the opinions that CULT prepared for 225 parliamentary resolutions examined in this chapter and selected because they touch on aspects of the EUYS.[87] The chart below illustrates that Parliament has extensively included young people's sensitivities in its legislative and non-legislative work across EU policies.

Figure 1 – Number of resolutions on aspects of the EU Youth Strategy by committee responsible (July 2019 to December 2025)



Source: Authors' analysis based on data from OEIL; graphic by Lucille Killmayer, EPRS.

The above infographic provides only an overview of the potential extent of youth mainstreaming in Parliament's oversight work, as there are some caveats to this analysis. The European Parliament's Legislative Observatory (OEIL), on which the data collection is based, does not include separate information on the subcommittees' work. For this reason, the resolutions of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) include those prepared by the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) and those prepared by the Commission on Security and Defence (SEDE), when SEDE was a subcommittee. SEDE became a fully-fledged committee in the current legislature, as of 20 January 2025, and at the time of writing, there are no adopted resolutions that SEDE has tabled and that address issues that are key to the EUYS. Similarly, the resolutions of the Committee on Economic

[87] Parliament's resolutions referred to in this section are a non-exhaustive selection of resolutions pertaining to key aspects of the EUYS. The extensive search for relevant resolutions was done with the following keywords: youth, young, child and children. The latter two were included because, as explained in the annexed study, Member States apply different age ranges to define youth in their national policies, some including minors as of the age of 15 years.

and Monetary Affairs (ECON) include those prepared by the Subcommittee on Tax Matters (FISC). It should also be noted that in the case of joint resolutions, the resolution is counted as many times as there are committees joined to it. In addition, the Committee's reports included in Figure 1 above considered young people before the contribution of a CULT opinion, in cases where there was one. Among the 225 resolutions studied, 25 are resolutions on topical subjects (RSPs) linked to political groups and/or individual Members and are not accounted for in the graphic.

4.1. Key European Parliament resolutions

This section provides an overview of the CULT committee's oversight work of the EUYS, for which this committee is responsible. It focuses on Parliament's resolutions from the ninth legislative term (July 2019 to July 2024) up to the time of writing (December 2025), in addition to Parliament's resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EUYS.[88] Parliament has adopted several resolutions on related programmes and broader issues affecting young people specifically, and which young people themselves have also raised. Moreover, Parliament's resolutions closely align with the concerns identified by the Commission in its evaluation of the EUYS and the linked 11 European Youth Goals. While acknowledging the effectiveness of certain youth programmes, **Parliament underscores the persistence – and even intensification, due to the COVID-19 crisis – of significant challenges young people have faced**. These include mental health challenges, difficulties accessing employment and housing, as well as limited participation in decisionmaking. These challenges disproportionately impact marginalised young people such as women, those with disabilities, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or remote rural areas.

4.1.1. Tackling persisting socioeconomic difficulties

In its resolution of 13 September 2022 on the impact of COVID-19 closures on educational, cultural, youth and sports activities on children and young people in the EU,[89] Parliament notes that 'the lack of educational, employment or financial opportunities and the increase in youth unemployment' drive rising rates of depression among 18- to 24-year-olds. Despite higher education levels in the EU, persistent economic recession continues to undermine 'young people's prospects for developing their full potential', as highlighted in Parliament's resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EUYS.[90] Several resolutions notably mention the difficulties young people face in accessing employment in the field of culture.[91] Parliament considers 'a whole generation of young artists and cultural workers will struggle to find cultural employment or enrol in higher art

[88] European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

[89] European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2022 on the impact of COVID-19 closures of educational, cultural, youth and sports activities on children and young people in the EU (2022/2004(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0314.

[90] European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy, (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

[91] European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2021 on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU (2020/2261(INI)), P9_TA(2021)0430; European Parliament resolution of 14 December 2022 on the implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations (2022/2047(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0444; European Parliament resolution of 21 November 2023 with recommendations to the Commission on an EU framework for the social and professional situation of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sectors (2023/2051(INL)), P9_TA(2023)0405.

education as a result of the narrowing of opportunities'.[92] One of the concerns raised is young people's heightened risk of inadequate credit and payment for their music.[93]

To combat youth unemployment, Parliament urges the European Commission and the Member States to establish a 'common legal framework to **ensure fair remuneration for traineeships and apprenticeships**'[94] and to make sure that young people have **access to social protection**.[95] Parliament also calls on 'the Commission and the Member States to supervise establishments that repeatedly offer consecutive internships without following them up with jobs'.[96]

Moreover, to enhance young people's access to the labour market, Parliament advocates – through its resolution on the European skills Year 2023[97] – for the use of **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)[98] and RRF[99] instruments to invest in the development of essential skills and ensure access to quality employment or internships for youth**, particularly through initiatives such as the Reinforced Youth Guarantee.[100]

In the current labour market context, Parliament also underlines that 'entrepreneurship is a tool to combat youth unemployment and social exclusion and stimulate innovation' and believes that 'the EUYS should support the creation of a suitable environment for youth entrepreneurship'; it is also in favour of strengthening the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme through European and national funding, notably by engaging with the chambers of commerce.[101]

Overall, **Parliament advocates for greater global coherence in youth policies**, emphasising, for example, that 'future European education policy must be built around a joined-up policy framework that ensures that relevant policy initiatives, such as the European Skills Agenda, the European Education Area,[102] the Digital Education Action Plan, the Youth Guarantee, and the Child Guarantee, are complementary and support clear overall policy aims'.[103]

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92 European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2021 on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU (2020/2261(INI)), P9_TA(2021)0430.

93 European Parliament resolution of 17 January 2024 on Cultural diversity and the conditions for authors in the European music streaming market, (2023/2054(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0020.

94 European Parliament resolution of 24 November 2022 on the European Year of Youth 2022 legacy (2022/2953(RSP)), P9_TA(2022)0424.

95 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

96 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

97 European Parliament resolution of 30 March 2020 on the European Skills Year 2023 (COM(2022) 526 – C9-0344/2022 – 2022/0326(COD)), P9_TA(2023)0089.

98 See European Social Fund.

99 See Recovery and Resilience Facility.

100 See N. Hanhkamper-Vandenbulcke et al., The implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee – Trends in EU Member States, impact, EU funding and governance, EPRS, European Parliament, December 2025.

101 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

102 European Parliament resolution of 19 May 2022 on establishing the European Education Area by 2025 – micro-credentials, individual learning accounts and learning for a sustainable environment (2022/2568(RSP)), P9_TA(2022)0217.

103 European Parliament resolution of 22 October 2020 on the future of European education in the context of COVID-19 (2020/2760(RSP)), P9_TA(2020)0282.

4.1.2. Eradicating increasing inequalities among young people

Parliament highlights that the COVID-19 pandemic intensified these challenges and particularly affected young people. The closing of school and extra-scholar activities, in particular, has deteriorated social development among many young people.[104] Moreover, 'the pandemic has not only exacerbated already existing inequalities, but has also created new ones by leaving children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds behind', thus 'increasing the risk of low learning outcomes and consequently of drop-out among learners with fewer opportunities'.[105] In response to this, Parliament calls on the Commission and the Member States to '**support and adequately fund small local cultural initiatives**, … **youth organisations and youth welfare institutions** to carry out the leisure, non-formal and informal learning activities that play an essential role in the development of young people […] including for young people with fewer opportunities or facing discrimination'; this is especially essential in rural and remote areas.[106]

Parliament also notes that 'the [COVID] crisis has impacted different education and training sectors to different extents, with higher education institutions often faring better thanks to existing infrastructure, resources and experience with digital tools'.[107] Similarly, Parliament underscores persistent inequalities in terms of access to education in the EU where 'segregation in education remains a significant issue'.[108] In a recent resolution from 17 June 2025 on strengthening rural areas in the EU through cohesion policy,[109] Parliament emphasises that 'rural areas have the highest share (12.6 %) of young people aged 15-29 not in employment, education or training (NEETs)'. The deterrent economic context has been most severe for young people from southern Member States and outermost regions, making one-size-fits-all solutions ineffective.[110] In light of this, Parliament calls on the Commission to develop 'targeted funding programmes to support young people, providing them with all the tools and resources they need to help them to access agricultural lands, jobs and business opportunities' in rural areas. It also stresses that such measures should include 'improved access to public services, educational and cultural facilities, access to housing, low-interest loans and … tax-related incentives to help young people build a stable future in line with their aspirations'. In the same resolution, Parliament calls for a more diversified rural economy by 'harnessing local potential, including in areas outside agriculture and tourism'.[111]

Beyond economic regional disparities, Parliament maintains that uneven recognition of youth qualifications and work across Member States hinders young people's integration in the labour

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104 European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2022 on the impact of COVID-19 closures of educational, cultural, youth and sports activities on children and young people in the EU (2022/2004(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0314.

105 European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2022 on the impact of COVID-19 closures of educational, cultural, youth and sports activities on children and young people in the EU (2022/2004(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0314.

106 European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2022 on the impact of COVID-19 closures of educational, cultural, youth and sports activities on children and young people in the EU (2022/2004(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0314; European Parliament resolution of 11 November 2021 on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach (2020/2243(INI)), P9_TA(2021)0452.

107 European Parliament resolution of 22 October 2020 on the future of European education in the context of COVID-19 (2020/2760(RSP)), P9_TA(2020)0282.

108 European Parliament resolution of 8 March 2022 on the role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism(2021/2057(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0057.

109 European Parliament resolution of 17 June 2025 on strengthening rural areas in the EU through cohesion policy (2024/2105(INI)), P10_TA(2025)0122.

110 European Parliament resolution of 17 June 2025 on strengthening rural areas in the EU through cohesion policy (2024/2105(INI)), P10_TA(2025)0122.

111 European Parliament resolution of 17 June 2025 on strengthening rural areas in the EU through cohesion policy (2024/2105(INI)), P10_TA(2025)0122.

market.[112] It also stresses that 'youth work and the education of youth workers are not recognised in all Member States, which results in discrepancies in the ESC [European Solidarity Corps] and in other youth programmes'.[113] It is thus essential that the European Commission and Member States work on 'increased recognition of youth workers' education, and non-formal education in order to **harmonise youth workers' realities across the EU**'.[114]

To combat such inequalities among young people, Parliament emphasises that EU strategies and programmes for youth and education 'should **include synergies with EU policies combating racism and xenophobia' and prioritise marginalised groups**.[115] For example, Parliament's resolution of 16 January 2024 resolution on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 emphasises that the programme should particularly **develop mobility opportunities for individuals with fewer opportunities and smaller organisations**.[116]

Parliament acknowledges that student – and, more generally, youth – mobility widens young people's perspectives and may help mitigate social inequalities. It is therefore essential that **mobility be made accessible** to all including young people from **non-formal educational backgrounds**.[117] To foster student mobility, Parliament calls for increased cooperation among EU educational and youth structures within a **fully integrated European Education Area**.[118]

4.1.3. Enhancing youth participation and active citizenship

Parliament points to the need to strengthen youth representation in decisionmaking processes. While Parliament recognises the 'positive achievements of the EUYS to ensure the participation of young people',[119] it also highlights that 'there is a lack of proximity to and understanding of the Union's democratic processes and mechanisms of participation among citizens, especially young people'.[120] To address this, Parliament calls for the future **EUYS to be more participatory, empowering** 'particularly those with fewer opportunities and those outside formal organisational structures' to '**play an active and critical role in public life**' and in **decisionmaking**.[121] Parliament believes this requires Member States and the European Commission to '**develop online and offline**

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112 European Parliament resolution of 21 November 2023 on the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme 2021-2027 (2023/2018(INI)), P9_TA(2023)0410.

113 European Parliament resolution of 21 November 2023 on the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme 2021-2027 (2023/2018(INI)), P9_TA(2023)0410.

114 European Parliament resolution of 21 November 2023 on the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme 2021-2027 (2023/2018(INI)), P9_TA(2023)0410.

115 European Parliament resolution of 6 April 2022 on the implementation of citizenship education actions (2021/2008(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0114.

116 European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 (2023/2002(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0007.

117 European Parliament resolution of 11 November 2021 on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach (2020/2243(INI)), P9_TA(2021)0452; European Parliament resolution of 19 May 2022 on establishing the European Education Area by 2025 – micro-credentials, individual learning accounts and learning for a sustainable environment (2022/2568(RSP)), P9_TA(2022)0217. Also, see, European Parliament resolution of 14 December 2022 on the implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations (2022/2047(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0444.

118 European Parliament resolution of 11 November 2021 on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach (2020/2243(INI)), P9_TA(2021)0452.

119 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

120 European Parliament resolution of 6 April 2022 on the implementation of citizenship education actions (2021/2008(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0114.

121 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

democracy tools – while taking into account the limitations and risks of social media' and ensuring '**national legal frameworks and adequate financial resources**' to support them. Parliament also underscores 'the importance of youth associations as a space enabling young people to grow and to develop a sense of active citizenship'.[122]

Furthermore, Parliament believes that '**increased social participation of young people can act as a stepping stone towards increased political participation**', which is key given the 'tendency of declining youth participation in national and local elections' and considering that such participation is a 'crucial step towards an increased feeling of European citizenship'.[123] To evaluate the young people's integration in the policymaking process and its impacts, Parliament highlights the **need for a fully-fledged Youth Test** 'to ensure the meaningful engagement, participation and commitment of young people in the preparation of all EU policies' and 'establish a systematic impact assessment on [the Commission's] proposals to ensure that they promote and reflect the needs of young people and to take mitigation measures if they have a negative impact'.[124] This same resolution 'stresses that the EU Youth Test must not merely become a bureaucratic check-list but it should engage people in a holistic way in order to achieve its aim' and considers that the EU Youth Test's 'outcomes should inform and be connected to already existing processes such as the **EU Youth Dialogue**'.[125]

4.1.4. Overcoming administrative burdens

Parliament acknowledges that the EUYS holds the keys to 'establishing a good base for fruitful and meaningful cooperation in the field of youth'[126] and enabling progress in the challenges young people face. Nevertheless, Parliament remarks that many programmes remain underused and have limitations and inherent obstacles that hinder their effectiveness, thus reducing the EUYS's overall impact. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening these programmes' bottom-up approach.[127] This will allow greater consideration of local realities, and increased awareness and understanding of the programmes themselves.[128]

Moreover, in its two resolutions of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the current Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027[129] and on 'the implementation of the current CERV programme 2021-2027 – Citizens' engagement and participation',[130] Parliament notes that the **administrative weight of procedures and delays in payment** of these programmes are 'particularly detrimental to small organisations and newcomers' and 'discourage the participation of less experienced applicants,

122 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

123 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

124 European Parliament resolution of 24 November 2022 on the European Year of Youth 2022 legacy (2022/2953(RSP)), P9_TA(2022)0424.

125 European Parliament resolution of 24 November 2022 on the European Year of Youth 2022 legacy (2022/2953(RSP)), P9_TA(2022)0424.

126 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

127 European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 (2023/2002(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0007.

128 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

129 European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 (2023/2002(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0007.

130 European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme 2021-2027 – citizens' engagement and participation (2023/2004(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0009.

including young creators'.[131] These challenges directly concern youth-supporting organisations, since many rely on volunteers, often young people themselves.

To remedy this situation, Parliament calls to **reduce administrative barriers and enhance communication about the strategy and its programmes**. This would strengthen cooperation with local and regional authorities, which should play a larger role in implementing the EUYS.[132] In addition, to better support beneficiaries, Parliament calls for **more adaptable tools and a streamlined, harmonised approach to EU youth initiatives**.[133] At the same time, Parliament warns against oversimplification, stressing the need to 'strike a balance between harmonised administrative management systems for all EU programmes, on the one hand, and the specific needs of different beneficiaries, on the other'.[134] It also cautions that 'streamlining and **simplification should not result in the reduction of financial and human resources** devoted to project monitoring and evaluation'.[135]

4.1.5. Increasing awareness of youth programmes and their effectiveness

In its resolution on the implementation of the EUYS, Parliament notes that 'despite the continuous efforts to communicate the opportunities that are supported by the various Union programmes, many young people still believe that they have limited access to them' and therefore 'urges the Commission to improve its communication tools'.[136] To reach young people more directly, Parliament highlights the need 'to **involve local stakeholders such as social partners, trade unions, civil society and youth organisations**'[137] and underlines the importance of national, regional and local authorities to reach young people, and **in particular NEETs**. In its resolution of 16 January 2024 on the CERV programme, Parliament argues that, to effectively engage local stakeholders and strengthen its communication, the Commission must share information about its strategy and programmes in **accessible language across all official EU languages**.[138] Effective communication should not only be strengthened between the Commission and Member States but also among Member States themselves, which should 'agree on **clear indicators and benchmarks in order to allow for monitoring of the progress** made', thereby enhancing capacity building.[139]

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131 European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027 (2023/2003(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0008.

132 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

133 European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027 (2023/2003(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0008; European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme 2021-2027 – citizens' engagement and participation (2023/2004(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0009.

134 European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027 (2023/2003(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0008.

135 European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027 (2023/2003(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0008.

136 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

137 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

138 European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme 2021-2027 – citizens' engagement and participation (2023/2004(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0009.

139 European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI)), P8_TA(2018)0240.

4.2. Selected CULT committee opinions

Since the ninth legislature, the CULT committee has prepared more than 70 opinions to advocate young people's needs and concerns in the work of other European Parliament committees. This section provides an overview of the key concerns raised in selected CULT opinions that have ensured that the objectives of EUYS are accounted for in Parliament's work. It concentrates on the opinions CULT prepared for some of the 225 parliamentary resolutions accounted for in the previous section. Notably, in its opinions, CULT further emphasises the persisting inequalities among young people, in particular regarding access to education. For instance, CULT highlights that all children must be provided with the tools to empowerment, 'regardless of who they are, where they live, their socioeconomic background, or any physical or mental disability they may have'.[140] In response to these issues, the CULT committee calls on the Commission to 'develop methodologies and guidelines that enhance the ability of its aid projects to reach all learners, in particular those who may be unable to access education, such as girls, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, **learners with special educational needs**'.[141] The CULT committee emphasises, in particular, discrimination against **refugee children** in accessing education, and 'calls for the compulsory education of refugee children in the school system of the host country to be made a **prerequisite for accessing EU funding in the field of migration**'.[142] In its opinions on recent related resolutions,[143] the CULT committee highlights the particular vulnerability of the Roma youth and young women of African, Middle Eastern, Latin-American and Asian descent.

To address these disparities, the CULT committee believes it is important that EU strategies and programmes clearly include young people in need. For instance, in its opinion on the resolution for the European Year of Skills 2023, CULT mentions the need to '**broaden the range of skills**' taken into account by the strategy so as to **include non-formal education**, so that 'everyone can participate in social and political life and that nobody is left behind'.[144] In its opinion on the resolution regarding quality traineeships in the Union, CULT emphasises that **traineeships should clearly support 'gender equality and be ensured to young people from vulnerable backgrounds** such as migrants and refugees, and hard-to-reach population groups, NEETs and young people coming from rural or isolated areas'.[145] In its opinion on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021, CULT also stresses the need for '**vigorous implementation by the Member States of the Youth Guarantee, and for the Sustainable Development Goals on quality education to be achieved**, so that everyone can

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140 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 3 May 2022 toward an EU strategy to promote education for children in the world: mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (2021/2209(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0138.

141 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 3 May 2022 toward an EU strategy to promote education for children in the world: mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (2021/2209(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0138.

142 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 3 May 2022 toward an EU strategy to promote education for children in the world: mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (2021/2209(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0138.

143 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2020 on the Implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies: combating negative attitudes towards people with Romani background in Europe (2020/2011(INI)), P9_TA(2020)0229; CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2022 on the intersectional discrimination in the EU: socio-economic situation of women of African, Middle-Eastern, Latin American and Asian descent (2020/2011(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0289.

144 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 30 March 2023 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Skills 2023 (COM(2022) 526 – C9-0344/2022 – 2022/0326(COD)), P9_TA(2023)0089.

145 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 14 June 2023 with recommendations to the Commission on quality traineeships in the Union (2020/2005(INL)), P9_TA(2023)0239.

afford quality and inclusive education [and] training ... in order to participate fully in society and join the labour market'.[146]

Finally, such improvements can only be met if the **necessary budgetary means** are allocated. This is notably what the CULT committee highlights in several of its opinions on yearly budget draft resolutions, MFF resolutions, RRF resolutions, and resolutions on specific programmes.[147] CULT emphasises that young people must remain an overarching priority for the EU budget, and that funding for programmes, such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, must be increased and youth NGOs supported, for instance through the redirection of RRF resources. In this context, CULT calls on the Commission and Member States to 'carry out thorough assessments of the data provided on the investments and reforms put in place by Member States in the fields of culture, media, education, youth and sports'.[148] The CULT committee also **cautions against the scattering of funds across projects with overly broad and proliferating objectives**. For instance, in its opinion on the resolution on the Council position on the draft general EU budget for 2022, CULT warns about the diversion of resources from the Creative Europe programme, which includes a significant youth component, toward initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus.[149]

CULT committee opinions also stress the need to **better consider the vulnerability of minors in EU legislations regulating digital tools**. In its 2023 opinion on Parliament's report on virtual worlds – opportunities, risks and policy implications for the single market, the CULT committee emphasises 'the special vulnerability of minors and young people' to 'addictive design and dark patterns in virtual environments', such as 'addiction, cyber sickness or disturbances in sleep patterns'.[150] In its 2025 opinion on Parliament's resolution relating to the protection of minors online, CULT calls on the Commission and Member States to take action by organising 'age-appropriate awareness campaigns in schools' and 'EU-funded training and awareness initiatives for parents, caregivers, teachers and educators, including on the effects of excessive use of social media, exposure to harmful content, and online addiction'. The same opinion highlights the need for targeted support for vulnerable children, 'including those from low-income backgrounds or with disabilities'.[151]

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146 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 11 March 2021 on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021 (2020/2244(INI)), P9_TA(2021)0084.

147 For more information see CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 21 October 2021 on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2022 (11352/2021 – C9-0353/2021 – 2021/0227(BUD)) P9_TA(2021)0432; CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 5 April 2022 on general guidelines for the preparation of the 2023 budget, Section III – Commission (2021/2226(BUI)), P9_TA(2022)0106; CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 18 October 2023 on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2024 (11565/2023 – C9-0336/2023 – 2023/0264(BUD)), P9_TA(2023)0367; CULT opinion European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2022 on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (2021/2251(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0264; CULT opinion European Parliament resolution of 3 October 2023 on the proposal for a mid-term revision of the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 (COM(2023)0337 – 2023/0201R(APP)), P9_TA(2023)0335.

148 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2022 on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (2021/2251(INI)), P9_TA(2022)0264.

149 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 21 October 2021 on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2022 (11352/2021 – C9-0353/2021 – 2021/0227(BUD)), P9_TA(2021)0432.

150 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 17 January 2024 on virtual worlds – opportunities, risks and policy implications for the single market (2022/2198(INI)), P9_TA(2024)0032.

151 CULT opinion on European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2025 on the protection of minors online (2025/2060(INI)), P10_TA(2025)0299.

5. Stakeholder consultations: Recommendations by young people on the future of Europe

This final chapter – in lieu of a conclusion – provides an overview of the main recommendations by young people, youth organisations and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) during the consultation that the rapporteur for the CULT implementation report on the EUYS held in person, on 11 November 2025. The chapter also takes into consideration the information that some organisations sent in writing after the consultation.[152] The following recommendations, which were raised by young people during this listening process, echo young people's concerns and suggestions presented over the last legislature (since 2019) in the diverse discussion forums held at EU level and in the Member States. These are ideas that young people hope can also feed into the drafting of the next EUYS.

1. Ensure that the European youth goals are aligned with the Commission work programme, as the European Youth Goals should not just accompany the EU agenda design but be integrated into specific EU policies. In a fast-paced turbulent world, the Commission should convene new EU Youth Dialogues to give young people across Europe the opportunity to revisit these 11 European Youth Goals, so that these goals reflect the new EU priorities and the new challenges the EU is facing (defence, housing, climate change). Therefore, the methodology whereby young people play a role as co-creators with the Commission should be retained.

2. Use young people's considerations early on in the Youth Checks and at every stage of policymaking. The Youth Check toolbox should not be a bureaucratic exercise; rather, 'quantitative assessments on intergenerational fairness' should be conducted,[153] and checks should not only be applied at the final stage of a legislative or strategic proposal. 'The interests and concerns of young people need to be considered at each stage of the policy-making cycle'.[154] Moreover, youth assessments must ensure that young people's vulnerabilities are adequately addressed in the development of EU policies and budgets.

3. Increase youth mainstreaming in EU policies by developing clear criteria for monitoring, and integrate mainstreaming in the conditionality of EU funds and instruments. In its opinion on the role of youth in rural development and in the context of the creation of the Rural Observatory, the EESC 'encourages a focus on collecting youth-centred data and the exchange of good practices'.[155] The EESC opinion also suggests that 'intergenerational budgeting be introduced as part of the conditionality for the new 2028-2034 cohesion policy programming cycle'.[156]

4. Provide more EU funding for youth programmes. This is particularly the case for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps in order to increase young people's participation and their active

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152 The participants in the consultations covered in this section are: Danish Youth Council, European Economic and Social Committee, European Union of Jewish Students, MOVIT, Centre for European Volunteering, European Youth Forum, two European Youth Event 2025 participants, Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Evangelischen Jugend in Deutschland e.V, and Bundesjugendring.

153 EESC opinion on Evaluating the impact of public policies in the medium and long term through intergenerational budgeting, SOC/827, 18 September 2025.

154 EESC opinion on Strengthening the EU Youth Dialogue follow-up via monitoring and transparency guidelines, SOC/795, 18 September 2024.

155 EESC opinion on the role of youth in rural development, NAT/893, 14 December 2023.

156 EESC opinion on Evaluating the impact of public policies in the medium and long term through intergenerational budgeting, SOC/827, 18 September 2025.

citizenship. In addition, more funding should go into research (Horizon programme) to support knowledge on climate and mental health issues, which are key concerns for young people.

5. Further strengthen youth participation in all phases of policy development and the decisionmaking processes. The Commission should include young people both in the design and implementation of EU strategies and programmes and in the methodology and assessments. The EESC encourages 'activating structured and meaningful youth participation as an integral part of budgetary planning and monitoring'.[157] For that to happen, young people should be actively involved in shaping the structure of exchange platforms such as EU Youth Dialogues, particularly by participating 'in the choice of topics and in preparation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and dissemination'.[158]

6. Ensure that youth participation is inclusive. This implies that youth participation must extend beyond urban areas to include rural youth, young people 'not in employment, education or training' (NEETs), those from marginalised and/or minority communities (e.g. Roma), those with disabilities, and those young people participating in mobility schemes (and thus away from their home base). Young people also ask that EU candidate countries participate in the EU Youth Dialogue on an equal footing with youth from EU Member States. Youth representatives emphasise that inclusive participation will help respond to the need to further examine and address young people's specific vulnerabilities, and provide targeted solutions to the EU's challenges.

7. Reinforce the process of youth participation and make its outcomes transparent and accountable. Youth participants call for better aligning the EU Youth Dialogues with the Commission work programme and ensuring that decisions and recommendations that emanate from the dialogues are taken consensually and are limited sufficiently to have policy impact. To ensure such oversight, the EESC proposes setting up guidelines to support the monitoring and dissemination of EU Youth Dialogue outcomes.[159] The Commission and the Member States should set up a clear feedback loop so that young people know from the beginning of the consultation process how their recommendations will be used in the policy design, and in particular, why their recommendations are not taken up. Linking to Recommendation 5, **follow-up activities and feedback to young participants would ensure that participation is meaningful**.

8. Boost volunteering to make it a key vector of employment. Young people ask for volunteering to be recognised as a vital tool for building solidarity and supporting democracy, inclusion and citizenship. They specifically urge that volunteering become a horizontal theme in Erasmus+ and a recognised pathway in employment opportunities.

9. Strengthen communication about EUYS-related programmes, as young people (particularly in remote and isolated communities) do not know about the EU's youth programmes. Even young people in schools that are part of Erasmus+ do not always receive the necessary information to be able to participate.

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157 EESC opinion on Evaluating the impact of public policies in the medium and long term through intergenerational budgeting, SOC/827, 18 September 2025; EESC opinion on Strengthening the EU Youth Dialogue follow-up via monitoring and transparency guidelines, SOC/795, 18 September 2024.

158 EESC opinion on Strengthening the EU Youth Dialogue follow-up via monitoring and transparency guidelines, SOC/795, 18 September 2024.

159 EESC opinion on Strengthening the EU Youth Dialogue follow-up via monitoring and transparency guidelines, SOC/795, 18 September 2024.

The EU institutions can play a central role in better addressing young Europeans' needs and in tangibly improving their quality of life. However, certain youth-related policies fall under national competence, with the European Commission playing a supporting role. Part II of this study examines in more detail the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy both at the EU level and in six selected Member States, focusing on the relevance of the 11 European Youth Goals, youth mainstreaming, youth participation and the EUYS's role in improving access to quality education and training.

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Annex 1 – Youth Policy Dialogues with each European Commissioner (10th legislature)

No.	Commissioner	Location	Date	Participants	Topics
New round of Youth Policy Dialogues					
1.	Jointly: Fisheries and Oceans (Costas Kadis) and Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport (Glenn Micallef)	Ayia Napa, Cyprus	19.4.2026 **(forthcoming)**	30 young people	Event titled 'Young Voices for the Ocean' to share opinions, concerns and recommendations on (i) attracting young people to the blue economy, (ii) youth perspectives on the future of fisheries and aquaculture, and (iii) underwater cultural heritage
2.	Defence Industry and Space (Andrius Kubilius)	Brussels, Belgium	27.1.2026 **(forthcoming)**	Students and young people	Discussion and live interactive poll at 'European Space Conference' on the EU's future priorities in space, defence and security, including dual-use technologies, resilience of space assets and independent access to space
3.	Defence Industry and Space (Andrius Kubilius)	Lisbon, Portugal	8.1.2026	Students and young researchers	Exchange focused on Europe's future challenges and opportunities in security, defence and space, including critical technologies, secure space communications, AI-enhanced intelligence and the EU Space Act
4.	Internal Affairs and Migration (Magnus Brunner)	Vienna, Austria	8.1.2026	6 youth panellists and about 110 pupils	Interactive discussion on Erasmus+ and opportunities for young people, migration, the growing threat of extremism in the EU, drug-related crime and its impact on young people, and expectations for the future of the EU

No.	Commissioner	Location	Date	Participants	Topics
5.	Defence Industry and Space (Andrius Kubilius)	Aalborg, Denmark	20.10.2025	20 university students; Q&A with 100 university students	Focused discussion on how space and defence together underpin EU security, resilience and strategic autonomy; EU space and defence ambitions; the role of innovation; youth engagement in shaping Europe's strategic future
6.	Internal Affairs and Migration (Magnus Brunner)	Bratislava, Slovakia	11.9.2025	'30 under 30' young professionals and students from Slovakia	Discuss and gather young people's insights, personal experiences and ideas on migration, borders and security, with a focus on Europe's internal security and Schengen Area
7.	Internal Affairs and Migration (Magnus Brunner)	Alpbach, Austria	28.8.2026	3 youth panellists and around 40 young talents	Interactive discussion on various topics: 30 years of Austria in the EU, security threats and the rising risk of extremism in the EU, and the opportunities and challenges of migration
8.	Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport (Glenn Micallef)	Brussels, Belgium	16.9.2025	14 young people from across Europe	Dialogue on the impact of cyberbullying on young people's daily lives, effects on their mental/physical wellbeing and social interactions, and how EU policies/programmes can better protect youth from cyberbullying
9.	Jointly: Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport (Glenn Micallef) and Health and Animal Welfare (Olivér Várhelyi) with **Peter Agius (EPP, Malta)**	Brussels, Belgium	2.7.2025	10 young people	Dialogue on 'Tackling Diabetes Together – Empowering young people to fight diabetes through awareness, prevention, and action', focusing on the effect of diabetes on young people's lives and EU policies and programmes to promote a healthier lifestyle among young people
10.	Fisheries and Oceans (Costas Kadis)	Kittilä, Finland	26.6.2025	14 young people from the Arctic and Europe	EU Arctic Forum, Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue, and Arctic Youth Dialogue to exchange with youth on their perceptions on the EU and its Arctic policy

No.	Commissioner	Location	Date	Participants	Topics
11.	Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy (Executive Vice-President (EVP) Henna Virkkunen)	Gdansk, Poland	18.6.2025	International students and young Europeans	'Digital Summit' to discuss the impact of social media and technologies on the lives of youth
12.	Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport (Glenn Micallef)	Strasbourg, France	13.6.2025	50 young people (9 000 young people at EYE)	In the context of the European Youth Event (EYE), exchanged on 'Continuing the Discussion: Youth Perspectives on EU Priorities'
13.	Internal Affairs and Migration (Magnus Brunner)	Vienna, Austria	9.5.2025	About 125 students from Viennese schools	'30 Years of Austria in the European Union: What Opportunities Does the EU Offer for My Future?'
14.	Internal Affairs and Migration (Magnus Brunner)	Vorarlberg, Austria	8.5.2025	About 120 students from various schools in Vorarlberg	Exchange on Commissioner's current priorities, the main challenges facing the EU, the role of a Commissioner within the EU framework, the changing security landscape and the impact of migration in the Vorarlberg region
15.	Agriculture and Food (Christophe Hansen)	Brussels, Belgium	7.5.2025	22 young professionals and students	Exchange on the evolving future of agriculture, food systems and rural life; focus on the needs, aspirations, and barriers faced by young people entering or remaining in the farming sector
The first 100 days of the von der Leyen Commission II					
16.	Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy (EVP Henna Virkkunen)	Espoo, Finland	10.3.2025	International students and young European voices at Aalto University	Exchange of views on the role and challenges of social media in shaping democracy and its impact on young people

No.	Commissioner	Location	Date	Participants	Topics
17.	Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection (Michael McGrath)	Dublin, Ireland	10.3.2025	30 young people coming from 18 different EU countries	Exchange on the democratic empowerment of young people and address the most severe risks to democracy in the EU
18.	Startups, Research and Innovation (Ekaterina Zaharieva)	Warsaw, Poland	10.3.2025	30 young people from Poland	'How do young people envision the cities of the future?' to discuss their role in transforming urban spaces into sustainable, innovative, and inclusive environments
19.	Mediterranean (Dubravka Suica)	Zagreb, Croatia	7.3.2025	30 young participants (Croatian and international students, incl. from the region)	Exchange on demography and youth, with a focus on the right to stay; employment, income and wealth; and housing
20.	Cohesion and Reforms (EVP Raffaele Fitto)	Vignola, Italy	7.3.2025	Young people (including high school students) from Emilia-Romagna	Exchange on young people's perceptions about the EU's impact on the local and regional life and their involvement in EU affairs and policymaking
21.	Prosperity and Industrial Strategy (EVP Stéphane Séjourné)	Paris, France	7.3.2025	Young people and students	Exchange on 'Sustainable prosperity: building a competitive future together', addressing such issues as industrial and climate policies, entrepreneurship, the EU's economic resilience
22.	Sustainable Transport and Tourism (Apostolos Tzitzikostas)	Brussels, Belgium	6.3.2025	20 young participants from across the EU	Exchange on 'Shaping the Future: Expectations and Needs of Young Travellers and Job Seekers', including on sustainable urban mobility and innovation

No.	Commissioner	Location	Date	Participants	Topics
23.	International Partnerships (Jozef Síkela)	Brussels, Belgium	6.3.2025	23 members (1 online) of the Youth Sounding Board for International Partnerships	'Youth and Global Gateway – Maximising impact' to discuss the intersection of youth and Global Gateway and its impact on economic development, digitalisation, transport, and energy, in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Asia–Pacific region
24.	Foreign Affairs and Security and Defence (HR/VP Kaja Kallas)	Brussels, Belgium	6.3.2025	25 participants aged 19–30, from the EU and abroad	Exchange on 'Ally with Youth in EU Foreign Policy' to discuss youth engagement in EU foreign policy and global challenges and propose ways to integrate youth voices in EU foreign policy
25.	Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness (EVP Roxana Mînzatu)	Brussels, Belgium	6.3.2025	16 young participants	'How can we ensure equal access to quality jobs and skills for everyone?' to share experiences, challenges, and ideas on creating quality jobs and addressing skill mismatches during the transition from education to the labour market
26.	Financial Services and the Savings and Investments Union (Maria Luís Albuquerque)	Brussels, Belgium	4.3.2025	15 young Europeans	Dialogue on 'The Future of Finance' to collect views on how on financial services can better meet the needs of their generation focus on: saving, investing and financial literacy; digital finance and innovation; and sustainable finance
27.	Clean, Just, and Competitive Transition (EVP Teresa Ribera)	Brussels, Belgium	4.3.2025	14 young participants	Dialogue on 'Empowering Young Talent and Improving Gender Balance in the EU' to discuss the impact on youth of the Commission's policies for a clean, just and competitive transition
28.	Economy and Productivity, Implementation and Simplification (Valdis Dombrovskis)	Brussels, Belgium	4.3.2025	17 young Europeans from 17 EU Member States	Dialogue on the economic priorities for the new European Commission mandate

No.	Commissioner	Location	Date	Participants	Topics
29.	Jointly: Defence Industry and Space (Andrius Kubilius) and Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport (Glenn Micallef)	Brussels, Belgium	4.3.2025	12 youth representatives (aged 18-30) from 11 European countries	Dialogue on 'Young Voices in European Defence: Fostering Dialogue and Understanding' explored the role of young people in shaping Europe's peace and security landscape, and the importance of cooperation in addressing emerging challenges
30.	Internal Affairs and Migration (Magnus Brunner)	Vienna, Austria	3.3.2025	5 youth panellists and around 150 pupils	Dialogue on '30 years of Austria in the EU, Schengen, drugs and their effects on young people, the growing threat of extremism in the EU and migration'
31.	Fisheries and Oceans (Costas Kadis)	Brussels, Belgium	3.3.2025	15 young people, aged 18-30	Dialogue on 'Future Ocean Pact – Young Voices for the Ocean', focusing on EU ocean policies (e.g. forthcoming European Ocean Pact), and their impact on youth (today and in the future)
32.	Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management (Hadja Lahbib)	Brussels, Belgium	26.2.2025	23 young people from 14 EU Member States, plus Ukraine and Türkiye	Dialogue on 'Citizen Risk Awareness, Disaster and Health Preparedness' to collect youth views that will contribute to shaping the EU's enlargement policy and programming
33.	Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy (Jessika Roswall)	Solna, Sweden	21.2.2025	Over 400 high-school students (aged 16-18) onsite and 300 remotely from 12 schools in Sweden	Exchange of views on EU environmental policies, in addition to security, organised crime and the future of the EU
34.	Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration (Piotr Serafin)	Warsaw, Poland	18.2.2025	25 young Europeans (mostly Polish, but	Dialogue on 'Future EU priorities: What should the European Union be involved in?' to gather young people's perspectives in view of the next MFF

No.	Commissioner	Location	Date	Participants	Topics
				also Ukrainians and Armenians)	
35.	Energy and Housing (Dan Jørgensen)	Brussels, Belgium	18.2.2025	30 young participants from across the EU	Exchange on 'EU Energy Policies: Shaping a clean, sustainable and fair energy future', including on the just transition and inclusion of vulnerable groups, renewables, grids and infrastructure, skills and education, net-zero standards, energy financing, and the integration of electricity market
36.	Jointly: Enlargement (Marta Kos) and Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport (Glenn Micallef)	Nova Gorica, Slovenia	8.2.2025	40 young participants from the EU, the Western Balkans and EU neighbourhood	Dialogue on 'Youth Enlargement Dialogue 2025: Breaking Barriers, Bridging Borders, Growing Together', focusing on empowering mobility for work and study, advancing regional integration, and peace and reconciliation
37.	Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth (Wopke Hoekstra)	Brussels, Belgium	6.2.2025	20 young people from across Europe	Exchange of views on the future of EU climate policy, just transition and skills for the clean transition, and taxation policy contribution to a green, competitive, and fair Europe
38.	Health and Animal Welfare (Olivér Várhelyi)	Brussels, Belgium	4.2.2025	30 young people (aged 20-30) from across the EU	Dialogue on 'Europe's Beating Cancer Plan' to create a better understanding of the lived experience of young cancer survivors and professionals
39.	Trade and Economic Security; Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency (Maroš Šefčovič)	Natolin, Poland	3.2.2025	12 young students from 9 different countries in Europe and its neighbourhood	Dialogue on 'EU trade and economic security – What is at stake for young Europeans?' to discuss the objectives for the EU trade policy, and how to achieve them while securing a greener and more digital long-term future

No.	Commissioner	Location	Date	Participants	Topics
40.	Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture, and Sport (Glenn Micallef)	Athens, Greece	28.1.2025	28 young people from diverse backgrounds	Dialogue on 'All in: Promoting Inclusiveness through Sports and Culture' to discuss access to culture and cultural heritage for young people and the role of sport as a vehicle for inclusion, solidarity and social cohesion
41.	Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness (EVP Roxana Mînzatu)	Warsaw, Poland	20.1.2025	18 young people from diverse backgrounds	Dialogue on '#True #Fake – Unmasking the True in a Digital World', focusing on building resilience to disinformation online by promoting digital and media literacy through education
42.	Internal Affairs and Migration (Magnus Brunner)	Perl, Germany	6.12.2024	30 students (aged 16–18)	Exchange of views on the present and the future of the Schengen area, security, and migration
43.	Agriculture and Food (Christophe Hansen)	Brussels, Belgium	11.12.2024	Environmental youth organisations	Discussion on 'Building together the future of farming, food and rural areas'; focus on young people's perceptions of the economic viability of the sector, the sustainability of the food system, and generational renewal in farming and rural areas

Source: European Union, Youth Policy Dialogues; European Commission, Youth Policy Dialogue with Commissioner Brunner on Schengen, security, and migration, DG Migration and Home Affairs; European Commission, Building together the future of farming, food and rural areas, DG Agriculture and Rural Development.

The implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027 at EU level and in selected Member States: Assessing policy coherence and mainstreaming

Part II

At the request of the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), this study supports the European Parliament's implementation report on the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) 2019–2027 that is prepared by the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT). Conducted as part of EPRS's European Implementation Assessment, it examines EUYS implementation at the EU level and in six selected Member States, drawing on the most recent evidence from a literature review, stakeholder interviews, and a survey. The study first analyses the 11 European Youth Goals and their implementation and relevance, and then assesses the extent to which EUYS has promoted youth mainstreaming across policy areas. It further explores youth participation, focusing on social inclusion, equality, and young people with fewer opportunities (case study 1), and examines the EUYS's role in improving access to quality education and training (case study 2). It concludes with recommendations to enhance the EUYS, thereby informing its update and future implementation beyond 2027.

EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service

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Executive summary

The **overall aim** of the study is to support the European Parliament's implementation report on the EU Youth Strategy (hereinafter, EUYS) 2019-2027, prepared by the Committee on Culture and Education. This study, which is part of the European Implementation Assessment that the European Parliamentary Research Service is drafting, assesses the implementation of the EUYS at the EU level and in six selected Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal), since 2019. It draws on the most recent evidence collected through a literature review, stakeholder interviews, and a stakeholder survey.

The research project has the following objectives: to assess the policy coherence of the EUYS with a particular focus on the **11 European Youth goals** (EYGs); to assess the **mainstreaming** of the EUYS, aiming to ensure joined-up implementation across policy areas; to analyse **youth participation** in six Member States, with a focus on inclusion and equality of youth (case study 1); to analyse the EUYS' role and linkages with improving access to **quality education and training** for young people (case study 2). The study follows the key evaluation criteria aligned with the Better Regulation Guidelines (effectiveness, relevance, coherence, and efficiency).

Key findings

Effectiveness

EYGs implementation varies across the EU level, as illustrated in the six selected Member States, due to their non-binding nature, differing national priorities, and the lack of an EUYS monitoring system. While some Governments at the Member State level align their respective youth strategies more closely with the EYGs, in others, the influence is weaker. Furthermore, **since the European Year of Youth 2022, youth mainstreaming has advanced through new instruments implemented** by the European Commission (EC), such as the EU Youth Coordinator, Youth Check, the internal EC Youth Correspondents network, and the external Youth Stakeholders group. **Youth mainstreaming across policy areas remains fragmented, with progress in education and training and employment, but less in health, environment and sustainability, and defence, among others.**

The **EUYS, through the EU Youth Dialogue, Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, has strengthened youth inclusion and participation,** with increased representation of youth with fewer opportunities. Yet rural youth, those with migrant backgrounds, and not in employment, education or training, and non-organised youth, remain underrepresented. The EUYS and its instruments have supported **access to quality education and training** at the EU level and in certain Member States, though the impact remains uneven where structural barriers in formal education persist. **Youth work and volunteering further build young people's skills, confidence, civic identity, and democratic engagement,** but their potential is hindered by weak institutional recognition, unstable funding, and unequal access across six Member States examined in this study.

Relevance

A dedicated EU-level youth policy coordination framework remains essential post-2027. The **core EUYS areas (Engage, Connect, Empower) embody the essence of youth policy and remain relevant** and foundational. Safeguarding civic space and civil society, competitiveness, skills, democracy, EU citizenship and values are among the topics stakeholders believe should be further prioritised post-2027. Furthermore, EYGs only partially address new cross-cutting issues that have emerged since the adoption of the EUYS in 2018. The EUYS captures the post-pandemic realities, climate challenges, but issues surrounding defence and security, peace, radicalisation, affordable housing, the long-term impact of digitalisation, and mental health, emerge as important.

Efficiency

At the EU-level, the EUYS and its instruments do not create significant additional burdens beyond their implementation costs. However, **at the Member State level, Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps activities remain challenging** due to complex applications, reporting demands, and financial constraints. In some Member States analysed in this study, stakeholders face **burdens linked to national conditions, such as unstable funding for youth organisations, which adds pressure to the implementation of EUYS** at both national and local levels. In most Member States analysed in this study, local youth and youth work organisations face insufficient and inconsistent funding, often compounded by restrictive eligibility criteria.

Coherence

The EUYS is internally coherent with the EUYS Work Plans and with the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, and it is also externally coherent with other EU strategies, although some minor misalignments remain. The EUYS Work Plans are seen as an important instrument, helpful in facilitating the implementation of the EYGs, giving a consolidated view of EU-level priorities; however, only a limited number and types of stakeholders are aware of the Work Plans. Horizontal priorities are aligned among the EUYS, Erasmus+, and the European Solidarity Corps, though weaknesses remain in aligning their practical implementation. At the EU level, the EUYS and EYGs align well with other cross-sectoral or sectoral EU strategies, but less so in areas that have become more relevant since 2019 (e.g., affordable housing shortages, peace and security).

Recommendations

Recommendations 1–5 are intended to begin implementation within the short-term horizon (0–2 years), while recommendations 6–10 set out medium-term actions (3-5 years).

Recommendation 1. The European Commission should develop a hybrid youth coordination framework post-2027, combining strategic direction with sectoral accountability. The next EUYS cycle should maintain a clear overarching vision (e.g., Engage, Connect, Empower) while embedding youth mainstreaming actions into sector-specific plans across the European Commission's Directorates-General (DG) with dedicated funding. The DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) should consult its Youth Network, EU and national youth organisations, and Member State authorities to identify priority policy areas for mainstreaming.

Recommendation 2. The European Commission should review and update the EYGs to reflect emerging issues (e.g., peace and security, housing, democracy, digitalisation, education to work transitions). Broad consultations with youth organisations, young people (including non-organised youth), and researchers should guide this process. DG EAC should integrate these themes into the final EU Youth Dialogue cycles to ensure continuity toward the post-2027 EUYS.

Recommendation 3. The European Commission should assess how to empower further and resource the EU Youth Coordinator. This includes assessing their mandate and budget, and enhancing horizontal coordination across DGs and other EU institutions. The EU Youth Coordinator and their team should act as a central hub linking youth-related initiatives within the European Commission and supporting Member States in establishing similar coordination structures.

Recommendation 4. The European Commission and Member States should reinforce mechanisms for youth participation and ensure that youth input is used in policymaking. The European Commission should strengthen reporting on how the results of the EU Youth Dialogue, Youth Check, and Youth Dialogues with Commissioners inform policy. Member States should ensure that Youth Dialogue results are publicly available and, similarly, used in policy design.

Recommendation 5. The European Commission and Member States should widen inclusion, diversity, and visibility in the EU Youth Dialogue, Erasmus+, and the European Solidarity Corps by reaching underrepresented groups (e.g., rural youth, youth not in education, training or employment, ethnic minorities, non-organised youth). Broader outreach, decentralised opportunities, and stronger youth work should be expanded to reach non-organised youth.

Recommendation 6. The European Commission, in collaboration with youth policy researchers, should revise the EU Youth Dashboard and its indicators to develop a robust monitoring and evaluation system for the EUYS post-2027. Updated situation and policy indicators should track changing realities and measure progress against EYGs. The EUYS Work Plans should be updated with clearer language and improved outreach.

Recommendation 7. The European Commission and Member States should strengthen youth mainstreaming by building institutional capacity, clarifying roles, and evaluating new tools. Following pilots of tools such as the Youth Check and Youth Dialogues with Commissioners, the European Commission should improve and integrate them into the post-2027 EUYS. The Member State authorities should systematically include youth in the policy design cycle via dedicated mainstreaming tools (e.g., youth checks, advisory boards).

Recommendation 8. The European Commission and Member States should simplify Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps procedures and support organisations participating for the first time. The administrative complexity should be simplified, while National Agencies should provide further technical assistance to organisations participating for the first time and avoid creating additional administrative burdens.

Recommendation 9. Member States should continue strengthening the recognition and professionalisation of youth work and non-formal/informal learning. The European Commission and partners (e.g., Council of Europe) should encourage Member States to recognise youth work through qualification frameworks, training standards, and accreditation, support the European Youth Work Agenda's implementation at national level, and promote such tools as Youthpass and Europass.

Recommendation 10. The EU and Member States should improve communication, visibility, and awareness of the EUYS at all levels, particularly among less-involved stakeholders (e.g., local authorities, small non-governmental organisations, non-organised youth). The European Commission, other EU bodies, and Member States should enhance the sharing of best practices.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BG	Bulgaria
BIK	Better Internet for Kids
CERV	Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values
CULT	Committee on Culture and Education
DE	Germany
DEAR	Development Education and Awareness Raising
DG	Directorate-General
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG ENV	Directorate-General for Environment
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG MARE	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DG MENA	Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf
DG SANTE	Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Education Area
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EP	European Parliament
EPRS	European Parliamentary Research Service
ESC	European Solidarity Corps

ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
ESN	Erasmus Student Network
EU	European Union
EUYC	European Union Youth Coordinator
EUYD	European Union Youth Dialogue
EUYS	European Union Youth Strategy
EYE	European Youth Event
EYG	European Youth Goal
EYY2022	European Year of Youth 2022
FNAP	Future National Activities Planner
HR	Croatia
ID	Identity Document
IPA III	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (third generation)
IT	Information Technology
ITA	Italy
KA	Key Action
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Others
LT	Lithuania
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MV	Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
NAP	National Action Plan
NE	National Expert
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRW	North Rhine-Westphalia
PRT	Project Team
PT	Portugal
SES	Socio-economic Status
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UN	United Nations
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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1. Introduction

The **overall aim** of the study is to support the European Parliament's (EP) implementation report on the EU Youth Strategy (hereinafter, EUYS) 2019-2027, prepared by the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT). This study, which is part of the European Implementation Assessment that the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) is drafting, assesses the implementation of the EUYS at the European Union (EU) level and in six selected Member States since 2019, based on the most recent evidence collected. In particular, the study research project had the following **objectives,** consistent with the Technical Specifications provided by the EP:

1. To assess the **policy coherence** of the EUYS with a particular focus on the 11 European Youth goals (EYGs) and their implementation.
2. To examine how effectively the **youth** have been **mainstreamed** across the EU and Member States, assessing both the integration of youth perspectives across policy areas and the use of EUYS instruments for youth mainstreaming, including barriers.
3. To analyse **youth participation** at the EU level and the selected Member States, with a particular focus on social inclusion, equality of youth, and youth with fewer opportunities (case study 1).
4. To analyse the EUYS' role and linkages with improving access to **quality education and training** for young people (case study 2).

The study also provides specific recommendations for improving the EUYS in view of its update post-2027.

The **geographical scope** includes the EU and six selected Member States: Bulgaria (BG), Croatia (HR), Germany (DE), Italy (ITA), Lithuania (LT), and Portugal (PT). When referring to 'Member States', the study refers to six analysed Member States; when referring to 'EU-level', it refers to the EU as a whole. To grasp the complexity of the issues at stake in two large Member States (DE and ITA), the analysis includes examples from the sub-national level as well. For DE, in addition to the federal level, two federal states have been engaged: Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania (MV) and North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). For ITA, in addition to national-level examples, examples from the Campania region are provided. The Member States were chosen to reflect a diverse range of levels of youth policy implementation, taking into account selected measurable indicators (e.g., level of youth participation), presented in Annex 1. This approach was chosen to gather insights from both high-achieving Member States and those that have yet to develop or implement their youth policies fully. Additionally, Member States were selected to ensure geographical representation within the EU and to achieve a balanced mix in terms of the Member State size.

The **scope** of the analysis was the following:

- In this study, 'youth' or 'young people' refers to people aged between 15 and 29 as per the commonly used definition in the EU for statistical purposes.[1] To note, six selected Member States use different age brackets to define 'youth', resulting in deviations from this definition:[2] 15-29 (BG); 15-30 (HR); no uniform legal definition (DE); not regulated by law (ITA); 14-29 (LT); no uniform legal definition, range from 12-30 (PT).
- Council of Europe definitions for 'youth participation' and 'youth work' are used in this study, which are consistent with the understanding and application of these

[1] Eurostat, Youth population on 1 January by sex, age and country of birth, website.

[2] European Commission, Youth Wiki, website.

terminologies in the EU.[3] 'Youth mainstreaming' is defined based on the recent European Commission's (EC) 2024 study.[4] See Annex 1 for all relevant definitions.
- When referring to youth with 'fewer opportunities', a wide understanding (e.g., in terms of social and economic reasons) consistent with Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) guidelines is used.[5]
- Where relevant, links to other policy areas (e.g., education, employment) are made, as well as to new cross-cutting issues (e.g., housing, digital, green transition).
- The part of the study related to objective no. 4, formal, informal, and non-formal education and training, will be considered. For formal education, examples from secondary education, vocational education and training (VET), and higher education, where possible, are provided.

Time frame. The analysis covers the period from 2019 to 2025, using data collected on the EUYS implementation during that period. Older information, prior to 2019, is used where relevant (e.g., for context or background). Additionally, any pertinent, forward-looking insights are provided, which may be valuable for the next EUYS post-2027.

Scope and research limitations. The study has a broad scope and a short study timeline (four months), as well as differences in the quality and availability of primary and secondary data between Member States. The Member States examined in this report serve to illustrate specific aspects of the analysis rather than to provide an exhaustive, systematic comparison for each research question. As a result, not all six Member States appear in each thematic section, as data may be unavailable or the case may not offer sufficiently relevant insight. In some Member States (e.g., ITA, PT), national authorities were not responsive to interview or survey requests (see Annex 6), which potentially lack of interest in the EUYS. Several interviewees (e.g., in HR, ITA, DE) provided their answers in writing due to lack of time to participate in an online interview. Additionally, many engaged stakeholders from the Member States lacked a comprehensive overview of the EUYS instruments or EUYS as a whole. Time limitations prevented a comprehensive analysis of each EUYS instrument and of youth mainstreaming across every policy area; thus, the areas that emerged as core during stakeholder consultations are analysed. Similar limitations can be seen regarding the depth of the analysis in DE and ITA.

Research methods used: desk research, semi-structured interviews, and a survey, all conducted at both the EU-level and in the six selected Member States (see in Annex 1 for methodological details). The interviews and survey involved three main groups of stakeholders: public authorities/officials responsible for youth policy; civil society organisations; individual youth policy experts and/or researchers. The study follows the key evaluation criteria aligned with the Better Regulation Guidelines, listed below and tailored for this study.[6] The EUYS added value is outside the scope of this analysis. Study questions, consistent with the Technical Specifications, were developed for each criterion (see Annex 2). Evaluation criteria used in the study at the EU and Member State level are:

- **Effectiveness** of the measures taken to achieve the EYGs, youth participation, and improve access to education and training by looking at the EUYS instruments, examples of actions and results.

[3] Source: European Union-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, Glossary on youth, website.

[4] European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks – A comparative overview*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

[5] Source: European Commission, Participant with fewer opportunities, website.

[6] Commission Staff Working Document Better Regulation Guidelines, SWD(2021) 305, 2021.

- **Relevance** of the EUYS by considering whether and to what extent EYGs address the new cross-cutting issues of the EU, including youth concerns about the future (e.g., climate change).
- **Efficiency** of the EUYS in terms of any burdens (e.g., financial, human) created for particular stakeholder groups in relation to the study objectives on youth participation and quality education and training.[7]
- **Coherence** refers to the extent to which the EUYS Work Plans facilitated the implementation of the EYGs, and the extent to which programmes (Erasmus+, ESC) work together to fulfil the objectives of the EUYS (internal coherence). It also includes the coherence of the EYGs with other EU policies and strategies (external coherence).

The report consists of seven Chapters, including the Introduction:

- **EUYS 2019–2027 background** of the study presents a brief overview of the EUYS aims and objectives, its implementation mechanisms, and key stakeholders involved.
- **Policy coherence of the EUYS** examines how the EYGs are implemented, including those identified as core, their implementation progress, relevance to new cross-cutting issues, and the EUYS coherence with the Work Plans and programmes.
- **Youth mainstreaming** presents the extent to which EUYS facilitated youth mainstreaming among different policy areas and reflects on related barriers.
- **Case study 1. Youth participation** analyses the extent to which EUYS promoted youth inclusion and equality, with a focus on youth with fewer opportunities.
- **Case study 2. Quality education and training** examine EUYS contributions and support in ensuring equal access to education and training for young people.
- **Conclusions and recommendations** build on the analysis presented in the Chapters above, drawing the main conclusions and recommendations for the final years of the EUYS implementation as well as its successor post-2027.

[7] Due to the study's limitations, no cost-benefit analysis is carried out to assess the efficiency of the EU intervention. Instead, the research questions related to efficiency focus on identifying significant burdens placed on stakeholders that go beyond the usual EUYS implementation costs.

2. EUYS 2019-2027 background

This Chapter provides a brief overview of the EUYS 2019-2027, setting the context of this study. The EUYS 2019-2027 is a **non-binding framework for EU youth policy cooperation**, adopted by the Council of the EU in 2018.[8] It builds on the EUYS 2010-2018, which was developed in the context of the global financial crisis and the subsequent great recession, along with their negative impacts, such as youth unemployment.[9] Thus, the main focus of the previous EUYS was on employment, education, and training, while other areas, such as youth participation, were prioritised less, although all crucial policy fields were represented.[10] The evaluation of the EUYS 2010-2018 showed that it was successful in reaching youth; however, it also revealed limited inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities. The EUYS 2019-2027 is expected to be more flexible and inclusive, to account for the globalisation, increasing digitalisation, geopolitical and economic challenges.

Recognising this, the **main aim of the EUYS 2019-2027 is to tackle existing and upcoming challenges faced by youth** in Europe.[11] The EUYS has four **general objectives**: 1) increase young individuals' autonomy and capacity to take control of and to navigate their lives; 2) encourage active citizenship; 3) improve policy impact in various areas, especially in employment, education, health, and social inclusion; and 4) end youth poverty and discrimination. The EUYS is established around three core areas: **Engage, Connect, and Empower**.[12] The Engage area aims to increase young people's civic, economic, cultural, and political participation in meaningful activities. This is supported by initiatives such as the EU Youth Dialogue (EUYD), which facilitates communication between youth and stakeholders, and the EU Youth Coordinator (EUYC), responsible for implementing the youth's perspective into measurable policy actions. The Connect area refers to youth mobility (e.g., via Erasmus+, the ESC) and to connections and exchanges of experiences. The Empower area encourages youth to lead their own lives through active engagement in quality youth work, for example, through the European Youth Work Agenda.[13] **11 non-binding EYGs** were developed during the 6th EUYD cycle (2017-2018) with young people and decision-makers, highlighting key cross-sectoral areas needing greater focus for Europe's future (Figure 1).

8 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 18 December 2018 on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C456/01).

9 Mazurek, J., The Evaluation of Recession Magnitudes in EU Countries during the Great Recession 2008–2010, Review of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2016.

10 European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and ICF Consulting Services Limited, Evaluation of the EU youth strategy and the Council recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU – Final report, executive summary, Publications Office, 2016.

11 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 18 December 2018 on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C456/01).

12 Ibid.

13 Council of the EU, Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01), 2020.

Figure 1 – 11 European Youth Goals (EYGs)



Source: Youth Goals, website.

The EUYS is implemented through three-year work cycles. The priorities of each cycle are set in the **Work Plans**, spanning several Council Presidency Trios.[14] Each Work Plan presents priorities and actions, focusing on selected EYGs. The EUYS is operationalised through at least **11 instruments.** For example, the EUYC, who works with various stakeholders across policy areas. Moreover, the EUYD increases the youth's voice in EUYS implementation and follow-up. Other recent instruments and initiatives, relevant to the objectives of this study, such as the Youth Check, the EU Youth Stakeholders Group, and the EC's Youth Network, are an integral part of the EUYS (see Annex 7 for a full list). The implementation of the EUYS is supported through various **programmes, including Erasmus+, ESC, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), and others** (e.g., Horizon Europe, InvestEU, EU4Health).[15] Moreover, the **key stakeholders** of the EUYS include the EU institutions and policymakers, such as the EP, the EC, the Council of the EU, and international organisations, such as the Council of Europe, as well as the EU Member States, their local and regional authorities, National Agencies of Erasmus+ and ESC, youth councils, youth organisations, youth workers, researchers or civil society actors, and, most importantly – youth themselves.[16]

14 European Union, EU Youth Strategy, *European Youth Portal*, website.

15 European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022–2024)*, SWD(2025) 73, 2025.

16 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 18 December 2018 on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C456/01).

3. Policy coherence of the EUYS

Key findings

It is challenging to measure the implementation of the European Youth Goals (EYGs) due to a lack of a monitoring system. As the EU Youth Strategy is not binding, it does not directly influence national strategies in some of the Member States examined in this study. Thus, the implementation of the EYGs has been uneven.

The EYGs most focused on in the six Member States examined in this study include EYG3 (Inclusive Societies), EYG5 (Mental Health and Wellbeing), and EYG9 (Space and Participation for All). At the EU-level, EGY1 (Connecting EU with Youth), EYG3 (Inclusive Societies), EYG6 (Moving Rural Youth Forward), EYG7 (Quality Employment for All), EYG8 (Quality Learning), EYG9 (Space for Democracy and Participation, and EYG10 (Sustainable Green Europe) have all received the most focus.

EYGs set the theme for each EU Youth Dialogue cycle, enabling consistent consultations with young people, ensuring the EYGs are prioritised. However, the selection of which EYGs to focus on is made by the Council Trio Presidency based on the Work Plans, meaning the choice is not solely based on the priorities of young people.

The EYGs have only partially addressed new cross-cutting issues which have emerged since their creation. While issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in climate and environmental disasters are addressed to some extent, other issues, such as security, radicalisation, and affordable housing, are not directly addressed by the EYGs.

European Union Youth Strategy Work Plans support the implementation of the EYGs and provide visibility on EU-level priorities, but they remain little known among many stakeholders in Member States. The EU Youth Strategy, Erasmus+, and the European Solidarity Corps are broadly aligned and act as the main drivers of national implementation, though some minor operational misalignments persist. Overall, the EU Youth Strategy and EYGs fit well within wider EU policy, but alignment is weaker in newer cross-cutting areas that have emerged since their creation.

This Chapter presents key findings based on desk research, stakeholder interviews, and a survey. It first focuses on the EYGs, which of them emerged as core, and what progress has been made towards each EYG (section 3.1). It then discusses the relevance of the EYGs, examining how they have addressed new emerging cross-cutting issues (section 3.2). Next, the internal and external coherence of the EUYS is analysed (section 3.3). Lastly, conclusions and potential improvements within this topic are provided (section 3.4).

3.1. Effectiveness

3.1.1. European Youth Goals (EYGs) – core EYGs and achievements

To start, it is challenging to measure the implementation of the EYGs due to a lack of an established monitoring system for the EUYS and corresponding data, meaning it is **not known what achieving an EYG actually means**. This point was raised by EU officials and civil society interviewees, as well as EU-level survey respondents, who highlighted a lack of a monitoring system and indicators for follow-up as a weakness of the EUYS and the EYGs. Therefore, an enhanced monitoring system was suggested to track progress. Suggestions for this included an indicator dashboard or a monitoring compass to demonstrate where gaps exist and where further action is necessary. The proposal for the Revised Dashboard of the EU Youth Indicators, published in 2021, suggested a set of indicators to inform the development of the EUYS; however, the dashboard currently does not focus on the

EYGs.[17] This suggestion was supported by many survey respondents across both the EU level and the six Member States analysed. Nevertheless, despite challenges in measuring the implementation of the EYGs, it is still possible to make a partial assessment based on the limited evidence available.

The EYGs set the theme for each EUYD cycle to ensure young people can influence the priority areas. Through EUYD, young people share their views on chosen topics, linked to one or more of the EYGs.[18] Each EUYD cycle lasts 18 months and is focused on specific EYGs; the current cycle (1 January 2025 – 30 June 2026) focuses on EYG1 (Connecting EU with youth).[19] The implementation of the EYGs through the EUYD was supported by an interviewed EU official, who noted that without the link, it would be difficult to consult young people consistently on the topics they wish to discuss. However, the selection process of which EYGs to focus on in the EUYD is made by the Council Trio Presidency.[20] Therefore, the choice usually aligns with the national priorities of the Member States leading the Council Trio Presidency and is not made solely by young people. This also means some EYGs, which are priorities for youth, may never be selected. On the other hand, the Council Trio Presidency's consistent work on EYGs is an achievement, as they are not mandated to do so, according to an interviewed EU official. Furthermore, since the EUYD became more structured, participation has grown substantially. The number of participants increased from 10 733 in the 8th Cycle[21] (1 July 2020 – 31 December 2021) to 38 042 in the 11th Cycle[22] (1 January 2025 – 30 June 2026). The interviewed EU stakeholders also acknowledged the EUYD's success. Within the EUYD, the EYGs that have been prioritised are:

- **EGY1** (Connecting EU with Youth) during the 11th Cycle (1 January 2025 – 30 June 2026);
- **EYG3** (Inclusive Societies) during the 10th Cycle (1 July 2023 – 31 December 2024); and the 9th Cycle (1 January 2022 – 30 June 2023), where **EYG10** (Sustainable Green Europe) also received focus;
- **EYG9** (Space for Democracy and Participation) during the 8th Cycle (1 July 2020 – 31 December 2021);
- **EYG6** (Moving Rural Youth Forward), **EYG7** (Quality Employment for All), and **EYG8** (Quality Learning) during the 7th Cycle (1 January 2019 – 30 June 2020).

This list of EYGs targeted during the EUYD is somewhat consistent with interviews with EU officials, who suggested that EYG9 (Space and participation for all), EYG3 (Inclusive Societies), and EYG10 (Green and Sustainable Europe) have received the most attention. However, this is inconsistent with the EUYS Work Plans' focus.[23] A comparison of each Work Plan shows **EYG4 (Information and Constructive Dialogue) has been the only consistent priority in the Work Plans** since 2019. As the EUYD is not the only mechanism for implementing the EYGs, this inconsistency may stem from other actions outlined in the Work Plans, as well as from differing stakeholder perceptions. Looking

17 Eurostat, EU Youth Dashboard, website.

18 European Youth Forum, EU Youth Dialogue, website.

19 European Union, A look back at EU Youth Dialogue consultations, *European Youth Portal*, website.

20 The Member States holding the presidency of the Council of the EU work together closely in groups of three, called 'trios'. This system was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The trio sets long-term goals and prepares a common agenda, determining the topics and major issues that will be addressed by the Council over an 18-month period. On the basis of this programme, each of the three countries prepares its own more detailed six-month programme. The current Trio's programme was published in 2024.

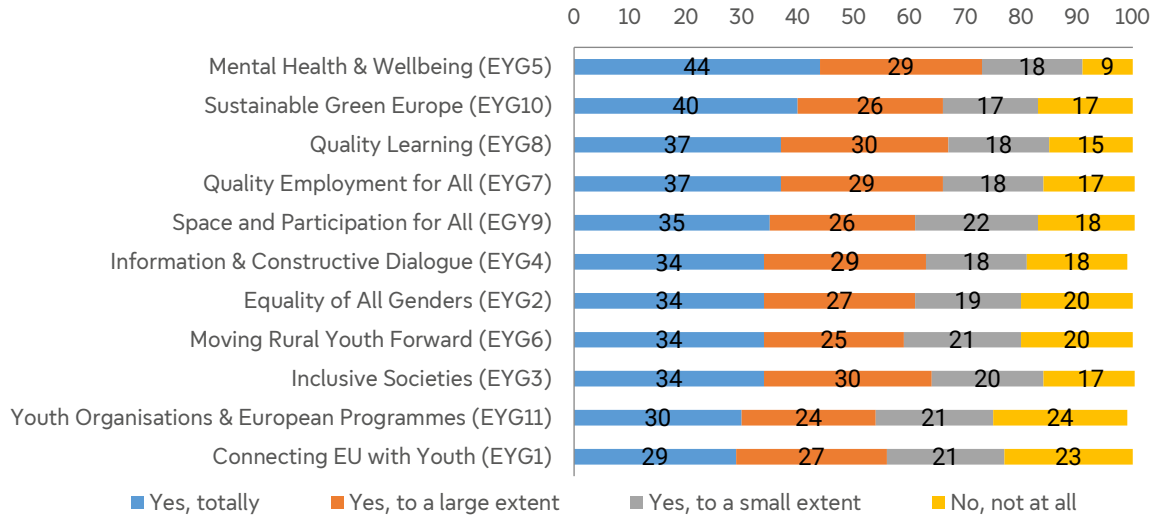
21 Moxon, D. and Pantea, M.-C., *8th Cycle Of The EU Youth Dialogue Qualitative Consultation Report - Youth for Europe, Europe for youth: space and participation for all*. Lisbon: Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude, 2021.

22 Moxon D. and Bárta O., *EUYD11 Results of the Consultation Phase: Connecting the EU with Youth*, 2025.

23 The EUYS operates in 3-year work cycles and the priorities for each cycle are set by the Council together with the EC in EUYS Work Plans.

across different sources, in 2024, the EU-27 Member States evaluated the EYGs, which were 'particularly relevant' to their national youth policy priorities.[24] The most frequently cited EYGs across the EU-27 were **Inclusive Societies (EYG3),** highlighted by 21 Member States, **Mental Health and Wellbeing (EYG5),** emphasised by 19 Member States, and **Space and Participation for All (EYG9),** chosen by 17 Member States, reflecting a strong shared commitment to equality, wellbeing, and meaningful participation. Six or fewer Member States selected other EYGs.

Figure 2 – Responses from the participants to the consultation for the 11th Cycle of the EUYD to the question 'are the following topics important for you today?'



Source: Moxon D. and Bárta O., *EUYD11 Results of the Consultation Phase: Connecting the EU with Youth*, 2025.

The prioritised EYGs described above can be further compared to what young people themselves see as a priority (see Figure 2 above). Young people who are participating in the 11th Cycle of the EUYD (1 January 2025 - 30 June 2026) see **Mental Health and Wellbeing (EYG5)** as being the most important, with 73 %[25] considering this to be important totally or to a large extent.[26] This shows alignment with the priorities of the EU-27 Member States described above. Other EYGs, such as Sustainable Green Europe (EYG10), Quality Learning (EYG8), and Quality Employment for All (EYG7), are also rated as important by over 70 % of young people. Overall, young people regard all 11 EYGs as important, with most respondents regarding each EYG as important to a large extent. This makes it difficult to distinguish which EYGs could be considered core.

To conclude, based on the sources described above, certain EYGs appeared to be common priorities across the EU-27 Member States and at the EU level. These are **EYG3 (Inclusive Societies), EYG5 (Mental Health and Wellbeing), and EYG9 (Space and Participation for All)**. This is attributable to the fact that each of these EYGs has been addressed in at least one cycle of the EUYD (though for EYG5, this focus was indirect), incorporated in the EUYS Work Plans, and cited most frequently by EU-27 Member States in the Future National Activity Planners (FNAPs).

[24] European Union, Future National Activities Planners, *European Youth Portal*, website.

[25] 38 042 young people had been consulted as part of the 11th Cycle of the EUYD by the time of this data.

[26] Moxon D. and Bárta O. *EUYD11 Results of the Consultation Phase: Connecting the EU with Youth*, 2025.

3.1.2. Progress towards each EYG

This section outlines the implementation of each EYG at the EU level and in the six Member States examined. If one of the six Member States is not mentioned in relation to a particular EYG, it is because interviewed and surveyed stakeholders did not provide information on that EYG. For more information on prioritised and deprioritised EYGs at the EU and six Member States, see Annex 10.

The analysis indicates **that all EYGs have seen at least some progress, though the extent of implementation varies**. It also suggests that there have been **differences in implementation between the EU and six Member States**. For example, EYG2 (Equality of All Genders) was not identified as a priority by any EU-level stakeholder in the interviews or the survey. However, at the Member State level, progress towards this EYG was noted in Bulgaria and Germany. **These differences could be because, as described above, the EYGs are not binding goals,** aiming instead to serve as 'inspiration and provide an orientation for the EU, its Member States and their relevant stakeholders and authorities'.[27] Thus, **there is no concrete link between the EUYS/EYGs and national youth strategies**. For example, in Bulgaria and Portugal, stakeholders indicated that the EUYS provides a solid framework for their national youth strategies, with Bulgaria having the EYGs embedded in its national strategy. However, interviewed stakeholders in Lithuania suggested that the National Youth Policy Action Plan is only indirectly influenced by the EUYS, instead being based on the national context and, to a lesser extent, on Erasmus+ and the ESC. Similarly, interviewees noted that Croatia's national strategy is only partially aligned with the EUYS, while in Germany, the federal youth strategy predates the EUYS, and in Italy, there is no single, binding, cross-sectoral youth framework. Further, examples illustrating the progress of each EYG are provided.

EYG1 (Connecting EU with Youth). At the EU-level, this EYG is one of the priorities of the current 2025-2027 EUYS Work Plan[28] and the current 11th Cycle of the EUYD (1 January 2025 – 30 June 2026). EU-level survey respondents supported this EYG as being actively achieved.

In the six Member States examined in this study, this EYG was assessed as having been partially pursued. In some Member States (e.g. Bulgaria, Germany, Portugal), clear progress was noted. For example, interviewed Bulgarian stakeholders suggested that this was one of the most actively pursued EYGs in Bulgaria, through the regular implementation of EUYD cycles and activities during the European Year of Youth 2022 (EYY2022). Similarly, for Germany, the FNAPs noted that, in connection with this EYG, the Young European Professionals Network brought together young professionals who seek to engage their peers with Europe, the EU, and its policies, fostering greater understanding and participation in European affairs.[29] Additionally, German stakeholders identified this EYG as a priority in the survey, though the interviewed stakeholders provided little insight. Croatian stakeholders identified that actions towards EYG1 have been taken, but mostly by other actors or stakeholders rather than the Government, especially by the EP office in Croatia, and through activities by the Erasmus+ agency. In contrast, interviewed stakeholders from Italy disagreed on this EYG, with some suggesting it has been pursued with greater vigour, while others felt progress towards this goal was not evident.

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27 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01).

28 Resolution of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the EU Youth Strategy Work Plan 2025-2027 (2024/C/7438).

29 Young European Professionals, website.

EYG2 (Equality of All Genders). At the EU-level, this was one of only two EYGs (along with EYG10) that no stakeholders believed was a core or had been actively pursued. It also has not been the focus of any cycle of the EUYD.

In the six Member States examined in this study, this EYG has been pursued to differing extents. For example, in Germany, interviewees noted that progress has been seen. The Self-Determination Act[30] came into force on 1st November 2024, which made it easier for trans, intersex, and non-binary people to change their gender marker and first names without extensive medical or legal obstacles. However, interviewees stressed that this did not stem solely from the EYGs. Additionally, the German federal state of NRW was identified as a leading state in gender equality according to interview data. On the other hand, in Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, and Croatia, there has been limited progress. For example, interviewed Italian stakeholders noted that the current Italian Government has taken a clear stance against integrating comprehensive gender and sexuality education into the school curriculum. A bill currently under discussion in the Italian Parliament may restrict sexuality and gender education by extending the current ban on sex education from kindergartens and primary schools to middle schools.

EYG3 (Inclusive Societies) was a priority of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council and the focus of the 10th cycle of EUYD (1 July 2023 – 31 December 2024). This cycle addressed inclusion-related economic barriers, inaccessibility to information on participating in youth programmes, barriers to mobility, and barriers due to invisible differences in society (including mental health issues, young people in foster care, those with disabilities, and religious and ethnic minorities).[31]

Of the six Member States examined in this study, progress towards this EYG has been made in five Member States, except for Portugal. For example, Italy has approved a Citizenship Income[32] initiative to provide personalised support, aimed at social inclusion and employment. This EYG has also been actively pursued in Germany. The federal Government presented a draft law on the design of the Inclusive Child and Youth Welfare Act.[33] It aims to make child and youth welfare more inclusive, particularly for people with disabilities. Less progress towards inclusion has been seen in Portugal, where interviewed stakeholders noted political setbacks and a lack of institutional support. Youth inclusion and equality are further discussed in Chapter 5.

EYG4 (Information and Constructive Dialogue). At the European level, this EYG has been consistently prioritised in each EUYS Work Plan. As such, the EUYD is one of the key EUYS instruments for fostering constructive dialogue and creating spaces for youth, along with other actions, such as the EU Youth Portal, which serves as a hub for youth-related opportunities.

In the six Member States examined in this study, this EYG has seen mixed progress. Progress was particularly noted in Germany and Italy. In Germany, interviewees outlined that an amendment to the Youth Protection Act[34] came into force on the 1st May 2024, which aims to protect young people from online bullying, sexual assault, and financial scams. Moreover, at the federal level, a centre was created which reviews potentially harmful media and promotes the development of protection

[30] The Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Act on Self-Determination with Regard to Gender (SBGG), website.

[31] Bárta, O. and Moxon, D., *EUYD 10 Youth Conference in Alicante Spain*, 2023.

[32] Ministerio del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Reddito di Cittadinanza, website.

[33] Deutscher Bundestag, Draft law for inclusive child and youth welfare, website.

[34] The Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, *Jugendschutz – verständlich erklärt*, 2023.

measures.[35] These measures support safer access to digital information spaces for young people, including better access to information and critical evaluation capabilities. Similarly, stakeholders interviewed in Italy agreed that Italy has built a solid infrastructure for youth information and dialogue, though its use and visibility among young people remain limited. At the regional level, the importance of regional and municipal youth forums is evident, especially in Campania, where active listening exercises and participatory events have become more regular, according to an interviewee. Less progress towards achieving EYG4 was noted in Bulgaria, Croatia, and Portugal. For example, according to the Portuguese interviewees, there is widespread criticism of the lack of effective communication and institutional dialogue in Portugal. Interviewees cited structures such as Lojas Ponto JÁ (Ponto JÁ Stores) as spaces for youth information, though these were criticised by other interviewees who stated that physical structures have not adapted to the transformation of youth realities. In addition, interviewed Croatian stakeholders highlighted that the Croatian Government abandoned civic education in vocational schools, and the responsibility for youth policy shifted from the bodies that previously handled it to the Ministry of Science, Education, and Youth, meaning there is now less information available regarding youth policies.

EYG5 (Mental Health and Wellbeing). At the EU level, an EU official highlighted that EYG5 had not been directly addressed in any cycle of the Council Trio Presidency, and very few EU-level survey respondents indicated that this EYG had been actively pursued. However, an EU official noted that the 10th cycle of the EUYD (1 July 2023 – 31 December 2024), despite focusing on EYG3 (Inclusive Societies), included actions to support young people's mental health. These include raising awareness of mental health, promoting the availability of psychological support for young people, and education programmes. Therefore, despite not being prioritised itself, EYG5 has still seen some indirect progress.

Across the six Member States examined, this EYG has generally been prioritised, with progress noted in Germany, Italy, Lithuania, and Portugal. For example, in Lithuania, strengthening youth mental health, healthy lifestyles, and active leisure is a core objective of the National Youth Policy Action Plan 2023–2027, supported by dedicated measures. Italian stakeholders reported that COVID-19 increased public awareness of mental health but did not lead to structural reform; many ad hoc initiatives emerged (school counselling, online support lines, community projects), but long-term coordination is still lacking. Campania specifically has seen progress, having introduced a regional School Psychology Service in 2023[36] and promoting integrated healthy-lifestyle actions through a 12-month prevention package (Health Days,[37] permanent help-desk labs, nightlife outreach with medical testing, and community facilitation). In Bulgaria, progress remains limited, with stakeholders describing it as the most neglected due to insufficient specialists, fragmented responsibilities, and lack of funding, a view supported by survey respondents. In Croatia, although the National Youth Strategy 2022–2025 foresees mental-health training for youth workers, interviewed stakeholders reported no evidence of implementation.

EYG6 (Moving Rural Youth Forward). Although this EYG was a focus during the 7th Cycle of the EUYD (1 January 2019 – 30 June 2020), few stakeholders who responded to the survey at either the EU or Member State level indicated that this EYG was among the most relevant or actively pursued. However, an interviewed EU official noted that this EYG was indirectly included under the Hungarian Presidency of the EU Council, while EYG3 (Inclusive Societies) was chosen to be the focus, as rural

[35] The Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Kinder- und Jugendmedienschutz für die Zukunft, website.

[36] Coesione Italia 21-27 Campania, Servizio di psicologia scolastica – i e il ciclo di istruzione, website.

[37] Comune di Napoli, Quarta edizione delle Giornate Napoletane della Salute, Prevenzione e Benessere, website.

youth were considered a group with fewer opportunities. The inclusion of rural youth is further discussed in Chapter 5.

In the six Member States examined in this study, progress was noted in Croatia and Germany. For example, in Germany, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development runs a project called Junge Täler (Young Valleys) which promotes the active participation of young people in shaping the future of the Ore Mountains.[38] Similarly, interviewed Croatian stakeholders indicated that this EYG has received the greatest financial investment and aligns with the national priority of supporting rural and remote areas. In addition, there has been an increase in funding for non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with a specific budget for NGOs working in rural areas. However, in Bulgaria, Italy, and Portugal, there has been less progress. For example, interviewed Bulgarian stakeholders indicated that this EYG is rarely prioritised, with no structural measures to address the lack of transport, access to information, or services for young people in small municipalities. In Portugal, interviewees viewed this EYG as somewhat of a myth, as there are no conditions that allow young people to remain in rural areas, and the absence of genuine opportunities leads to youth leaving these regions. Similarly, Italian interviewees suggested that some regional initiatives exist (often supported by EU funds), but no major national policy has emerged in this area. For example, in Campania, grants are assigned to youth associations in urban peripheries or small towns to co-design local social/cultural/urban regeneration actions, explicitly targeting civic involvement, belonging, and anti-marginalisation outcomes.

EYG7 (Quality Employment for All). At the EU-level, this goal was addressed during the 7th Cycle of the EUYD (1 January 2019 – 30 June 2020). In addition, the EU Youth Guarantee remains one of the EU's main programmes to support youth employment, targeting those under the age of 30. The implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee was assessed in 2025. This found that while it has been a catalyst for institutional reform and policy innovation, impact has been uneven.[39] Outreach remains difficult, and there remain equality concerns regarding the reinforced Youth Guarantee's ability to reach vulnerable youth and to serve rural and remote areas.[40] The topic is further supported through various EU programmes and initiatives, such as the European Year of Skills 2023 and actions to improve traineeships, tackle long-term unemployment, and enhance mobility.

In the six Member States examined in this study, youth employment remains one of the most developed areas. For example, in Lithuania, various projects on youth not in education, employment, or training (NEETs) have taken place – e.g., JUNGTYS (CONNECTIONS),[41] JUDAM (LET'S MOVE).[42] Similarly, in Germany, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs funded a programme called Securing Training Places to help training companies maintain apprenticeship positions and ensure young people can access and complete vocational training during COVID-19.[43] According to interviewees, in Italy, youth employability has benefited from targeted programmes and EU-funded training. However, it continues to face structural barriers, such as dual labour markets and limited access to stable contracts. Moreover, while national and regional measures have increased, they remain fragmented and overly project-based, according to an interviewee. Interviewed Bulgarian

38 Junge Täler, website.

39 European Parliament, *The implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee – Trends in EU Member States, impact, EU funding and governance*, 2025.

40 Ibid.

41 Jaunimo Reikalų Agentūra, Projektas JUNGTYS, website.

42 Jaunimo Reikalų Agentūra, Įgyvendintas projektas 'JUDAM', website.

43 Cedefop, and ReferNet, Alliance for initial and further training: Germany, *Timeline of VET policies in Europe (2024 update)*, 2025.

stakeholders were also more negative, indicating that the Youth Guarantee has stagnated since 2022, mainly due to institutional restructuring, insufficient national financing, and weak coordination between employment and youth authorities, and that youth employment policies are only loosely connected with the youth strategy.

EYG8 (Quality Learning). At the EU-level, this EYG has seen progress as it was addressed during the 7th Cycle of the EUYD (1 January 2019 – 30 June 2020). Access to quality education and training is further discussed in Chapter 6.

In the six Member States examined in this study, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, and Lithuania have progressed towards this EYG. For example, interviewed Bulgarian stakeholders saw this quality learning as one of the most actively pursued EYGs, with Erasmus+ projects, dual education initiatives, and training within youth centres highlighted as concrete contributions. In Italy, there has also been progress in Campania, where there is a cluster of non-formal education programmes that cultivate creativity, teamwork, and digital/media competencies, while engaging thousands of youths across the region, according to an interviewee. Here, for instance, the region is relaunching a second edition of PROMOSS,[44] which builds transnational school networks to make international mobility a routine pedagogical practice (not a one-off), with a focus on disadvantaged students and NEETs. Efforts have focused on integrating formal, non-formal, and informal learning through comprehensive strategies combining digital transformation, civic engagement, and lifelong learning.[45]

EYG9 (Space and Participation for All) was the focus of the 9th cycle of EUYD (1 July 2020 – 31 December 2021). Within this cycle, the German Council Presidency focused on democratic awareness and engagement among young people in Europe, the Portuguese Council Presidency focused on strengthening multilevel governance by promoting the participation of young people in decision-making processes and put particular emphasis on the participation of young people through digital innovation, and the Slovenian Council Presidency focused on the importance of civic spaces for youth participation.[46]

In the six Member States examined in this study, interviewed stakeholders in Bulgaria, Italy, and Germany (including federal states NRW and MV) highlighted progress towards this EYG. For example, in Germany, the 20th federal Government pursued the core goal of increasing youth participation through the development of the National Action Plan (NAP) Child and Youth Participation.[47] On the other hand, in Portugal and Italy, progress has been uneven, and in Croatia, there has been little progress. For example, Portuguese interviewees noted that while youth participation is widely valued, there is criticism regarding the lack of genuine representation and the elitist nature of participation, so work is needed in this regard. Portuguese respondents to the survey agreed with this, with only some seeing this as a goal which had been actively pursued in the country. Similarly, in Italy, various national and regional level interviewees mentioned that there is uneven access for youth from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In Croatia, interviewed stakeholders stated that the Government created a new advisory body, but that this was mainly for members of the youth wing of the ruling party and not open to all.

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44 Regione Campania, Public notice: Mobility program in secondary schools – Evaluation Commission results, website.

45 European Commission, Youth Wiki, website.

46 Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the outcomes of the 8th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue (2021/C 504/01).

47 Bundesjugendkuratorium, Zentrale eckpunkte zur weiterentwicklung der beteiligungsformate junger menschen auf bundesebene, 2025.

EYG10 (Sustainable Green Europe). Green policy was one of the EYY2022's focus areas,[48] during which the EC launched the flagship Green Track Campaign in collaboration with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network and Biodiversity Action Europe to mobilise young people for the United Nations (UN) Biodiversity Conference and to collect their recommendations on nature, biodiversity, and a sustainable future for Europe. Furthermore, EYG10 was the focus of the 9th cycle of EUYD (1 January 2022 – 30 June 2023).[49] The cycle's findings concluded that there is a lack of awareness about climate change, which could be addressed through educational instruments (formal, informal, and non-formal) and active involvement. It was suggested that high-quality information on sustainable development should be provided to young people from specific groups facing challenges with social and vocational integration, particularly those with fewer opportunities. However, no surveyed EU-level stakeholders saw this as an EYG which has been actively pursued.

In the six Member States examined in this study, interviewed stakeholders in Bulgaria and Germany identified progress. For example, in Germany, the Coordination Office for Youth Participation in Climate Issues, hosted by the German Federal Youth Council, functions as a central youth participation format at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, enabling youth civil society organisations to present their positions and demands to the ministry's climate policy processes, as stated by an interviewee. In comparison, in Croatia, Lithuania, and Portugal, stakeholders agreed that this EYG has not received adequate attention, and there are few existing youth-related measures to implement this specific goal. For example, interviewees in Portugal could not identify any specific environmental programmes, although there is a history of support for ecological projects through youth volunteering initiatives. Similarly, Italian interview stakeholders suggested that Italy's progress toward a green and sustainable Europe has been gradual and uneven, with most initiatives focusing on education, awareness, and local environmental engagement rather than comprehensive youth-led climate policy.

EYG11 (Youth Organisations and European Programmes). At the EU level, there were divergent opinions among interviewed EU-level interviewees and survey respondents regarding the implementation of EYG11. One interviewed EU official identified this goal as not having been addressed, as it has not been covered at any EUYD. However, according to another EU official, many Erasmus+ projects cite EYGs among their targeted issues or actions, which suggests progress towards EYG11. In addition, this EYG was reported as more relevant or actively pursued by a majority of EU-level survey respondents. Based on this, EYG11 has been actively pursued at the EU-level through the Erasmus+ and ESC programmes.

Among the six Member States examined in this study, interviewed Lithuanian stakeholders identified this EYG as a priority due to its inclusion in Lithuania's National Youth Policy Action Plan (2023-2027) and its focus on Erasmus+ and the ESC. In addition, a majority of survey respondents in Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, and Portugal indicated EYG11 as more relevant or actively pursued. On the other hand, in Italy, there is a lack of large-scale national initiatives to broaden diversity among participants, indicating that inclusion within youth organisations still depends heavily on local initiatives and EU-funded projects.[50]

[48] European Union, European Year of Youth 2022, website.

[49] French Ministry of Education and Youth and French National Youth Council, Report on the European Youth Conference, 2022.

[50] European Commission, Youth Wiki, website.

3.2. Relevance

3.2.1. EYGs and the new cross-cutting issues

Since the creation of the EYGs, multiple new cross-cutting issues have emerged. However, as the EYGs have not been reviewed or updated since the start of the EUYS in 2019, they may need to be reevaluated to reflect the current situation in the EU. This idea was highlighted in the EU-level interviews, during which stakeholders noted that the EYGs are too static and inflexible, making it difficult to respond to emerging issues, especially given that the Work Plans set out priorities in advance. This was also evident in the 2024 Eurobarometer survey, as youth expressed a need for the EU to reinforce peace, international security, and cooperation, and to address poverty and inequality.[51] In addition to the topics discussed above regarding EYGs, the following areas emerge.

Firstly, the **COVID-19 pandemic** not only caused an increase in overall unemployment levels in the EU-27 Member States and on a global level, but also caused psychological distress to individuals, calling for Government support in terms of financial support, housing, and access to psychological aid.[52] The pandemic and its related restriction measures were associated with a decline in mental well-being, particularly for young people, and the number of people reporting 'bad' or 'very bad' health more than doubled between 2020 and 2022.[53] EU-level survey respondents and the six Member States' survey both corroborated that young people face mental health challenges. This is a cross-cutting issue which is covered directly by EYG5 (Mental Health & Wellbeing). However, interviewees in Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, and Portugal all agreed that more focus is needed on this area.

Meanwhile, the sanctions, as a result of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, led to an increase in oil and gas prices, significantly impacting the transport, industry and services sectors, and additionally leading to worse mental health outcomes of those impacted by the war, especially individuals living in the bordering Member States such as Poland, Slovakia, and Romania.[54] This has also led to broader concerns among young people in Europe about **security**, an area that the EYGs do not directly address. A 2022 poll found that nearly two-thirds of young people in Europe feared that the conflict in Ukraine would spread to the EU.[55] The need to include EYGs on defence or peace and security in the EUYS was supported by an interviewed EU official and survey respondents. In Bulgaria and Lithuania, security was strongly linked to concerns about **radicalisation and disinformation**. A Lithuanian interviewee noted that while EYG4 (Information & constructive dialogue) aims to improve access to information, it does not address radicalisation or encourage young people to act as responsible content creators. German interviewees similarly highlighted rising radicalisation, populism, and right-wing extremism, stressing the need for preventative measures in MV. Furthermore, social media was seen as a major driver of manipulation and radicalisation among young people. In addition, several stakeholders emphasised the **long-term**

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51 European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, The situation of young people in the European Union – EU youth report 2024, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025.

52 Eurofound, *Quality of life Impact of COVID-19 on young people in the EU*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021.

53 Eurofound, *High risk of depression persist following COVID-19 pandemic: Data behind the mental health crisis*, 2022.

54 Kalaitzaki, A., R. Goodwin, A. Kurapov, M. Vintila, G. Lazarescu, S. Lytvyn, G. Tsouvelas, et al., The Mental Health Toll of the Russian-Ukraine War across 11 Countries: Cross-Sectional Data on War-Related Stressors, PTSD and CPTSD Symptoms, *Psychiatry Research*, 2024; Martínez-García, M.Á., Carmen Ramos Carvajal, and Ángeles Cámara, Consequences of the Energy Measures Derived from the War in Ukraine on the Level of Prices of EU Countries, *Resources Policy*, 2023.

55 Foundation for European Progressive Studies, Dressler, M., Howard, C., *Builders of Progress: Europe's Next Gen The War in Ukraine Through the Eyes of Youth*, 2022.

impact of digitalisation. As such, this is a cross-cutting issue that can be further addressed by the EYGs.

Recent years have also seen severe **climate and environmental crises**, such as Europe's worst floods since 2013 and record heatwaves in 2024, and above-average wildfire damage, affecting young people and society as a whole. Although EYG10 (Sustainable Green Europe) addresses this area, interviewed stakeholders argued that national implementation remains weak. For example, in Bulgaria, activities largely consist of short-term awareness-raising rather than long-term policy integration, and in Croatia, strong national climate policies exist, but youth involvement is limited. This indicates gaps between EU-level ambition and national operationalisation. In addition, **housing shortages** were another frequently raised issue by Member State interviewees (e.g., Croatia, Italy, Portugal). These interviewed stakeholders highlighted housing as a major youth concern, as well as survey respondents in Croatia and Portugal. Most EU-level respondents felt that the EUYS and EYGs address affordable housing only to a small extent or not at all, signalling an area requiring stronger action. Furthermore, young people view this as a crucial topic. When young people across the EU-27 were asked to propose a hypothetical 12th EYG, housing, living costs, and social security were among the most common suggestions.[56]

3.3. Coherence

3.3.1. The role of EUYS Work Plans in the implementation of EYGs

As mentioned previously, the Work Plans and the selected EYGs focused on are translated into specific working methods and instruments. For example, the ongoing 2025-2027 Work Plan,[57] which is focused on the three selected EYGs, namely EYG1 (Connecting EU with youth), EYG4 (Information and Constructive Dialogue) and EYG9 (Space and participation for all), has defined **working methods/instruments, and their indicative targets or outputs foreseen**. Examples of working methods/instruments range from conferences and meetings (e.g., EU Youth Conference, Directorate General (DG) Youth Meeting, EU Youth Stakeholders Group Meeting) to outreach efforts (e.g., Conference/seminar on youth-friendly information and communication) and related Council conclusions (e.g., Council conclusions on the topic of civic engagement – the change through youth organisations – and youth media literacy and others). The results of the three-year work cycles of the EUYS are reported in the triennial EU Youth Reports.[58]

The majority of EU-level interviewees, who were aware of the EUYS Work Plans, **agreed that these Work Plans are an important instrument, helpful in facilitating the implementation of the EYGs, helping stakeholders plan, bringing visibility on specific EYGs, and giving a consolidated view of EU-level priorities, connecting several institutions.** According to the interviews, EUYS Work Plans also help ensure that Trio Presidencies and chairing Member States cannot decide to focus on matters relevant only to their respective national priorities. EUYS Work Plans also help translate the EUYS into three-year priorities and provide a clear link to selected EYGs, thereby giving Work Plans relevance as they are co-created with youth. This also serves as guidance for operational work regarding the EUYD, peer learning and other activities. Regarding specific Work Plans, an

[56] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022–2024),* SWD(2025) 73, 2025.

[57] Resolution of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the EU Youth Strategy Work Plan 2025-2027 (2024/C/7438).

[58] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022–2024),* SWD(2025) 73, 2025.

interviewed EU-level civil society representative noted that the ongoing 2025-2027 Work Plan is useful because it helps facilitate future developments of the EUYS; otherwise, there is no clear mechanism for stakeholders to do so.

In addition to positive views on the Work Plans, EU-level stakeholders suggested that **improvements are also needed,** and shared suggestions for improving their impact. **Improved follow-up** was noted by several interviewees, suggesting that **communication to stakeholders regarding what has been done** because of the respective Work Plan, as well as the integration between the different Work Plans, should include concrete follow-ups at both the EU and Member State levels. It was noted that the strengthened EUYD follow-up could be adopted for the follow-up of EUYS Work Plans as an approach too. Moreover, an interviewed EU official suggested that Work Plans could go **deeper and include more information about youth activities in other institutions** (e.g., the European Economic and Social Committee's (EESC) work on youth, work of the EP and its Committees). Furthermore, an EU official suggested that the Work Plans could be more effective and accessible by **improving the language, which is not youth-friendly**, although it was accepted that sometimes the political realities necessitate this type of formal language.

Across the six Member States examined, many stakeholders could not comment on the EUYS Work Plans; none were referenced in Croatia or Portugal. In the other four **Member States, views broadly aligned with the EU level: Work Plans were seen as useful frameworks that offer structure, adaptability (e.g. during COVID-19), and continuity, but remain known only to a limited circle of stakeholders.** In Bulgaria, awareness was largely confined to central administration and a few major NGOs, with only indirect influence on national reforms. In Italy, the 2019–2021 and 2022–2024 Work Plans helped set priorities and link youth consultations to national policy, but still require greater visibility, an improvement also suggested by German interviewees and survey respondents. Lithuanian stakeholders valued the Work Plans for supporting coherence among Member States, particularly in the context of Lithuania's upcoming Trio Presidency in 2027. However, survey data confirms limited awareness: around half of respondents at both EU and Member State levels did not know whether the Work Plans had facilitated EUYS implementation.

3.3.2. EUYS coherence with the EU programmes

The **EUYS, Erasmus+, and the ESC are generally aligned in their objectives and priorities, with the EUYS explicitly linking to both programmes and promoting their effective use.**[59] This connection is reflected in the EUYS's three areas: Engage, Connect, and Empower, which map onto participation, learning mobility, and youth-worker mobility. **EU and examined Member State stakeholders generally agreed that alignment has strengthened under the 2019–2027 EUYS** and should be maintained. In most of the six Member States studied, **Erasmus+ and the ESC are viewed as key drivers of national EUYS implementation**. Interviewed stakeholders highlighted that their flexible frameworks enable projects to address a wide range of EYGs, support youth participation and a strong European dimension, and, in some cases (e.g. Bulgaria), help compensate for limited national funding.

The programmes' horizontal priorities can also be compared with the EYGs. **Inclusion and diversity** are one of the horizontal priorities of Erasmus+ and of the ESC.[60] Within the political context of the EUYS, the principle that the programmes should be accessible for all, regardless of the barriers

[59] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022–2024),* SWD(2025) 73, 2025.

[60] European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme priorities, website; European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *European Solidarity Corps 2025 Call*, 2025.

people may face, underpins all the opportunities they offer to individuals and organisations, with the core aim of leaving no one behind and leading to more inclusive, just, greener and more digitally-fit societies. This focus aligns clearly with, for example, EYG3 (Inclusive Societies) and with EYG11 (Youth Organisations and European Programmes). Erasmus+ and the ESC in particular show strong progression on inclusion,[61] which is further discussed in Chapter 5. In addition, alignment between EYG10 (Sustainable Green Europe) and both programmes can also be seen, with the **environment and fight against climate change** being a core priority of Erasmus+, and Environmental Sustainability and Climate Goals being a core priority of the ESC.[62] This alignment has been furthered by the 2025 Erasmus+ and ESC green transition and sustainable development strategy,[63] which provides guidelines for organisations, applicable to all projects funded through these programmes.

Participation in democratic life is another core priority of both Erasmus+[64] and the ESC,[65] showing alignment with EYG9 (Space and Participation for All). Erasmus+ promotes citizens' right to take part in democratic life, and encourages active involvement at all levels – local, national, and European.[66] Projects can create meaningful opportunities for participants to express their views, contribute to decisions, and develop a stronger sense of belonging to the European community. Meanwhile, the ESC promotes the participation of young people in democratic processes and civic engagement.[67] Moreover, the area where the programmes show some alignment with the EUYS is **digital transformation**. This priority was furthered by the programmes' digital strategy implementation guidelines,[68] ensuring close alignment with the Digital Education Action Plan.[69] This priority aligns with EYG4 (Information & Constructive Dialogue), which includes the aim of ensuring young people have stronger digital literacy skills, though no EYG explicitly focuses on digitalisation, digitalisation being embedded across EUYS more so horizontally.

Some **weaknesses** were also identified. Programme rules on **geographical scope** create uncertainty about whether the EU Youth Dialogue should involve only EU-27 countries or also candidate countries. EU-level civil society noted weaker alignment in areas such as **skills recognition, labour markets, and employment**, and suggested that the post-2027 EUYS should reference other youth-relevant programmes (e.g., Creative Europe, Horizon). Some examined Member States (e.g., Croatia, Italy) reported that links between the EUYS and funding calls or evaluation criteria are not

61 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the interim evaluation of the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme and the final evaluation of the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme COM (2025) 395, 2025.

62 European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme priorities, website; European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *European Solidarity Corps 2025 Call*, 2025.

63 European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps green transition and sustainable development strategy – Implementation guidelines*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025.

64 European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme priorities, website.

65 European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *European Solidarity Corps 2025 Call*, 2025.

66 European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme priorities, website.

67 European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *European Solidarity Corps 2025 Call*, 2025.

68 European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps green transition and sustainable development strategy – Implementation guidelines*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025.

69 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 Resetting education and training for the digital age COM(2020) 624, 2020.

always explicit, leaving applicants unaware of the EUYS. A German stakeholder from MV added that many organisations deliver Erasmus+ and ESC projects aligned with the EUYS without realising it, while stakeholders at the federal level and in both MV and NRW stated that disadvantaged young people still face barriers to Erasmus+. Examined Member States also highlighted challenges such **as limited coordination and monitoring between National Agencies and Government bodies, insufficient funding, and inconsistent implementation of themes due to national contexts**. Stakeholders from Bulgaria and Lithuania additionally expressed concern that merging Erasmus+ and the ESC after 2027 may dilute the focus on youth.

3.3.3. External EUYS coherence

In general, the EUYS and EYGs align well with EU-level policy. The EUYS operates in synergy with many other EU policies relevant to youth, through shared priorities, objectives, and values. Examples of these synergies include the synergy between youth participation and child participation. The EU Children's Participation Platform[70] involves children in EU decision-making and supports their active participation in democratic life, contributing to youth participation and active citizenship, recognised priority topics within the EUYS.[71] According to the same source, the Citizenship Package[72] supports democratic participation of young citizens. Furthermore, the Defence of Democracy[73] package underlines the importance of participation of young people and children in democratic life, supports young voters, and refers to best practices, including the EUYD. Moreover, youth participation is a pillar of the European strategy for a Better Internet for Kids (BIK+).[74] Another example is the synergy with demographic policies that prioritise gender equality, non-discrimination, and intergenerational fairness. In addition, interviews with EU officials and civil society highlight areas of synergy, including participation and inclusion, green policies, and employment and training, which align with EU-level policy. This was also supported by the survey respondents, who, at the EU level, all believed that the EYGs fit with the EU's broader policies, strategies, and priorities at least to a small extent.

Beyond synergies with other sectoral policies, there are **many synergies between the EYGs and other cross-sectoral EU strategies**. For example, EYG10 (Sustainable Green Europe), as discussed above, is clearly aligned with wider EU policies. This goal aims to achieve a society in which all young people are environmentally active, educated and able to make a difference in their everyday lives, and this links with the EU's wider strategy, the European Green Deal.[75] Launched in 2019, this responded to the call of citizens, and especially young people, for climate action.[76] However, there are areas that are covered in the EYGs, which lack coherence with wider EU policy. One such area is mental health (EYG5), as despite the launch of a Comprehensive Communication on a Mental Health Strategy,[77] an EU official believes there has not been sufficient momentum in the area since then.

To improve alignment, **cross-cutting issues not explicitly covered by the EYGs (e.g. peace and security, radicalisation, threats to democracy, and housing shortages) should be addressed, as**

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70 European Union, EU Children's Participation Platform, website.

71 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Interim Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, COM(2024) 162, 2024.

72 European Commission, Citizenship Package, website.

73 European Commission, Protecting democracy, website.

74 European Union, Better Internet for Kids, website.

75 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions The European Green Deal, COM(2019) 640, 2019.

76 European Commission, The European Green Deal Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent, website.

77 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a comprehensive approach to mental health, COM(2023) 298, 2023.

they reflect current youth concerns. These issues were also highlighted in the consultation report of the 11th Cycle of the EUYD (1 January 2025 – 30 June 2026), where young people were asked which EYGs should potentially be revised.[78] An EU-level civil society representative emphasised the need to begin revising the EYGs early so youth perspectives can shape the next EUYS. However, an EU official noted that some gaps in the EYGs may stem from the fact the current EYGs are based entirely on youth consultation. Young people at the time of consultation may not have identified certain topics which may become important in the future. Thus, future revisions should involve researchers and other stakeholders, as research and foresight can offer a more complete picture of topics that may be relevant in the future. One EU-level researcher further suggested shortening the EUYS cycles to five years to reflect rapid global change.

Defence, **peace and security** illustrate a key area of misalignment. Since 2022, these issues have grown in prominence at the EU level, and young people are increasingly concerned about the security situation in Europe, yet no EYG addresses them directly. Interviewed Lithuanian stakeholders identified defence as a national priority that intersects with youth policy and civic engagement, while research from Ukraine shows that youth volunteering strengthens national defence and societal resilience.[79] On the other hand, a German interviewee warned that a stronger focus on peace and security may overshadow social policy. A position paper by an umbrella association similarly cautioned that young people 'are being considered primarily in terms of their individual resilience and employability in order to foster the goal of increasing Europe's competitiveness and stability, while other important aspects and the independence of child and youth policy are in danger of being neglected'.[80]

3.4. Potential improvements

The following section summarises the key findings from the Chapter according to the evaluation criteria, followed by an overview of potential areas for improvement.

Table 1 – Key Chapter 3 findings and potential improvements

Effectiveness – key findings
It is **challenging to measure the implementation of the** European Youth Goals (EYGs) due to a lack of a dedicated monitoring system or agreement on what achieving an EYG means**.**
As the EU Youth Strategy is not binding, it does not directly influence the national youth strategies or youth policy priorities in some examined Member States. Therefore, **the implementation of the EYGs has been uneven, with different Member States focusing on different areas.**
Available data show that the **Member States examined have focused most** on EYG3 (Inclusive Societies), EYG5 (Mental Health and Wellbeing), and EYG9 (Space and Participation for All). At EU-level, the greatest attention has gone to EYG1 (Connecting EU with Youth), EYG3, EYG6 (Moving Rural Youth Forward), EYG7 (Quality Employment for All), EYG8 (Quality Learning), EYG9, and EYG10 (Sustainable Green Europe).

[78] Moxon, D. and Bárta, O. *EUYD11 Results of the Consultation Phase: Connecting the EU with Youth*, 2025.

[79] T. Madryha, K. Fedoryshyna, I. Krasnodemska, D. Bozhko, and V. Chekaliuk, The volunteer movement as a tool for strengthening civil solidarity in wartime, *Cadernos de Educação Tecnologia e Sociedade*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 183–194, 2024.

[80] Child and Youth Welfare Association, Intervention by the Child and Youth Welfare Association (AGJ): For a Cross-Sectoral and Multidimensional EU Child and Youth Policy – Even in Light of Politically and Financially Altered Conditions, 2025, p.3.

The EYGs shape each EU Youth Dialogue cycle. However, the Council Trio Presidency, not young people, selects which EYGs to focus on, based on the Work Plans. As a result, choices often reflect national rather than youth priorities, and some EYGs may never be selected.
Relevance – key findings
The EYGs only partially address new cross-cutting issues that have emerged since their creation. While issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in climate and environmental disasters are addressed to an extent by existing EYGs, other new issues, such as those surrounding peace, security and defence, radicalisation and populism, and the lack of housing, are not addressed directly.
Coherence – key findings
EU Youth Strategy Work Plans are an important instrument in facilitating the implementation of the EYGs, helping stakeholders plan, bringing visibility on specific EYGs, and giving a consolidated view of EU-level priorities. However, **only a limited number and types of stakeholders at the Member State level in those examined in this study know of the Work Plans, which limits their practical impact.**
The EU Youth Strategy, Erasmus+, and the European Solidarity Corps are broadly aligned in their objectives and priorities, and in most examined Member States, the two programmes are viewed as key drivers of national implementation. However, some minor misalignments remain (e.g., regarding geographical scope, skills recognition, labour markets, and employment) and could be further improved.
In general, the EU Youth Strategy and EYGs align well with EU-level policy, and there are many synergies between the EYGs, for example, EYG9 (Space and Participation For all), EYG10 (Sustainable Green Europe), and other cross-sectoral EU strategies (e.g., the Children's Participation Platform, the Citizenship Package, the Defence of Democracy Package, the European Green Deal). However, **there is less alignment in some areas which have emerged since 2019, such as defence.**
Potential Improvements
The European Commission should **revise the EU Youth Dashboard and its indicators to create a monitoring and evaluation system for the post-2027 EU Youth Strategy.** Furthermore, it should update the situation indicators to reflect changes in young people's lives and revise the policy indicators to improve monitoring of the EU Youth Strategy's instruments, actions, and EYGs.
As the EYGs have not been reviewed or updated since the start of the EU Youth Strategy in 2019**, they may need to be re-evaluated to reflect the current situation of Europe and its people**. This review should be carried out by the European Commission with consultations with both young people, researchers, and other relevant stakeholders.
The European Commission should aim to address **cross-cutting topics not explicitly covered by the EYGs** in the final years of the current EU Youth Strategy (e.g. peace and security, threats to democracy, housing shortages). In its final years, the EU Youth Strategy should also bridge current and emerging issues by integrating new topics into existing EYGs (e.g. cost of living within Inclusive Societies (EYG3) and Quality Employment for All (EYG7), due to both EYGs aiming to support the right of living wage for all young people), improving the strategy's effectiveness and ensuring continuity toward its post-2027 successor.
Specifically, the European Commission and Member States should pay particular attention to **rural youth**, for example, during the EU Youth Dialogue cycles. Member State authorities should place greater emphasis on rural youth when considering policies on the inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities.
The Council of the EU and the European Commission should **increase the awareness and accessibility of the Work Plans**, especially by updating the language to make it less bureaucratic and more accessible.

To enhance **EU Youth Strategy coherence with EU programmes**, the European Commission should clarify the geographical scope of the EU Youth Dialogue (and, potentially, other instruments). Clearer links in programmes' funding calls and evaluation criteria in areas related to skills recognition, employment, and the scope of the programme could improve the coherence.

4. Youth mainstreaming

Key findings

Youth mainstreaming has seen positive developments since the European Year of Youth 2022, and the recent introduction of the EU Youth Coordinator, Youth Check, and internal and external European Commission networks signals early progress.

While the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022 is widely acknowledged, the EU Youth Dialogue remains the most visible and operational youth mainstreaming instrument across the Member States examined in this study. Yet, its effectiveness varies across the Member States.

Youth mainstreaming remains uneven across policy areas, both at the EU and examined Member State levels, being most developed in education and employment. Youth views are yet to be fully integrated in other policy areas (e.g., health, finance, defence). The environmental and sustainability fields show strong potential, driven by youth activism.

Effective youth mainstreaming remains hindered by institutional fragmentation, weak cross-sectoral coordination, cultural and perception-related barriers. Resource and capacity, and monitoring limitations constrain the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy at the EU and Member State levels; the former also often lack comprehensive evidence and youth policy research.

A dedicated youth policy coordination framework – a strategy with a clear vision and priorities remains essential post-2027. Core EU Youth Strategy areas (Engage, Connect, Empower) remain foundational post-2027. To increase ownership across other policy areas, topics such as competitiveness and skills, democracy and citizenship, and mental health require better sectoral integration, though there is no clear consensus on such a shortlist.

This Chapter presents key findings on youth mainstreaming within the context of the EUYS, based on desk research, stakeholder interviews, and a survey. It first focuses on the effectiveness of the EUYS instruments for youth mainstreaming and their use across different policy areas (section 4.1), then discusses relevance, examining the youth mainstreaming approach streamlined across the policy areas (section 4.2). Lastly, conclusions and potential improvements of the EUYS within this topic are provided (section 4.3).

4.1. Effectiveness

4.1.1. EUYS instruments and youth mainstreaming

At the EU level, youth mainstreaming dates back to the 2001 White Paper on Youth and has since been integrated as one of the founding principles and objectives of the EUYS 2019-2027.[81] It is essential to ensure that the needs and effects of policies on young people are taken into account. Therefore, a cross-sectoral approach should be pursued as a fundamental basis.[82] The EUYS 2019-2027 was the first strategy to formally invite the EC and the Member States to create mechanisms

[81] European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *A new impetus for European youth – European Commission White Paper*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2002.

[82] Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 18 December 2018 on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C456/01); European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks – A comparative overview*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

allowing young people to participate in the development of policies that affect their lives.[83] The EC has introduced several youth mainstreaming instruments and initiatives, also ensuring alignment with transversal issues (e.g., social inclusion).[84] A number of instruments emerged after the adoption of the EUYS as a legacy of EYY2022 and the ongoing progress of the EUYS. Across EU-level interviews, respondents widely **recognised youth mainstreaming as a major advance stemming from the EYY2022 and the EUYS,** signalling a positive shift and institutional commitment. On the other hand, implementation gaps and barriers persist, as further discussed.

Among the selected **Member States, the implementation of EUYS instruments for youth mainstreaming remains uneven.** While the **EUYD stood out as the most prominent instrument, followed by the EYY2022,** other instruments were either not mentioned by the Member States' stakeholders or mentioned in passing. This finding is also in accordance with the interim EUYS evaluation, as very few stakeholders had a comprehensive overview of EUYS as a whole and its instruments.[85] This situation may signal that, while some instruments are recognised in principle, operationalisation and systematic evaluation issues persist, or Member States use their own instruments (discussed further in this Chapter). At the same time, national and regional youth strategies and initiatives foster youth mainstreaming within the Member States rather than the EUYS itself. The level of youth mainstreaming within the Member States is also conditioned by various institutional and structural barriers, as discussed further in sub-section 4.1.3. The youth mainstreaming instruments and initiatives, including the **EUYC role, the EYY2022, the EC's Youth Network, the EU Youth Stakeholders Group**, and the **EUYD,** are discussed below.

The **role of EUYC** was first established, and the first EUYC, Ms. Biliana Sirakova, was nominated in June 2021, after the start of the EUYS. The EUYC improves cross-sectoral cooperation, including youth organisations, civil society, established youth networks, and young people themselves. The EUYC is also responsible for ensuring the operation of mainstreaming youth perspectives across policy areas. Since then, the EUYC established the EC's Youth Network and the EU Youth Stakeholder group, launched the Youth Check process, moderated at least 14 Youth Policy Dialogues with Commissioners, led the legacy of the EYY2022 and conducted over 400 outreach activities (e.g., conferences, meetings with young people and civil society), among others.[86] There is **agreement among stakeholders that the establishment of the EUYC has enabled undeniable progress towards the effective mainstreaming of youth**.[87] Several EU-level interviewees supported this. They noted that the visibility and influence of the EUYC have, to date, contributed to greater institutional recognition of youth issues. Interviewees agreed that the EUYC role is in its early stages and that a complete progress evaluation is premature. Moreover, a civil society interviewee noted that, prior to its establishment, the EUYC role was envisioned as more senior, with a political mandate comparable to that of the EU small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) Envoy, thereby enabling mainstreaming with stronger political will. Several survey respondents

[83] Irina Lonean, *Review of the nine cycles of the EU Youth Dialogue (2010-2022)*, 2024.

[84] European Commission, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *The Youth Policy Dialogues during the first 100 days of the new mandate of the European Commission*, 2025.

[85] European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Kantar Public, Ramboll Management Consulting, and Technopolis Group, *Support study for the interim evaluation of the EU youth strategy 2019-2027 – Final report*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

[86] European Union, EU Youth Coordinator, *European Youth Portal*, website.

[87] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Year of Youth 2022 COM(2024) 1, 2024.

reiterated this point, adding that strengthening the EUYC also needs sufficient financial resources. Furthermore, the EC President's Youth Advisory Board is being set up at the time of writing.[88]

Subsequent youth mainstreaming initiatives emerged as a legacy of the **EYY2022,** which was supported by several EU-level interviewees. More than 30 EC departments contributed to EYY2022, with over 130 policy initiatives for young people, many of which were developed in cooperation with them.[89] Various initiatives were developed, including MeetEU digital events promoting democratic participation and the EUYD, which involved structured exchanges between young people, youth organisations, and policymakers.[90] The European Youth Event (EYE) also enabled dialogue with Members of the EP (MEPs), producing a Youth Ideas Report.[91] In addition, the #Engaged4YOUth initiative by the EP CULT further demonstrated youth engagement by fostering direct interaction between young people and EU policymakers. Following EYY2022, the EP adopted a resolution[92] calling for continued structured dialogue. According to the study's survey respondents, the EYY2022 and the EUYD were the EUYS instruments that promoted youth mainstreaming well or very well.

The EUYC further launched an external **EU Youth Stakeholder group** and the internal EC's Youth Network. The former is a group of 40 European youth organisations, National Youth Councils, youth researchers, representatives of the Member States and other EU institutions, serving for three years.[93] As the group was established in late 2024 and has met only twice since then, it is not feasible to assess its effectiveness. During the two meetings, the group discussed the progress of youth mainstreaming instruments (e.g., Youth Check, Youth Policy Dialogues with Commissioners), consultations regarding policy initiatives (e.g., Action Plan on Basic Skills, Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights, EU Civil Society Strategy) and exchanged good practices (available publicly online).[94] The group has an online collaboration channel for further discussions and meeting outputs. An EU-level civil society interviewee appreciated the publicly available results, which serve as a newsletter for other youth organisations. While Member State representatives largely did not mention the EU Youth Stakeholder group, divergent views were expressed when it was mentioned. While a survey respondent from Germany suggested that the tasks of the group need clarification, one interviewee from Lithuania perceived this structure as an achievement, adding that the DG for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture (EAC) should invite these group members to contribute to agenda-setting and that the group has potential beyond the sharing of good practices.

The new internal **EC's Youth Network** includes 66 youth correspondents from 33 DGs, who serve as focal points of their respective DGs. The correspondents have a dual role – understanding their respective policy areas and youth issues. The network primarily exchanges knowledge and best practices and promotes cross-sector collaboration. The youth correspondents also support the Youth Check. For example, the EC's Youth Network facilitated ongoing exchanges between the DGs

88 Commission Decision of 25.6.2025 setting up the President's Youth Advisory Board (2025/C/3967).

89 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Year of Youth 2022 COM(2024) 1, 2024.

90 European Parliament: Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union, Gaušas, S., Švedkauskienė, A., Leiputė, B., Langham, E. et al., *EU education, youth and sport policy – Overview and future perspectives*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

91 European Parliament, *Youth Ideas Report*, 2023.

92 European Parliament, Resolution of 24 November 2022 on the European Year of Youth 2022 legacy, (2023/C/167/13), 2023.

93 European Union, EU Youth Stakeholders Group, *European Youth Portal*, website.

94 See, for example: European Commission, *EU Youth Stakeholders Group – collection of good practices*, 2025.

during EYY2022 and played a central role in cross-sectoral collaboration throughout it.[95] As a result, the structure was institutionalised after the EYY2022. According to an interviewed EU official, since the establishment of the EC's Youth Network in 2021, 11 meetings were held while it operated as an informal forum, and three meetings have taken place since its formal launch in June 2024. The network maintains an online exchange space on Microsoft Teams and produces internal meeting minutes. However, not every DG has a youth correspondent, as is the case with DG for Health and Food Safety (SANTE), despite the importance of youth mental health and well-being. According to an EU-level official, DG EAC collaborates with DG SANTE on various youth issues. As these internal and external EC networks are relatively new, consulted stakeholders did not have substantial insights to share on their effectiveness to date.

Another recent youth mainstreaming advancement is the **Youth Check** – an instrument whose stated aim is to ensure that the potential impact of policies on young people is systematically assessed during the policymaking process.[96] At the EU-level, the assessment for the youth relevance is mandatory for key initiatives listed in Annex I of the EC's Work Programme. The EC's instrument follows a four-step process: (1) determining whether an initiative is youth-relevant; (2) consulting youth on the relevant initiatives; (3) evaluating the expected impacts, and; (4) the Regulatory Scrutiny Board verifying whether the impacts have been properly analysed. The last two steps apply only to legislative files. Since the Youth Check was launched only in January 2025, there is limited evidence on its effectiveness and outcomes.[97] At the time of writing, there is no clear way to assess the extent to which the youth consultations were reflected in the final policy proposals. Since its launch, the Youth Check has already been applied to 12 initiatives from the 2025 Work Programme,[98] covering a wide range of policy areas such as social and employment policies, sustainability and agriculture, fundamental rights and democracy, and defence (see Box on Youth

The Youth Check

The consulted EC proposals to which Youth Check was applied (as of 30th July 2025):

- 2030 Consumer Agenda, including an action plan for consumers in the Single Market
- An EU fit for enlargement: policy reviews and reforms
- A new action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights
- EU Anti-racism Strategy
- EU Preparedness Union Strategy
- EU Strategy to support, protect and empower the civil society
- European Democracy Shield
- European Oceans Pact
- Post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework proposals
- Quality jobs roadmap
- Union of Skills
- Vision for Agriculture and Food

Source: European Union, Progress on the European Commission Youth Check: Amplifying Young Voices in EU Policymaking, *European Youth Portal,* website.

[95] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022–2024),* SWD(2025) 73, 2025.

[96] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Year of Youth 2022 COM(2024) 1, 2024.

[97] Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022-2024) COM(2025) 117, 2025.

[98] European Union, Progress on the European Commission Youth Check: Amplifying Young Voices in EU Policymaking, *European Youth Portal*, website.

Checks). As a first step, the EC, with the support of the internal and external networks introduced above, assesses the youth relevance of EC policy proposals. The individual policy consultations are available on the European Youth Portal.[99]

The Youth Check in Germany and Italy

Germany developed the Youth Check at a federal level in 2017 through the Competence Centre Youth Check, funded by the Ministry of Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth. Between 2018 and 2021, 543 regulatory projects were reviewed and 126 Youth Checks published – around three to four per month – thanks to systematic cooperation and monitoring of Government developments. The initiative, particularly successful in labour and health policies, improved awareness of young people's concerns across ministries and received positive feedback for its inclusive and accessible materials. At the level of federal states, Thuringia started its own Youth Check, supported by the Competence Centre Youth Check, in 2022. North Rhine-Westphalia is currently considering the introduction of a Youth Check.

Italy has recently strengthened the institutionalisation of youth mainstreaming by establishing in 2021 a national committee involving key institutions (the Ministry for Youth, the National Youth Council, the National Youth Agency, and the Italian National Institute of Statistics) to assess policy impacts on young people. The committee's 2022 guidelines promote coordination and evidence-based policymaking, while a draft law proposes introducing a national 'generational impact assessment mechanism'. At the local level, municipalities such as Parma and Bologna have pioneered Youth Checks on municipal budgets (supported by the National Association of Italian Municipalities) – an innovative and unique approach in Europe that is now being scaled up with national and international support.

Sources: interview findings and European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks – A comparative overview*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024; Jugend-Check Thüringen, Der Jugend-Check Thüringen (JCT), website; KomJC, *Jugendgerechte Gesetzgebung mit dem Jugend-Check Eine Bilanz der 19. Legislaturperiode 2017-2021*, 2023; KomJC, Rückblick auf den 18. DJHT: Mehr Sichtbarkeit und Verbindlichkeit für den Jugend-Check gewünscht, website; Monti L., et al., *Mapping youth policies across 32 countries: Legal frameworks and strategies for education, employment, and well-being*, 2025; Moxon, D., Kovačić, M., Ștefan, V., *Learning from national and local approaches to youth mainstreaming and the use of youth perspective in policy making across Europe*, 2025.

An interviewed EU official noted that although participant data is available for individual consultation activities, it is challenging to obtain a consistent, comprehensive overview at the level of Youth Check initiatives due to varying formats, target audiences, and data types. Youth are engaged through Youth Policy Dialogues with Commissioners, EU Youth Conferences under the EUYD, the EU Youth Stakeholders Group, workshops, focus groups, meetings, as well as European Citizens' Panels and the Citizens' Engagement Platform.[100] Some consultations are more complex, for example, the Multiannual Financial Framework included a European Citizens' Panel, a public consultation and an EUYD, each organised by different EC services. Despite this, the engaged EU officials shared that they are **satisfied with the effectiveness of the Youth Check so far, as previously the youth and civil society were not consulted to the same degree**, or at all, on some initiatives. It also served as an instrument through which the EC could engage in deeper reflection on the impact of new proposals on young people, prompting early involvement of young people in consultations. The EC plans to assess first-year experiences and learn from them.

[99] For example, a page for the European Commission's Action Plan on Cyberbullying.

[100] European Union, Progress on the European Commission Youth Check: Amplifying Young Voices in EU Policymaking, *European Youth Portal,* website.

Several interviewed EU-level stakeholders expressed criticism of the Youth Check. An EU official and a civil society representative criticised the approach, which bases decisions on what is considered youth-relevant **on a fixed list of priority initiatives**. They noted that, in other initiatives (such as the EESC's Youth Test), youth themselves determine which policy they want to engage with. Moreover, in some Member States, such as Austria, respective youth checks are mandatory for all Government-drafted laws, and the results are publicly available.[101] An EU-level civil society representative also stated that the current Youth Check **does not live up to the five pillars advocated before its launch and found its implementation unclear (e.g., how policy initiatives are selected, the methodology applied, the results and follow-up).** The EC should comprehensively and transparently implement it to assess the impact of each successor programme on young people, including by consulting youth organisations.[102] In addition, civil society called for an instrument equivalent to an SME test.[103] Bulgarian stakeholders also suggested that at the EU and national levels, respective youth checks would result in **mandatory youth impact statements** required in all relevant policy proposals.

Back in 2022, the EESC called for an EU Youth Test to be integrated into the Better Regulation Toolbox as a distinct instrument.[104] While the Youth Check is not included as a separate tool in the Better Regulation Toolbox, the toolbox provides other tools[105] to ensure that the impact of policies and policy proposals, including on young people, is assessed.[106] Moreover, aligning the Youth Test (EESC) and the Youth Check (EC) at the European level across all EU bodies might help to streamline assessments and ensure coherence. Lastly, EC's Youth Check was largely not addressed by the engaged Member States. In Lithuania and Bulgaria, for example, interviewees were aware of the EC's Youth Check but rather mentioned it as an instrument which should be replicated in the national context. In Germany, the federal Government has its own youth mainstreaming instruments (e.g., the Youth Check at the federal level and the Interministerial Youth working group) and does not require EU instruments, according to an interviewee.

Another EUYS instrument, **the EUYD, aims to ensure that 'the needs of young people and youth organisations are taken into account when defining the EU's youth policies'**.[107] As such, it is a crucial youth mainstreaming instrument that also aims to enhance youth participation, especially for youth with fewer opportunities (diversity and inclusion of youth is discussed in Chapter 5). According to a recent review, the EUYD is effective in shaping some of the most important EU youth policies, though there is substantial variation in its impact at the national and regional levels. Among the recommendations of the study, there is a need for greater involvement of policymakers from other fields in the EUYD beyond youth-specific governance structures, particularly in areas such as education, employment, climate, and health, to better integrate youth perspectives across sectors.[108] According to the same source, the EUYD could be better linked to key upcoming EC

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101 European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks – A comparative overview*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

102 European Youth Forum, *Mainstreaming Young People in the Next Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–34: A message to policymakers – write youth into the programme architecture*, 2025a.

103 European Commission, SME Test, website.

104 European Economic and Social Committee, *The EU Youth Test SOC/728*, 2022.

105 Tool #31 (Education, training, culture and youth - ETCY); Tool #30 (Employment, working conditions, income distribution, social protection and inclusion); Tool #29 (Fundamental rights including the promotion of equality); Tool #20 (Strategic foresight for impact assessments and evaluations); Tool #51 (Consulting stakeholders).

106 European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks – A comparative overview*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

107 European Union, What is the EU Youth Dialogue?, *European Youth Portal*, website.

108 Irina Lonean, *Review of the nine cycles of the EU Youth Dialogue (2010-2022)*, 2024.

initiatives, ensuring that youth priorities influence wider EU action plans and mainstreaming concerns into broader legislative frameworks and strategic actions. Additionally, EUYD communication requires better coordination, coherence, and an overall strategic approach at the EU level, which would allow integration of youth perspectives in all relevant areas. According to an interviewed EU-level public official, changes are being introduced to the EUYD. Priorities include increasing its impact on EU policymaking, better aligning the EUYD with the ongoing policy initiatives, and adjusting its process to receive fewer but higher-quality proposals.

Across the six Member States examined in this study, **the EUYD also stood out as the most visible and actively implemented EUYS instrument**. Stakeholders identified the EUYD as a continued opportunity for youth mainstreaming, although its depth and effectiveness vary. For example, in Lithuania, the EUYD is perceived as an important mechanism by both institutional and civil society actors. In 2024, 10 in-person consultations were held and 150 young people were reached, turning it into a significant instrument that can strengthen democracy and youth participation by giving young people a meaningful voice in shaping policies.[109] Additionally, the National Working Group was reestablished by the National Youth Council and the Youth Affairs Agency, which were assigned the responsibility for coordinating the EUYD in Lithuania. In Germany, stakeholders acknowledged EUYD as well received[110] and recent positive progress, which resulted in adjustments in the national youth dialogue to enhance its effectiveness and quality of feedback mechanisms. Although, according to the interviewees, the EUYD in Germany could be more widely recognised, aligned with real-life situations, and integrated better in the decision-making processes. An interviewee from Campania, Italy, stated that tools such as the EUYD, peer learning/exchanges, and capacity-building have provided a useful framework for integrating youth perspectives into education, training, and employment policies, albeit unevenly across territories. The interviewee argued that the EUYS could be more effective if synergies were developed systematically at the municipal level – for example, by formally connecting EUYD cycles and outcomes to the agendas of municipalities and their youth forums, with clear follow-up and feedback loops.

On the other hand, in Bulgaria, the EUYD was perceived as largely symbolic, lacking continuity and transparency. The conclusions and reports from the recent EUYD cycles were not publicly available, further limiting transparency, continuity, and stakeholders' ability to track follow-up actions. In Bulgaria, clear institutional owners with responsibility for following up on EUYD outputs are needed, with mandatory feedback loops and minimum national standards for participation. Similarly, in Portugal, youth contributions through the EUYD, although seen as a positive, transversal approach by public officials, were rarely perceived by civil society representatives to influence concrete policy decisions. In Croatia, there has been no National Working Group for the EUYD since 2020. The Council for the Development of Youth Policies of the Government of the Republic of Croatia will act as the National Working Group for the implementation of the EUYD. This is also related to wider contextual changes in Croatia, for example, youth policy responsibilities being moved from the State Office for Youth and Demography to a respective ministry. According to the interviews conducted, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth will take over the exclusive implementation of the EUYD. The role of the EUYD in terms of inclusion and equality, and access to education and training, is further discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

[109] LiJOT, *2024 veiklos ataskaita*, 2025.

[110] EU Survey, Published Results: FNAPSurvey2021, website.

4.1.2. Youth mainstreaming across the policy areas

While the level of youth mainstreaming varies across policy areas, there is no clear way to analyse the effectiveness of EUYS in this regard due to the absence of comprehensive targets or a monitoring system to measure it. Despite this, all interviewed EU stakeholders agreed that, **at the EU level, youth mainstreaming has advanced since 2022 but remains uneven and fragmented outside traditional domains such as education or employment**. EU-level stakeholders agreed that youth mainstreaming cannot be uniform, and such an expectation is unrealistic, as its effectiveness depends on each sector's capacity, priorities, political will, and openness to youth perspectives. At the same time, small, incremental efforts, even in less visible policy areas, can have transformative effects if supported by strong coordination and accountability. **The analysis conducted in the participating Member States also confirmed that youth mainstreaming is uneven across policy areas;** however, it was reflected in national contexts rather than linked to specific EUYS instruments.

Without senior buy-in, EUYS instruments and initiatives risk remaining symbolic. EU-level civil society representatives stressed that the mainstreaming's impact is highly contingent on political will and high-level commitment within the EC. A concern raised was also on the limited involvement of **Members of the EP** (MEPs) and other high-profile officials, with room for MEPs to feel more connected to the youth cause by, for example, getting involved in the national-level youth consultations. Youth Policy Dialogues with Commissioners, conducted on an annual basis, are an example of the EC's commitment to strengthening youth mainstreaming involving high-level officials. Between 6 December 2024 and 10 March 2025, 28 Youth Policy Dialogues hosted by 12 Member States took place during the first 100 days of the new mandate of the EC (the results of these Youth Policy Dialogues are analysed in the Introductory Part of this European Implementation Assessment, prepared by EPRS).[111] As the majority of the meetings were conducted in 2025, their effectiveness should be further evaluated, ensuring that the insights used fed into specific policy actions, as stated in the report. Only two Member State stakeholders addressed this initiative specifically. A Lithuanian interviewee mentioned that such dialogues mainly involve young people already active at the national or EU level, meaning invitations are limited to an existing pool. A stakeholder from Germany noted that, while the Youth Policy Dialogue format has proven successful, closer coordination with the EUYD is needed. Additionally, improved transparency (e.g., selection criteria) and participant outreach (e.g., communication format and channels suitable for youth) were highlighted. A discussion on separate policy areas is provided below, while specific EU-level examples are provided in Table 11, Annex 8.

Traditionally, sectors such as **education** or employment are more receptive to youth input, the former, on the EU level, having a long-standing engagement through DG EAC. While the interviewed EU stakeholders acknowledged this, several cautioned that it risks isolating youth within a single DG. Across all Member States examined, education remained the most visible policy area, though its effectiveness in terms of youth mainstreaming and perceptions among different stakeholders varied. National and regional German stakeholders added that overall, youth perspectives are adequately considered in education policy. In Croatia and Bulgaria, student and pupil organisations are occasionally included in consultations on education reforms (e.g., recent curriculum changes on religion in schools in Bulgaria, digital education reforms in Croatia); however, interviewees noted that inputs are not always taken into account. Digital education and citizenship education were also highlighted in Italy as areas with consistent progress. National consultations on digital citizenship, youth work through Universal Civic Service, and the Youth Panel at BIKs+[112] are promoting

[111] European Commission, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *The Youth Policy Dialogues during the first 100 days of the new mandate of the European Commission*, 2025.

[112] European Union, BIK Youth Panel, *Better Internet for Kids*, website.

mainstreaming on digital issues. Furthermore, in Portugal, there is no evidence of systematic youth consultation in the formal education policy. Survey respondents also noted youth mainstreaming opportunities within the education sector, including VET and dual training, media literacy, citizenship education, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

EU-level interviewees repeatedly viewed youth mainstreaming in the area of **employment** positively, highlighting initiatives such as Youth Guarantee, as a result of the EUYD. Moreover, DG EMPL, for instance, focuses on youth unemployment, VET, and entrepreneurship. However, while civil society representatives generally agreed with youth mainstreaming progress in employment, one interviewee criticised the process as tokenistic,[113] noting that youth perspectives are often added after the policy is designed, rather than being incorporated in the initial steps of the process. Interviewed stakeholders in the Member States agreed: programmes on entrepreneurship, employability are widespread (e.g., Portugal, Lithuania), but youth are rarely involved in labour policy design (e.g., in Portugal, Italy), consultations tend to prioritise employers or institutional actors (e.g., Croatia), conditioned by institutional restructuring (e.g., Bulgaria) or reactive socio-economic crises (e.g., Italy).

In these sectors and in **international development,** dedicated structures such as youth boards, ambassadors, and advisory groups support youth engagement. At the EU level, the DG for International Partnerships (INTPA) has institutionalised and structured development initiatives, such as establishing a Youth Sounding Board and an Overseas Territories Youth Sounding Board for non-EU countries (approximately 70 delegations have such structures). The existence of such measures (e.g., youth advisory groups) may signal progress in the process of youth mainstreaming, although, as indicated before, there is no clear pathway to measure the actual impact. However, the consulted representatives in the selected Member States did not mention international development.

Environmental and sustainability policies were seen as an area with growing youth engagement and cross-DG collaborations, including, for example, DG for Environment (ENV), DG for Climate Action (CLIMA), DG for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MARE), and DG for Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI). An EU-level researcher emphasised that the youth's willingness to drive the agenda should be harnessed. Civil society views have also been largely positive, highlighting the Youth Policy Dialogue with European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Christophe Hansen on generational renewal in agriculture and the inclusion of environmental organisations, with youth representation from rural youth organisations and young farmers. Interviewed EU-level civil society representative noted that this led to high-quality conversations and follow-ups, as a testament that Youth Policy Dialogues work best as a live process rather than a one-off conversation. Survey respondents also noted the European Climate Pact Ambassadors[114] as an opportunity for youth mainstreaming. In the Member States, youth-led projects and activism are encouraged (e.g., Portugal, Croatia, Italy), taking the form of ad hoc consultations or driven by campaigns or Erasmus+ and ESC programmes (e.g., Bulgaria), or designed mainly without youth-specific structures (e.g., Italy). A stakeholder from NRW in Germany stated that the ministries focusing on environmental issues are highly participatory-friendly. Similarly, urban planning policies also successfully engage youth, as mentioned by the same stakeholder.

Health and well-being were consistently regarded as lagging in terms of youth mainstreaming by all interviewed EU stakeholders. While **mental health** has become one of young people's top

[113] 'Something that a person or organisation does that seems to support or help a group of people who are treated unfairly in society, such as giving a member of that group an important or public position, but which is not meant to make changes that would help that group of people in a lasting way', Cambridge Dictionary, Tokenism, website.

[114] European Union, Become a Pact Ambassador, website.

concerns, according to Eurobarometer,[115] DG SANTE lacks a youth correspondent, and mainstreaming remains limited, despite a comprehensive mental health strategy.[116] A civil society representative described it as an area in which progress has not been managed effectively, lamenting the loss of focus on youth health and well-being since the pandemic. Similarly, most EU and Member State stakeholders agreed that youth health remains overlooked, with weak mainstreaming despite its centrality to young people's lives. This neglect can be illustrated by, for example, the cancellation of support programmes, such as a psychologist voucher in Portugal or the absence of a comprehensive youth mental health strategy in Italy. In Germany, the Youth Check at the federal level has proven particularly successful in the realm of health policies and labour laws.[117]

Based on the EU-level interviews, **security and defence** were identified as essential to youth and as emerging yet underdeveloped fields for youth mainstreaming. According to an interviewed EU-level researcher, youth organisations lack the capacity to meaningfully participate in the sector, as in established mainstreaming sectors such as education. For example, interviewees identified defence as an area in which young people from Germany have shown growing interest. Lastly, youth mainstreaming was less observed in areas such as **digitalisation, competition, and finance,** despite high youth relevance. Nevertheless, efforts at the EU level are underway to bridge existing gaps. For example, a dialogue on the EU Budget and Finance was launched via a public call on social media. Similarly, among the engaged Member States, other policy areas were addressed much less frequently, with certain initiatives highlighted showing some progress (e.g., Youth Panels or Digital Safety Panels in Croatia, Global Lithuania[118] and Create Lithuania[119] programmes, engaging diaspora youth). These findings are largely aligned with the above-presented discussion on EYGs in Chapter 3.

4.1.3. Barriers to youth mainstreaming

In addition to the challenges identified above, stakeholder interviews and desk research revealed that barriers to youth mainstreaming exist at all levels. These include institutional and structural, perception-related and cultural barriers, as well as constraints related to resource, capacity, and data,[120] as discussed further.

Institutional and structural barriers. At the EU level, stakeholders expressed concern about the **lack of cross-sectoral coordination and knowledge**. EU officials and researchers agreed that the breadth of sectors, EU programmes and initiatives makes it difficult to track developments; and that having detailed knowledge of the processes across the EC is nearly impossible. Combined with **limited interest** from some DGs, it is an important obstacle. Knowledge of policy design timing is also crucial to ensure early intervention, for example, timely EUYD consultations. For mainstreaming to be effective, messages from young people should ideally be incorporated into the policy design phase.[121] An interviewed EU official shared that institutions hold **varying expectations, and there**

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115 European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer 2282, *Youth and Democracy in the European Year of Youth*, 2022.

116 Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the governments of the Member States on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people in the European Union (2023/C/1337).

117 Moxon, D., Kovačić, M., Ștefan, V., *Learning from national and local approaches to youth mainstreaming and the use of youth perspective in policy making across Europe*, 2025.

118 Globali Lietuva, website.

119 Kurk Lietuvai, website.

120 See, for example, Deželan, T., Petković, S., Taru, M., *Youth Mainstreaming: The International Perspective*, 2025.

121 Moxon, D., Kovačić, M., Ștefan, V., *Learning from national and local approaches to youth mainstreaming and the use of youth perspective in policy making across Europe*, 2025.

is often a need to justify prioritising youth over other groups, such as retired citizens or people with a migrant background. This again leads to inconsistent implementation of youth mainstreaming.

At the Member State level, multifaceted barriers exist, **ranging from institutional fragmentation, lack of cross-sectoral collaboration, to the absence of structural mechanisms**, which are the most consistently reported by stakeholders. For example, in Portugal, institutional frameworks and formal participation channels tend to be prioritised. In Lithuania, for example, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour provides annual recommendations regarding youth to other ministries;[122] however, there are no binding mechanisms to ensure their implementation. In addition, not all ministries are part of the National Youth Affairs Council.[123] Thus, a body reporting directly to the Government or youth advisers within each respective Ministry is being considered. In Bulgaria, only a small number of municipalities use institutionalised dialogue through youth councils or working groups,[124] but these are often declaratory in nature, as agreed by all stakeholders. This calls for reactive or formalised cross-ministerial youth councils with transparent procedures[125] and accountability. Stakeholders in Portugal and Germany called for shifting from youth consultations to co-management models that give young people real decision-making power (e.g., based on the promising governance models of the Council of Europe, and youth hostels or the Youth Card in Portugal). Stakeholders from NRW in Germany also highlighted the need for suitable, fast, and responsive forms of mainstreaming, as by the time youth insights are collected, analysed, and published, they become irrelevant. An Italian stakeholder interviewed emphasised continuity and institutional memory, as the absence of permanent consultation spaces results in 'generational discontinuity': each cycle of youth representatives must rebuild relationships and mechanisms from scratch. Consultations are often episodic and dependent on specific events or funding cycles (e.g., EUYD rounds, EYY2022).

Additionally, the **absence of regulatory binding instruments**, such as youth checks or permanent advisory bodies, was noted in several Member States (e.g., Lithuania, Bulgaria, Italy). However, lessons from the Youth Check at the federal level in Germany should be used. For example, there is no binding obligation to carry out youth checks for every legislative proposal, and the results are not automatically taken into account during the legislative process. Thus, more institutional weight is needed,[126] as also confirmed by the interviews. Isolated but promising local innovations – youth checks in Parma and Bologna (Italy) were also highlighted as practices to scale up in the Italian context. Shared EU-level standards or guidance on local youth checks could further support this process. Moreover, a stakeholder from Campania in Italy shared that while systematic consultation mechanisms are missing, local and regional youth forums – such as municipal, provincial, and regional youth forums – play an important bridging role. This practice shows that bottom-up youth consultation is becoming a routine.

Perception-related or cultural barriers were widely acknowledged. Both EU officials and researchers noted that many administrative units lack a clear understanding of youth mainstreaming. While a Council Resolution formally defines youth mainstreaming,[127] there remains no shared

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122 Jaunimo Reikalų Agentūros Rekomendacijos dėl jaunimo politikos įgyvendinimo 2025 metams, 2025.

123 Jaunimo Reikalų Agentūra, JRT nariai, website.

124 Република България Министерство на младежта и спорта, Анализ на състоянието на политиките за младежта на местно ниво в България, 2025.

125 Kandilarov, E., *Bulgaria social briefing: The Problems and Challenges of Young People in Bulgaria and the State Policy for Youth*, Vol. 61(3), 2023.

126 KomJC, *Jugendgerechte Gesetzgebung mit dem Jugend-Check Eine Bilanz der 19. Legislaturperiode 2017-2021*, 2023.

127 Deželan, T., Petković, S., Taru, M., *Youth Mainstreaming: The International Perspective*, 2025.

understanding of its practical meaning.[128] An interviewed EU official emphasised that this creates inconsistencies across policy areas and institutions, as there is no common framework for applying the concept. An interviewee also agreed that, while youth mainstreaming is a priority, it remains challenging to persuade other DGs of its importance. Several DGs lack formally appointed youth correspondents, including DG SANTE and the DG for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf (MENA) (the newest DG), although the latter has indicated plans to nominate one soon. A lack of common understanding may lead to youth mainstreaming becoming an institutional formality rather than a fully participatory process. This gap underscores the need **for capacity-building among public officials**. Perception-related barriers may also lead to the instrumentalisation of youth mainstreaming.[129] On the Member State level, some still **face cultural attitudes towards youth**. A German survey respondent shared that the views of young people are considered valuable only once the youth meet certain criteria (e.g., working or paying taxes). Stakeholders from MV in Germany added that a compartmentalised approach to politics, organised in separate departments, often leads to categorical thinking. This was discussed together with MV youth during a Jugend im Landtag (Youth in Parliament)[130] initiative. A study in Lithuania revealed that youth indicate doubts that their ideas will be implemented or even considered,[131] and 54 % of Bulgarian youth believe that they do not possess any real public influence.[132] In Portugal, youth may also be devalued as a social group due to their job insecurity and economic dependence, as well as a lack of experience.[133] This was also recognised in survey respondents across the Member States.

Resource and capacity. Limited financial and human resources are particularly significant, as insufficient funding impacts outreach, consultation, and coherent coordination across institutions.[134] In this context, interviewed EU stakeholders viewed the EUYS as essential in ensuring youth remains a political priority, unlocking funding opportunities. Researchers also addressed the need to ensure the capacity of youth and youth organisations to share their views meaningfully. At the Member State level, funding instability and administrative capacity are closely linked to other types of barriers (e.g., institutional, structural barriers), exacerbating the underlying issues. For example, interviews in Croatia indicated that some local Governments lack the resources to systematically mainstream youth. In Bulgaria, 83 % of municipalities have designated youth officers, but, in many cases, the same person is responsible for multiple target groups (e.g., children, students, adults).[135]

Data, monitoring and evidence gaps. Furthermore, EU and Member State stakeholders highlighted the absence of systematic indicators and measurement instruments to track youth mainstreaming progress. At the EU level, while there are some examples of monitoring practices,[136] they are not

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128 Moxon, D., Kovačić, M., Ștefan, V., *Learning from national and local approaches to youth mainstreaming and the use of youth perspective in policy making across Europe*, 2025.

129 European Economic and Social Committee, *Structured and Meaningful Youth Participation in Policy and Decision-Making Processes - Mapping Local, National, EU, and International Good Practices*, 2024.

130 Landesjugendring Mecklenburg – Vorpommern, Jugend im Landtag 2025, website.

131 LiJOT, *Jaunimo j(si)traukimo Lietuvoje galimybių analizė Tyrimo ataskaita*, 2020.

132 Trend, Младежко участие и активизъм (май 2025), website.

133 Silva, M., Fernandes-Jesus, M., Loff, M., Nata, G., Menezes, I., *A Participação Política da Juventude em Portugal A participação política de jovens vista por dentro: perspetivas de ativistas sobre as formas, as causas, os motivos e o futuro*, 2022.

134 European Economic and Social Committee, *Structured and Meaningful Youth Participation in Policy and Decision-Making Processes - Mapping Local, National, EU, and International Good Practices*, 2024.

135 Република България Министерство на младежта и спорта, Анализ на състоянието на политиките за младежта на местно ниво в България, 2025.

136 See, for example, the EU Youth Dashboard and *Proposal for an updated dashboard of EU youth indicators – Support services to Expert Groups and mutual learning activities in the field of youth policy (June 2020-December 2021) – Final report*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021.

quantifiable or standardised, leaving policymakers without a clear way to evaluate improvements over time. Based on EU-level civil society interviews, the upcoming EUYS should present a clear way to track and measure its impact. A lack of reliable data to inform policymaking was a recurring weakness across the Member States. In particular, such a barrier was observed in Bulgaria, where stakeholders indicated that the national youth reports are sometimes seen as fragmented, superficial and infrequent. Considering that the lack of visibility and monitoring serves as a barrier to effective youth mainstreaming, stakeholders from Portugal also called for a greater EUYS visibility and impact monitoring. Lastly, in Lithuania, in certain policy areas, there is a lack of specific legal mechanisms to ensure the involvement of youth representatives in decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes.[137]

Other barriers to youth mainstreaming can be noted. A lack of citizenship education in schools was also observed as a barrier by interviewed EU officials, leaving many young people disconnected from the EU, unaware of various participation opportunities. Thus, the gap in the formal education curriculum is a missing link that could further bridge the gaps in youth mainstreaming. Lack of intergenerational solidarity (e.g., tendency to patronise youth) and youth-unfriendly procedures (e.g., large amounts of formal documents to analyse, read) reduce overall initiative and meaningful involvement.[138] Lastly, trends toward individualisation have decreased interest in traditional, collective youth organisations.[139] Challenges to participation and representation are further discussed in Chapter 5.

4.2. Relevance

This section examines which core elements of EU youth policy should continue to be prioritised in the EUYS, in contrast to other policy areas. Consulted EU-level stakeholders acknowledged that the question poses a challenge, and no clear proposal emerged, calling for a larger consultation process.

The evolution of EU youth policy has illustrated a steady increase in the degree of youth mainstreaming across various policy areas. In the first stages of youth mainstreaming, the areas of focus were education and training, employment and social inclusion and health and anti-discrimination.[140] By 2005, the European Youth Pact had expanded its scope to include issues such as family-work balance and social advancement, thereby embedding youth concerns more firmly into employment and social policy. The EUYS 2010-2018 further broadened the agenda and incorporated participation, voluntary activities, youth and the world, creativity and culture, thereby linking youth policy with cultural, international, and civic dimensions. This resulted in eight mainstreamed youth policy areas. With the three core areas of the **EUYS 2019-2027 and the EYGs, the degree of youth mainstreaming has reached its most comprehensive scope to date**.[141] This progression shows that, while mainstreaming in areas such as education and training, employment, and inclusion remained central to the EU youth policy throughout the years, there are newer thematic areas of interest, such as sustainability, mental health, housing, and others.

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137 Įsakymas dėl Nacionalinės jaunimo politikos 2023-2027 metų veiksmų plano patvirtinimo (2023/A1-469).

138 European Economic and Social Committee, *Structured and Meaningful Youth Participation in Policy and Decision-Making Processes - Mapping Local, National, EU, and International Good Practices*, 2024.

139 Humphrey, A., and Bliuc, A.-M., *Western Individualism and the Psychological Wellbeing of Young People: A Systematic Review of Their Associations*, Youth, 2(1), 2022.

140 Deželan, T., Petković, S., Taru, M., *Youth Mainstreaming: The International Perspective*, 2025.

141 European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks – A comparative overview*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

The interviews provided insights into whether all elements of the EUYS should remain within its scope. First, EU-level interviewees argued that, even if youth mainstreaming were to work well, there is a need for a **dedicated youth policy framework to articulate the vision and strategic priorities, unify stakeholder efforts, and serve as a blueprint for Member States**. At the EU level, there is no formulated youth policy which connects the different youth-related initiatives across all policy areas under one umbrella.[142] This fragmentation makes it difficult to integrate youth effectively across all policy areas, whereas a cross-sectoral framework would ensure this.[143] Thus, a combination of the two is needed – **a dedicated cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder youth strategy** that clearly states the vision and strategic priorities, further translated into sectoral action plans and respective funding. This calls for enhanced coordination, underscoring the EUYC's critical role. Similarly, on the Member State level, there is a need for greater coherence and coordination across sectors.

In addition, interviewed EU officials noted that the current EUYS is primarily driven by youth policy actors. They suggested that the EUYS should incorporate more foundational content (e.g., competitiveness, skills, civic participation, as discussed further in this section) to encourage **broader ownership across the different DGs or other policy areas**, in general. This could help DGs to fully recognise EUYS as part of their mandate (e.g., as the three EUYS areas Engage, Connect, Empower are more focused on youth policy). Such a point was also raised in other studies, indicating that **youth mainstreaming requires a shift in the organisation of policymaking and commitment from senior political leadership**.[144] This was also noted by an interviewed civil society representative, who suggested that EYGs could be linked to different policy areas and showcase actions across sectors. The example of the Intergenerational Fairness Strategy, which is scheduled for publication in 2026, was raised.[145]

Member State stakeholders highlighted the need for stronger **links between the EU and Member State levels**. For example, the situation in Croatia (no EUYD working group) signals a stronger need to ensure EUYS implementation at the Member State level, whereas in Bulgaria, stakeholders engaged called on each Member State to adopt a National Youth Mainstreaming plan and binding EU mechanisms. In contrast, an interviewed stakeholder from Germany highlighted the importance of maintaining a **flexible framework** that enables a strong connection between the EUYS and the federal Youth Strategy in Germany, allowing EU-level priorities to coexist with Member State-specific implementation. Moreover, in Italy, **regional realities were reflected** in an example from Campania, where EUYS supported youth mainstreaming by reinforcing local participation infrastructures (e.g., municipal youth forums). According to a representative from Italy, EUYS would be more effective if synergies were systematically developed at the municipal level by connecting EUYD cycles and outcomes to municipal agendas and their respective youth forums. Regulatory and budgetary standards at the EU level, which can be applied at the regional and local levels, were emphasised.

Several interviewed and surveyed stakeholders emphasised the **core areas of the EUYS, namely Engage, Connect, and Empower, and argued that those should be maintained**. The Engage area primarily relates to youth participation with many DGs organising events, dialogues, and other

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142 Hofmann-van de Poll, F., and Williamson, CVO CBE FRSA FHEA, D. H., *European Youth Strategies: A reflection and analysis – Background analysis for the EU Council of Europe youth partnership consultative process*, EU-CoE Youth Partnership, 2021.

143 Ibid.

144 Moxon, D., Kovačić, M., Ştefan, V., *Learning from national and local approaches to youth mainstreaming and the use of youth perspective in policy making across Europe*, 2025.

145 European Commission, Notes from our intergenerational fairness journey: what have we learnt so far?, website.

initiatives to involve young people in policymaking. Another interviewee added that youth participation should remain a core focus, with opportunities such as youth advisory boards and institutional policy dialogues. They cautioned, however, that this expansion in opportunities comes alongside a shrinking space for youth organisations, and thus safeguarding **civic space and civil society** should also be a future priority. In addition, **inclusion** as an essential angle of youth participation was noted. Similarly, **learning mobility**, notably through Erasmus+ and volunteering exchanges, should continue to play a central role, alongside the recognition and support of **youth workers** and non-formal learning, which are considered key to empowering young people.

EU-level interview and survey respondents agreed on the importance of mainstreaming youth issues across policy areas, while preserving youth-focused elements; although no explicit shortlist can be made, certain examples emerge. Topics such as **competitiveness, skills, democracy, EU citizenship, values, and identity should also be more widely integrated across relevant policy areas** rather than addressed mainly within youth policy. Competitiveness and skills development should be more visible in employment and skills policies; democracy and threats to it should fall under civic participation policies; and civic education should be embedded within formal education. This may also connect with broader EU initiatives such as the European Democracy Shield.[146] An interviewed EU official stressed the need to strengthen **the link between informal, non-formal, and formal education**, ensuring skills recognition (e.g., via Youthpass). An interviewed researcher and survey respondents argued that complex issues, such as **housing or mental health,** cannot be confined to a single youth strategy. Interviewed EU officials and civil society representatives emphasised that it is crucial to maintain the **Youth Check** and the **EUYD**, as EUYS inspires action at the national level and is powerful when used correctly (e.g., consultations are regular, and results are followed up). Lastly, stakeholders highlighted that all EUYS youth mainstreaming instruments should be better integrated, with clear explanations of their individual aims, their interconnections, and how different stakeholders can influence them.

4.3. Potential improvements

The following section summarises the key findings from the Chapter according to the evaluation criteria, followed by an overview of potential areas for improvement.

Table 2 – Key Chapter 4 findings and potential improvements

Effectiveness – key findings
Significant developments in youth mainstreaming have been seen since the European Year of Youth 2022, and with the recent introduction of new or strengthened EU Youth Strategy initiatives and instruments, such as the EU Youth Coordinator, Youth Check, internal and external European Commission's networks. These signal progress but remain in early stages.
While the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022 is widely acknowledged, **the EU Youth Dialogue remains the most visible** and operational mainstreaming instrument across the Member States. Yet, its effectiveness varies in terms of transparency, continuity and follow-up mechanisms.

[146] European Parliament, *Legislative Train 10.2025 Protecting our democracy, upholding our values*, 2025.

The EU Youth Coordinator has enhanced visibility and coordination by establishing networks, leading European Union Youth Strategy instruments, initiatives, and outreach. **The Youth Check represents a key innovation** in embedding youth perspectives in policy design, and its early success has yet to be assessed.

Youth mainstreaming remains uneven across policy areas both at the EU and Member State levels, being most developed in education, employment and international development (EU-level). Youth views are yet to be fully integrated in other policy areas (e.g., health, finance, defence). The environmental and sustainability fields show strong potential due to the activism of youth.

Youth mainstreaming **is hindered by institutional fragmentation, weak cross-sectoral coordination, cultural and perception-related barriers.** Some EU-level stakeholders and Member States also lack a shared understanding, dedicated structures, or binding accountability mechanisms. Limited **resources, capacity and monitoring** further constrain the implementation of the European Union Youth Strategy.

Relevance – key findings

A dedicated youth policy coordination framework remains relevant, providing a vision and strategic priorities for cross-sectoral alignment. **Core areas (Engage, Connect, Empower) remain foundational,** embodying a continued youth policy focus. To **increase ownership**, topics such as competitiveness, democracy, and mental health require better integration into respective policy areas. However, there is no clear consensus among stakeholders on a shortlist regarding specific sectoral elements.

Potential improvements

For the EU Youth Strategy post-2027, the European Commission should consider a hybrid model combining an overarching, unifying youth framework with **a shared vision and long-term strategic priorities, which are translated into relevant sectoral strategies**, action plans and dedicated funding. This should result from a participatory approach – consultations with relevant EU and Member State level stakeholders.

The European Commission should further empower the **EU Youth Coordinator as the central coordination and accountability mechanism**. The need for a stronger political mandate and additional resources should be investigated within the final EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 evaluation to determine the improvements.

The European Commission should further **align and strengthen new instruments, such as the Youth Check, its networks, and Youth Policy Dialogues with Commissioners**. Clearer links should be established between these instruments and their objectives (e.g., role of EU Youth Dialogue within the Youth Checks; links between Youth Check and the Youth Test). The Youth Check should be assessed after its initial phase, with greater transparency regarding its methodology and integration into policymaking.

The European Commission should continue cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder coordination at the EU level, ensuring that Directorates-General have youth structures (e.g., functioning sounding boards, appointed youth correspondents) and action plans (e.g., in the less mainstreamed areas such as health). **Member State authorities** should consider having fully functioning youth advisory bodies, shifting from youth consultations to co-management models that give young people real decision-making power.

The European Commission and Member State authorities should strengthen **institutional and youth capacities** for meaningful mainstreaming, including capacity-building for civil servants, further developing EU-level guidance (e.g., on youth checks) and common methodologies, and alleviating resource constraints faced by youth and youth organisations in the Member States.

5. Case study 1. Youth participation, inclusion and equality

Key findings

The EU Youth Dialogue, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps have supported progress on youth inclusion and equality. The EU Youth Dialogue has improved representation of youth groups but continues to underrepresent rural youth and youth not in education, employment or training, with ongoing gender imbalance despite progress. Some reasons for this include weak infrastructure, limited access to information, and financial constraints.

National initiatives by the six selected Member States address the underlying issues and implement public initiatives to increase participation among youth with fewer opportunities. On the other hand, sometimes Member States' Governments hesitate to engage, while youth organisations face funding challenges.

Youth organisations are central to promoting youth participation, civic engagement, and volunteering. They create inclusive spaces for youth expression, informal learning, and active citizenship. They also provide opportunities for underrepresented groups through specific projects. However, youth organisations face challenges, such as unstable, project-based funding and limited administrative capacity.

Youth work and volunteering serve as core platforms for civic engagement and empowerment, supported primarily through EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. They foster self-development, social skills, and, in some cases, employability. However, issues persist, namely a lack of recognition for skills acquired through volunteering, a lack of institutionalisation of the youth worker profession, and a lack of funding.

At the EU level, there have been efforts to simplify processes and improve the efficiency of the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes through lump-sum contributions and streamlined monitoring and reporting systems, aiming to reduce administrative burdens. The barriers remain at the Member State level, as countries continue to face challenges related to complex application and reporting procedures.

This Chapter presents youth participation within the context of the EUYS, drawing on EU and Member State-level desk research, stakeholder interviews, and a survey. Firstly, the Chapter outlines the context of the study (section 5.1) and explores the effectiveness of the EUYS and its instruments (the EUYD) and programmes (Erasmus+, ESC) in addressing youth inclusion and equality (section 5.2), especially of those with fewer opportunities. Secondly, the role of youth organisations in fostering active citizenship and promoting social inclusion in different Member States is presented. Thirdly, youth work and volunteering across Europe are examined to understand how and to what extent they empower young Europeans. Lastly, section 5.3 analyses the efficiency of the EUYS and the section 5.4 provides conclusions and potential improvements.

5.1. Context of the case study

Active **youth participation** is a central ambition of the EU, as reflected in the objectives of the EUYS 2019–2027 and its instruments. The EUYS aims to enable young people to shape their own lives, encourage their active engagement as citizens and agents of positive change inspired by EU values, and contribute to eradicating poverty and discrimination.[147] This is also reflected in several **EYGs**,[148] such as: EYG1 (Connecting EU with Youth), which aims to strengthen the relationship between young people and the EU institutions; EYG3 (Inclusive Societies) that focuses on equality and inclusion for all youth; EYG9 (Space and Participation for All), aimed at strengthening youth democratic participation and providing dedicated youth spaces; and EYG11 (Youth Organisations and European Programmes), which emphasises equal opportunities for youth to reach youth organisations and take part in programmes.

Youth participation includes young people's **involvement in decision-making** and their **civic action or activism**, including efforts such as community initiatives, volunteering, and other forms of social or political engagement.[149] One of the Eurostat indicators of youth participation and representation is the involvement of 16–29-year-olds in formal or informal volunteering activities or other forms of active citizenship. The rate of involvement in informal voluntary activities differs widely between the six Member States examined in this study. For example, in Portugal, 14.9 % of young people engage in informal activities (just above the EU-27 average at 14.4 %), while in Italy and Bulgaria, the rate is only 3.7 % and 3.4 %, respectively.[150] Moreover, regional differences exist in participation. For example, in Portugal, regional participation rates are lower in the Autonomous Region of Azores (5.5 %), compared to the Central Portugal Region (8.9 %).[151] In Italy, among youth who participated in voluntary activities through the Universal Civic Service, 54% served in the South (including the islands), 24% in the Centre, and 22% in the North.[152] Similarly, in Bulgaria, among youth who have not participated in informal activities, the majority live in rural areas. The EU-27 average regarding youth participation in such informal voluntary activities stands at 14.4 %, reflecting significant disparities across the EU and the six Member States analysed (see Figure 3).

For youth participation in formal voluntary activities, the EU-27 average is at 13.3 % (2022); however, since participation in formal and informal activities is not measured together, the overall activity level remains unclear.[153] Moreover, political participation, measured by the intention of 18–30-year-olds to vote in the European elections, is relatively high, with an EU-27 average of 64% and most Member States showing a majority of youth intending to vote.[154] Nevertheless, some variation exists among Member States, with Portugal having one of the highest levels of youth voter intent (more than 77 %), whereas rates are lower in other Member States, for example, Germany (65 %) and

147 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 18 December 2018 on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C456/01).

148 Youth Goals, website.

149 SALTO, *Mapping Study of European Civic Engagement Frameworks and their links with Youth Volunteering*, n.d.

150 Eurostat, Persons participating in formal/informal voluntary activities or active citizenship by sex, age and educational attainment, website.

151 Instituto Nacional de Estadística, *Survey on Volunteer Work 2018*, 2019.

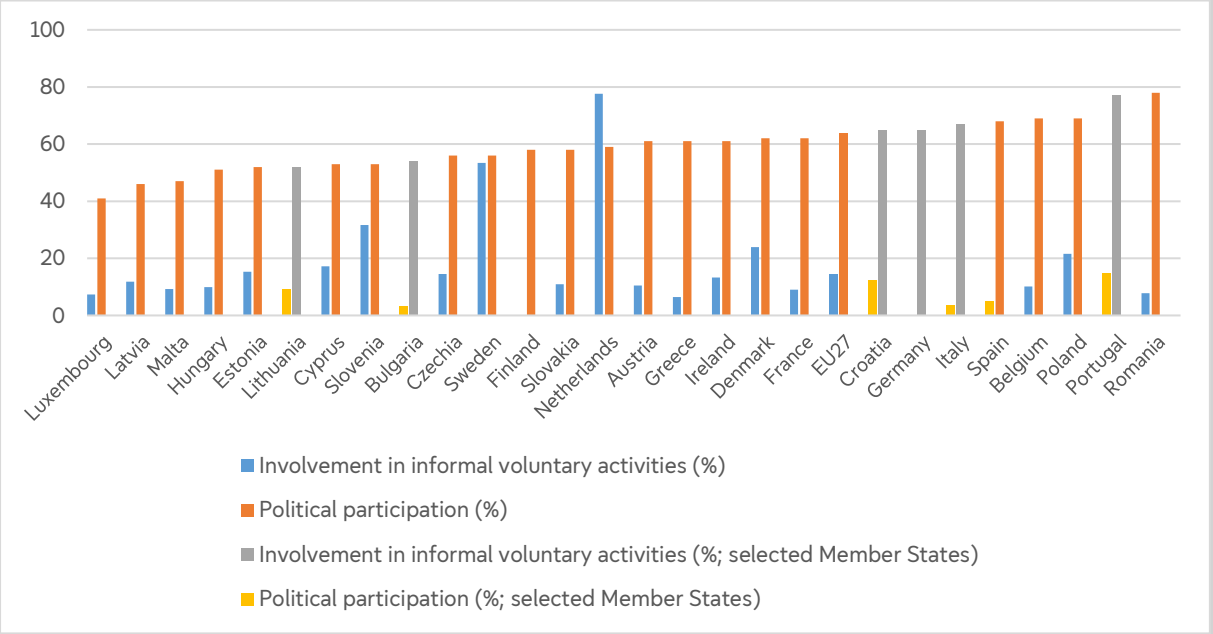
152 European Commission, Youth Wiki, website.

153 Eurostat, Persons participating in formal/informal voluntary activities or active citizenship by sex, age and educational attainment, website.

154 European Commission, Eurobarometer 3181, *Youth and Democracy*, website.

Lithuania (52 %) (see Figure 3). The existing variation underscores the challenges the EUYS seeks to address in promoting inclusion, equality, and active youth engagement.

Figure 3 - Percentage of youth involvement in informal voluntary and political activities in the EU and Member States, % (2022)



Source: Eurostat, Persons participating in formal/informal voluntary activities or active citizenship by sex, age and educational attainment, website and European Commission, Eurobarometer 3181, *Youth and Democracy*, website.
*No data is available on the involvement in informal voluntary activities (%) in Finland and Germany.

5.2. Effectiveness

5.2.1. EUYS' role in promoting youth inclusion and equality

The following section examines the implementation of the EUYS at the EU level and in six Member States, focusing on youth inclusion and equality in the EUYD, particularly for rural youth and NEET groups. Subsequently, the EU programmes, namely Erasmus+ and the ESC, are analysed with respect to their impact on increasing inclusion, particularly among youth with fewer opportunities. Finally, the arising challenges, issues, and concerns related to youth inclusion and equality are presented.

In addition to the specific EYGs listed above, the EUYS has actively **promoted youth inclusion and equality** at the EU-level, explicitly prioritising young people 'with fewer opportunities and/or those whose voices may be overlooked' as one of its five guiding principles.[155] Additionally, the 2022–2024 Work Plan emphasised inclusive societies, with around half of the actions directly addressing social inclusion, reflecting a high-priority area for the EUYS.[156] This commitment is operationalised through a range of EU-level instruments and initiatives, including the EUYD, Erasmus+, ESC and other youth-

[155] Hofmann-van de Poll, F., and Williamson, CVO CBE FRSA FHEA, D. H., *European Youth Strategies: A reflection and analysis – Background analysis for the EU Council of Europe youth partnership consultative process*, EU-CoE Youth Partnership, 2021, p.16.

[156] Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the revision of the EU Youth Strategy Work Plan 2022-2024 (2023/C 185/05).

focused programmes. However, based on the survey results, most EU-level respondents agreed that the EUYS promotes inclusion only to some or to a small extent. Challenges related to the promotion of inclusion are discussed further in this section.

National Initiative Supporting Rural Youth Participation (Germany)

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has a project called Junge Täler (Young Valleys), which promotes the active participation of young people in the rural Erzgebirge area. The project encourages youth to design their community. Through workshops, a summer camp and a year-round programme, participants explore their environment, develop new skills and gain confidence to initiate change. Not only does the project involve rural youth, but it also strengthens democracy, civic participation, cooperation and commitment among youth.

Source: Junge Täler, website.

At the Member State level, the EUYS has been useful in promoting inclusion; however, national-level limitations still exist. For example, interviewed stakeholders in both Bulgaria and Portugal agreed that **progress of inclusion remains uneven** and highly dependent on project-based interventions rather than systemic measures, **lacks visibility and direction,** and struggles to reach youth with fewer opportunities. On the other hand, the main progress in Croatia comes from European-level initiatives and programmes, through the National Erasmus+ agency or the EP Office in Croatia, while there is a lack of initiative from the Government's side, according to a Croatian interviewee. In contrast, the concepts of NEET and youth with fewer opportunities have been introduced into Lithuanian national law and the respective measures, as these terms were originally defined in a European context, through programmes such as Erasmus+ and ESC.

Inclusion within the EUYD

As one of the key EUYS instruments, **the EUYD** invited around 38 000 young people from EU-27 to participate in face-to-face events in the latest cycle at the time of drafting this report, namely the 11th cycle (January 2025 – June 2026).[157] The EUYD is considered **increasingly inclusive** and successful in representing youth from minority groups.[158] Based on stakeholder feedback summarised in the Review of the Nine Cycles of the EUYD (2010–2022), **the EUYD is an effective mechanism for integrating young people's perspectives into policy design and improving the visibility of youth policy overall**. This is reflected in the EUYD participation rates at the EU level, as the **rate of ethnic, religious minorities, young people who are disabled and LGBTQ+ young people, exceeds the expected level of participation** if they were selected randomly from the population. The overrepresentation is between two and three times higher than the expected number of participants. The data from the three most recent cycles (9th, 10th, and 11th), which together covered the period from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2026, suggest that there remains a gender bias in participation in the EUYD, with young women participating less than young men. However, there has been quite some progress in narrowing this difference between the genders.[159] In addition, minority groups (young people with disabilities, or those from ethnic, religious, or sexual minorities) are over-represented within the consultation sample, though again this over-representation has been reducing towards the benchmark level over the last three cycles of the EUYD. According to the same source, the proportion of young people from rural areas has declined, and this group is underrepresented in the 11th cycle (1 January 2025 – 30 June 2026). Furthermore,

157 Bárta, O. and Moxon, D., *EUYD 11 Youth Conference in Lublin Poland, 2025.*

158 Irina Lonean, *Review of the nine cycles of the EU Youth Dialogue (2010-2022)*, 2024.

159 Moxon D. and Bárta O., *EUYD11 Results of the Consultation Phase: Connecting the EU with Youth*, 2025.

the proportion of young people who are NEETs has seen a significant increase in the 11th cycle (1 January 2025 – 30 June 2026) compared to the previous two, though it is noted that the majority of these come from the data provided by the Italian National Working Group, and if Italy is excluded **only 5.9 % of the young people in the consultation were NEETs, meaning this group remains under-represented**. Additional data regarding the EUYD inclusion is presented in the Annex 9.

Progress towards youth inclusion and equality is also seen in the Member States examined, for example, in **Bulgaria**. **There, the EUYD cycles, particularly during EYY2022, broadened participation, raised awareness of EU priorities**, and offered a platform for young people to voice concerns at both national and local levels.[160] According to the source, through the National Programme for Active Labour Market Policies, which was inspired by the EYY2022, youth and Roma mediators appointed in municipalities played a key role in reaching NEET groups. According to the same source, in 2022, mediators motivated 4 626 inactive young people to register with the Employment Agency, encouraging their reintegration into education, training, or employment. An interviewee from Germany also stated that the EUYD has promoted inclusion and equality. During the 10th EUYD cycle (1 July 2023 – 31 December 2024), activities targeting young people who had not previously been reached, such as those with disabilities or those living in rural areas, were deliberately organised, resulting in new perspectives, experiences, and an expansion of the EUYD's partner networks. Moreover, in MV in Germany, funding has been allocated to support youth inclusion and equality, with a particular focus on young people with fewer opportunities.[161] Special attention has been given to projects addressing rural youth. Integration initiatives, tolerance promotion, reduction of xenophobia, and outreach programmes targeting youth with fewer opportunities have been prioritised. However, one Lithuanian interviewee mentioned that the EUYD process lacks follow-up actions after the consultation stage, and many insights remain unaddressed, which highlights the need to ensure a transparent follow-up to reach and represent all youth groups.

Inclusion of rural youth, NEETs and other underrepresented groups

According to the EU-level interviewee, **rural youth has gained prominence in the EU policy agenda** in 2020, and, as a result, seminars and workshops have been held with young people from rural areas in collaboration with Rural Youth Europe network, DG AGRI in the EC and the Rural Pact. Additionally, at the Member State level, Croatia included 'youth in rural areas' as a national priority in the National Youth Programme.[162] Despite these efforts, EUYD participants usually come from rather urbanised areas, namely, large cities or rural areas around them. This was also acknowledged by stakeholders in several Member States, including Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, and Portugal, reflecting the need to encourage greater youth participation from more distant rural areas. An Italian interviewee highlighted a broader sociopolitical dimension: a crisis of participation, particularly acute in southern Italy, including Campania, where turnout in local and national elections often falls below 40 %, and party-based youth organisations have largely disappeared. These lower rates of participation among rural youth may be due to several factors, such as difficulties in reaching rural youth, as reported by youth organisations, or difficulties for young people in these areas in accessing training, resources, and employment.[163] Additionally, in Bulgaria, rural youth continue to be insufficiently reached, due to **poor transport links, limited access to information, underdeveloped local infrastructure, and high demographic polarisation**, as in rural areas, there are fewer people,

160 Ministry of Youth and Sports, *Youth Report for the period 2021-2022*, 2024.

161 Administrative Regulation of the Ministry for Social Affairs, Integration, and Equality of August 31, 2021 on the Guideline for the Promotion of Child and Youth Welfare in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, 2021.

162 Central State Office for Demography and Youth, *National Youth Programme for the period 2023 to 2025*, n.d.

163 Șerban, A. M., and Brazienė, R., *Young people in rural areas: diverse, ignored and unfulfilled*, 2021.

and those who leave to pursue education rarely come back.[164] Meanwhile, in cities and larger municipalities, there is more youth, but also more fragmentation of youth groups and insufficient dialogue. In rural areas of Lithuania, about 18 % of youth are inclined to participate in voluntary activities; meanwhile, in towns and cities, the rates are nearly twice as high, at 32 % and 34 %, respectively.[165] Furthermore, Lithuanian city residents are more often aware of international volunteering opportunities.[166]

Several interviewed EU officials agreed that **NEET youth are also not being reached enough**. One interviewed EU official argued that these NEET participants may not perceive education, participation, or volunteering as beneficial because they lack access to role models and because their communities do not prioritise civic engagement. In the context of the EUYS, the EC has implemented measures through the EUYD to foster inclusion, with dedicated actions on this topic. Several DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL) programmes, such as the Youth Guarantee and the ALMA programme, are designed for NEET youth and enable them to participate in vocational exchanges abroad, thereby increasing their employability in the job market. At the Member State level, NEET rates remain significantly high. For example, in Bulgaria, half of young people report having peers who are NEET for at least 1 year.[167] However, initiatives are also present in the Member States. For instance, the Lithuanian project JUDAM (LET'S MOVE), which lasted from 2019 to 2023, reached 1 535 young people who were facing social, economic, legal, or institutional challenges and applied early intervention measures. As a result of the project, 76 % of participants successfully entered the labour market or the education system.[168] Additionally, Portugal implements programmes to promote social inclusion, such as the Programa Escolhas (Choices Programme), described below.

Beyond NEETs and rural youth, assessing social inclusion for other groups may be limited, as data on religion, ethnicity or other backgrounds are rarely collected. Across selected Member States, the **inclusion of ethnic groups or migrant youth** remains a difficult topic. In Bulgaria, the inclusion of minority communities, such as Roma, depends on the initiative of individual NGOs or youth centres, with no consistent national strategy. Similarly, in Croatia, it is unclear to what extent migrant or refugee backgrounds are included. In Germany, integration and equal opportunities continue to be a challenge that requires attention, and those with refugee or migration backgrounds experience limitations in accessing Erasmus+ and ESC programmes.[169] According to a Lithuanian interviewee, the system is not always able to meet their needs due to language barriers and cultural differences. Integration challenges are related to a lack of proficiency in the Lithuanian language and to the recognition of acquired education, qualifications, or professions.[170] In Italy, to reach youth with a migratory background, the Migrant Integration Portal offers dedicated information in multiple languages. However, no further information is provided on this initiative. Finally, Lithuanian and Portuguese interviewees noted that **non-organised youth should also be more specifically targeted,** as the system favours active, motivated youth and those who actively seek involvement opportunities.

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164 Република България Министерство на младежта и спорта, Анализ на състоянието на политиките за младежта на местно ниво в България, 2025.

165 LiJOT, *Jaunimo savanoriškos veiklos vystymas Lietuvoje Tyrimo ataskaita*, 2020.

166 Jaunimo Reikalų Agentūra, *Jaunimo problematikos tyrimas*, 2023.

167 Kandilarov, E., *Bulgaria social briefing: The Problems and Challenges of Young People in Bulgaria and the State Policy for Youth*, Vol. 61(3), 2023.

168 Buzaitytė-Kašalynienė, J., et al., *Projekto 'JUDAM' veiksmingumas Tyrimo ataskaita*, 2021.

169 EU Survey, Published Results: FNAPSurvey2021, website.

170 Įsakymas dėl nacionalinės jaunimo politikos 2023–2027 metų veiksmų plano patvirtinimo (2023/A1-469).

Inclusion within the Erasmus+ and ESC

Achievements in youth inclusion should also be noted in the context of the Erasmus+ and ESC programmes, as highlighted by the engaged stakeholders. **The EC's Implementing Decision on inclusion measures within Erasmus+ and ESC 2021–2027**,[171] adopted in 2021, further embeds support mechanisms, including financial assistance for participants with fewer opportunities and guidelines for involved organisations to promote inclusion. Over time, Erasmus+ has increased the participation of young people with fewer opportunities from around 10 % in 2014–2020 to **15 % in 2023, demonstrating measurable progress in promoting social inclusion at the EU level.**[172] In addition, Erasmus+ has supported over 6.2 million participants between 2014 and 2020 and around 1.6 million between 2021 and 2023.[173] Similarly, between 2021 and 2022, the proportion of youth with fewer opportunities participating in ESC projects was 35 %, which reflects targeted social inclusion measures.[174] The inclusion in the Erasmus+ programme participation is also reflected at the Member State level. To illustrate, in Lithuania during the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ implementation period, more than 3 600 youth participated in youth-sector mobility activities, and more than a quarter (28 %) were youth with fewer opportunities.[175] However, in Lithuania, the 2021-2023 participation rate of youth with fewer opportunities did not meet the intended 30 % target. Additionally, the Croatian Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Family and Social Policy published a Volunteering Act,[176] which includes a principle of inclusive volunteering, aiming to pay more attention to young volunteer groups at risk of social exclusion.[177]

Despite programmes promoting youth inclusion and raising awareness of opportunities, EU and Member States' interviewees remained critical, stating that **Erasmus+ suffers from structural limitations and still predominantly benefits more privileged youth, namely university students from higher-income families**, while those in more vulnerable situations are often left behind. At the Member State level, this manifests in **cost, transportation, and information barriers**, making the programme biased toward youth who already possess certain socio-economic advantages or are enrolled in higher education. The obstacles can include the inability to afford upfront travel expenses, limited access to reliable transportation networks (especially in rural areas), and unequal awareness of the programmes due to varying levels of institutional support and outreach. Thus, more work is needed to reach young people with fewer opportunities, even though support such as financial top-ups exists. Additionally, EU-level interviewees believed that participants are sometimes classified as youth with fewer opportunities in a tokenistic way. Lastly, interviewed EU stakeholders and Member States' civil society representatives mentioned that **the progress on inclusion cannot be solely attributed to the EUYS itself**. For example, the progress described above about Erasmus+ and ESC has occurred primarily within the framework of these programmes

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171 Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1877 of 22 October 2021 on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027 (2021/C/7493).

172 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the interim evaluation of the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme and the final evaluation of the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme COM(2025) 395, 2025.

173 European Parliament: Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union, Gaušas, S., Švedkauskienė, A., Leiputė, B., Langham, E. et al., *EU education, youth and sport policy – Overview and future perspectives*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

174 Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1877 of 22 October 2021 on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027 (2021/C/7493).

175 CIVITTA, *Assessing Erasmus+ programme Implementation in Lithuania: 2021-2027 Mid-term Review and 2014-2020 Final Evaluation*, 2024.

176 Croatian Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Volunteering Act, 2021.

177 European Commission, Youth Wiki, website.

themselves. Other programmes, outside the direct EUYS instruments, that contribute to the enhancement of youth inclusion are described in Annex 7.

5.2.2. The role of youth organisations in fostering active citizenship and promoting social inclusion

Overall, youth organisations play an essential role in supporting youth participation across different Member States. They have been the **primary drivers of youth participation in democratic processes, civic engagement, and volunteering**, often filling gaps in public authorities' limited institutional outreach.[178] Their role has been vital in creating spaces where young people can both express their views and gain practical experience in active citizenship. Youth organisations and youth centres serve as **hubs of information, non-formal and informal learning, and civic participation**, enabling youth to engage in programmes and projects relevant to them. Based on the survey results, more than half of the respondents believed that youth organisations help young people get involved in democratic processes, act as active citizens, and participate in volunteering, thereby promoting social inclusion and youth participation to a large or very large extent.

Civil society and public sector projects in the selected Member States

Bulgaria: The Youth Democracy: Together for the Future Academy, launched by the Bulgarian Euro-Atlantic Youth Club in 2024, trained 20 young Bulgarians to become active participants in democratic life and develop civic and leadership skills on topics like democracy, media literacy, artificial intelligence (AI), and public speaking.

Italy: Giovanisì approved a €3.5 million intervention to support cooperation projects in rural areas, aimed at counteracting depopulation and promoting digital/multifunction agricultural solutions.

Portugal: The project Programa Escolhas (Schools Programme) by the Portuguese Sport and Youth Institute enabled young people from vulnerable communities to engage in locally tailored projects, promoting their social integration.

Sources: Bulgarian Euro-Atlantic Youth Club, Projects, website; Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude, Programa Escolhas, website; Giovanisì, Approvato intervento da 3,5 milioni per lo sviluppo delle zone rurali, website.

Youth organisations are recognised as entities that **contribute to the implementation of youth policy**. In Lithuania, structures such as the National Youth Council and municipal Youth Affairs Councils contribute to youth mainstreaming.[179] Similarly, in Bulgaria, the National Youth Forum, as the umbrella organisation, has coordinated initiatives for youth consultation and engagement, while smaller NGOs have worked with specific groups such as Roma youth, young people with disabilities, and NEETs. In Croatia, civil society organisations are recognised as valuable partners in **implementing youth-oriented activities**, which further promote understanding, dialogue, and solidarity between generations and encourage the inclusion of youth in local communities. The Ministry of Science, Education, and Youth in Croatia continuously provides funding to support projects of youth-oriented associations, ensuring that activities respond to the needs and problems of young people and have an impact on improving their quality of life and preventing social exclusion. In MV, in Germany, the example of the Youth in Parliament was given.

The crucial role of youth organisations is evident from analyses of various volunteering programmes. For example, in Lithuania, the Jaunimo Savanoriška Tarnyba (Youth Voluntary Service) evaluation

[178] Deželan, T., *Study on key trends in youth participation and youth organisations' responses to them*, 2024.

[179] Lietuvos Respublikos Jaunimo Politikos Pagrindų Įstatymas IX-1871, 2003.

showed that 57.3 % of participating youth agreed that their organisation contributed to a **deeper meaning of their experience**.[180] Organisations are also significantly involved in developing the **youth's civic responsibility**. For example, the National Youth Council of Lithuania's VOTE16 initiative advocates lowering the voting age to 16 for municipal elections, thereby promoting youth civic engagement and increasing electoral participation.[181] (For more information on programmes and initiatives mentioned in this study, see Annex 7). In Bulgaria, young people have been **mobilised for social causes** such as environmental protection, humanitarian aid for refugees, and support for disadvantaged groups through the ESC and Erasmus+. An example of a youth organisation's involvement in Portugal is the CO-CREATE European Project, which highlights the transformative potential of Youth-led Participatory Action.[182] In the Portuguese Youth Alliances, adolescents were empowered to identify challenges and propose policy solutions. The approach also demonstrated that youth can be active agents in shaping public policy, particularly in health and education. An Italian interviewee shared examples of **peer-education labs and co-design workshops** promoted by Generazioni Connesse (Connected Generations).[183] The work of member associations of the Advisory Board of the Safer Internet Centre has built empowerment paths centred on education, in contrast to hate speech and violence online. Despite some positive results in some Member States, the role of youth organisations in Croatia remains unclear, as there is no legal definition of 'youth organisation' or a national volunteering programme comparable to Italy's Universal Civic service or Lithuania's Jaunimo Savanoriška Tarnyba (Youth Voluntary Service).[184]

Despite these achievements, challenges persist in several Member States. In Bulgaria, the sustainability of youth organisations is undermined by **unstable, project-based funding and limited administrative capacity**, which restricts continuity and prevents long-term engagement. Similarly, in Portugal, a critical view persists that **youth participation often remains symbolic and instrumental**, with limited real influence over policymaking. According to an interviewee in Portugal, it is not part of the political culture in Portugal to integrate young people into the definition of policies that affect them. Volunteering in Portugal is also increasingly viewed not as an expression of civic commitment, but rather as a **strategic tool for enhancing employability**. This reflects broader individualistic tendencies, potentially undermining the transformative potential of youth participation.[185] At the same time, the issue of the shrinking civil society space, which seems to pose a threat to Germany's youth organisations, has been mentioned in some interviews. The interviewees pointed out that extreme-right political groups may disrupt youth organisations' events or use political instruments, such as parliamentary inquiries, to question the eligibility of youth organisations' funding and, to some extent, to put pressure on them. Other relevant challenges faced by youth organisations are described in sub-section 4.1.3., which discusses the barriers to youth mainstreaming.

5.2.3. Youth work and volunteering empower young people

Youth work and volunteering often provide platforms and opportunities for young people to engage in actions that **influence society through community projects, advocacy, or participation in programmes such as Erasmus+ and the ESC**. Youth work is promoted through programmes, for

180 Kairė, S., *Jaunimo savanoriškos tarnybos (JST) programos įgyvendinimo ir mokymosi perspektyvos tyrimas: ataskaita*, 2024.

181 LiJOT, VOTE16, website.

182 Co-CREATE, website.

183 Generazioni Connesse Safer Internet Centre, website.

184 European Commission, Youth Wiki, website.

185 Jardim, C. and Marques da Silva, S., *Young People Engaging in Volunteering: Questioning a Generational Trend in an Individualized Society*, Societies, 8(1), 2018, p. 1-11.

example, by youth worker mobility actions, exchanges, and cooperation projects that test new pedagogies and instruments. The two EU programmes remain the main instruments for systematic youth work on the EU level, while Member States are encouraged to complement these efforts nationally and create additional opportunities. In addition, the **European Youth Work Agenda,** adopted after the start of the EUYS in 2020, and positioned under the Empower pillar of the EUYS, has been a key step, implemented through collective efforts under the open method of coordination and in partnership with the Council of Europe. One of the recent EU-level efforts was **the European Youth Work Convention organised in Malta in 2025**. Despite these developments, many volunteer-based organisations suffered significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, right after the agenda was adopted, thereby limiting its impact.[186]

Regarding the impact of youth work, a study in five Member States revealed varying results, ranging from youth having a high level of responsibility and ownership (e.g., Finland) to a greater degree of control by organisations/youth workers (e.g., Italy).[187] The findings of the same study showed that youth through youth work in Finland **learn about their identity, talents and strengths. Moreover, their life-management and social skills improved, as well as empathy and competences related to working life**. Making new friends brought them new experiences, empowered their careers, and introduced them to new hobbies. In recent years, in addition to providing a safe space for youth to try out new things and collaborate with others, youth work has emerged **as a space that can support youth in addressing individual challenges in a rapidly changing environment** (e.g., due to pandemics, economic instabilities).[188] Other studies also show that youth work engages young people, helps them build meaningful relationships and provides tools for social and personal development.[189]

Both the EU and Member States' stakeholders at the national level share the view that youth work and volunteering are among the most empowering tools, **enabling youth to acquire new skills, gain confidence, feel part of their communities, and have a substantial impact on their future**. More specifically, volunteering strengthens democracy and active citizenship by fostering youth empowerment, solidarity, and European values through collaborative activities that enhance social, civic, and professional engagement.[190] Moreover, one interviewed EU civil society representative explained that these programmes equip youth with valuable competences, such as **leadership, intercultural understanding, organisational skills, and critical thinking** – soft skills often missing in formalised contexts. Moreover, youth work may provide **a safe space** with support from adults who are not teachers or parents/carers. However, as noted above, youth clubs are often perceived by society primarily as providers of after-school activities, which can make their recognition appear tokenistic. This is also supported by the survey, as in different Member States, the results revealed that **volunteering and youth work empower youth to a large or a very large extent**. For instance, the Universal Civic Service in Italy is widely recognised as a flagship initiative: each year, tens of

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186 Ogou Corbi, C. and Rossino, G., *Surviving (and even thriving) during a crisis: the experiences of youth organisations during the Covid-19 pandemic*, n.d.

187 Ord, J.; Carletti, M.; Cooper, S.; Dansac, C.; Morciano, D.; Siurala, L.; Taru, M. *The Impact of Youth Work in Europe. A Study of five European Countries*; Juvenes Print - Suomen Yliopistopaino Oy: Helsinki, Finland, 2018.

188 Hofmann-van de Poll., F. *European Youth Work Developments and Challenges – A Meta-Synthesis*, Youth, 4(3), 1194-1210, 2024.

189 See, for example: JUGEND für Europa, *Ongoing Developments within the European Youth Work Community of Practice*, 2020; European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *The contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment - Executive Summary*, 2015.

190 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the interim evaluation of the 2021-2027 European Solidarity Corps and final evaluation of the 2018-2020 European Solidarity Corps, COM(2025) 144, 2025.

thousands of young people participate in projects across social, cultural, and environmental domains, with evidence indicating that many develop new skills and a stronger sense of civic identity.[191] Germany is among the countries with comparatively well-developed structures for youth work and volunteering, as well as legal regulations for voluntary services.[192] In fact, volunteer work is recognised through the Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Moreover, the Juleica Card is an official nationwide identity document (ID) for individuals who volunteer in youth work. This ID serves as proof of qualifications and as recognition of volunteering.[193]

However, in Portugal, the opinions on whether volunteering is empowering are somewhat mixed. While the empowering role of youth work and volunteering was acknowledged, several interviewees argued that volunteering practices are often instrumentalised and are more often used as tools for employability than for genuine civic engagement. **Volunteering may also address country-specific problems**, as it was reported that ESC projects have played a particularly important role in Bulgaria in empowering disadvantaged youth, including Roma, young people with disabilities, and refugees. In addition, local Bulgarian volunteer actions during crises, such as providing aid during the COVID-19 pandemic, organising solidarity initiatives for refugees, or campaigns on the environment, have demonstrated the strong potential of volunteering to **foster solidarity and civic responsibility**.

Challenges exist in recognising the skills and active citizenship gained through youth work and volunteering, according to interviewed EU officials and civil society representatives.[194] Further strengthening the EU-wide recognition frameworks and instruments, such as **Youthpass,** is needed. Moreover, EU-level interviewees shared that recognition at the political level is lacking, as there is a limited understanding of youth work. Among Member States, including Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania and Portugal, **youth work suffers from a lack of institutionalisation**, formal recognition, and sustainable support structures. In Bulgaria and Croatia, there is **no formal recognition of the youth worker profession** in the national classification of occupations. An attempt to introduce the national framework of competences for the youth workers and the development of the youth work standards in Croatia, developed by the University of Rijeka and the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, was rejected by the Croatian Government, without a chance for a pledge. According to Lithuanian interviewees, progress is being made, as new legislation will come into force in 2026, recognising the profession of youth worker with a status equivalent to that of social workers. Another issue is that in Member States, including Croatia, Italy, Germany, Lithuania and Portugal, **youth workers and youth organisations are often underfunded**, and struggle to gather sufficient resources, which results in high staff turnover, lack of professional development opportunities, the exclusion or over-prioritisation of certain target groups, and reduced capacity to provide tailored support. A Croatian interviewee shared that youth work is heavily dependent on project funding, with a significant share of funds coming from international sources. One German interviewee emphasised the importance of improving funding mechanisms to address social inequalities that limit the participation of disadvantaged youth, for example, due to mobility issues.

Visibility and awareness of volunteering programmes and youth work, as well as understanding of their benefits and responsibilities, among youth are low. As a result, youth are unwilling to engage in volunteering activities.[195] EU-level interviewees suggested that one of the reasons for this is the lack of information provision in schools, as youth are not introduced to volunteering

191 Italiadomani, Universal Civic Service, website.

192 European Commission, Youth Wiki, website.

193 Julieca, Was ist de Juleica, website.

194 Volunteer IE, *Policy Recommendations: Youth Engagement & Volunteering in Strengthening EU Values*, n.d.

195 OECD, *Unleashing the potential of volunteering for local development An international comparison of trends and tools*, 2024.

concepts and their outcomes, such as critical thinking and freedom of expression. Another major challenge across Bulgaria, Croatia and Portugal is the **limited inclusion of rural and marginalised youth** in youth work and participation structures. Thus, youth work has proven to be a tool for civic engagement, but access to such opportunities remains unequal.

5.3. Efficiency

The EU or Member State-level stakeholders **shared no major insights regarding the EUYS or its instruments' efficiency.** The insights, when shared, pertained to the efficiency of the Erasmus+ and ESC programmes. Several interviewed EU officials argued that the EUYS itself and its instruments do not create extra burdens, and if anything, there has been a focus on simplification of mechanisms. For example, one interviewed EU official emphasised the role of the EU Stakeholders Group, which helps to share and collect information, provide direct access to EC officials, and simplify communication with stakeholders. However, it was described at a broader EUYS level rather than in terms of inclusion and equality. The efficiency in relation to Erasmus+, ESC, and national youth policy implementation, as highlighted by stakeholders and desk research, is described below.

The **Erasmus+ programme** has been shown to be relatively efficient at the EU level between 2021 and 2027. Several **simplification measures** (e.g., lump-sum contributions for partnerships, new types of smaller grants, and the extension of the accreditation scheme) have been designed, which stakeholders have evaluated positively.[196] EU instruments supporting social inclusion and equality have had a positive impact, as evidenced by one survey in which project participants reported a mean score of 3.4 and project team members 2.9 (on a 0–10 scale) when asked whether they had observed or experienced barriers to inclusion.[197] In addition, the streamlined funding rules, the more coherent programme structure, and the programme's monitoring mechanisms were found to be proportionate, as they have helped minimise management costs and improve accessibility.

The findings above are more positive than the analysis at the Member States' level, which revealed that **several Member States continue to face challenges** in implementing the Erasmus+ and ESC programmes. Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, and Portugal all report administrative and financial burdens arising from complex application processes, reporting requirements, and compliance with EU standards. Additionally, all Member States implied that **small organisations are the ones affected the most**, which primarily affects youth from rural areas or less privileged settings, NEETs, refugees, or Roma youth, specifically in Bulgaria. More specifically, in Lithuania, about one in two Key Action 1 (KA1) and one in nine Key Action 2 (KA2) applications are funded, indicating strong competition between organisations and putting those less experienced at a disadvantage.[198] However, based on an interview with an Italian stakeholder, the EUYS has also imposed burdens on certain stakeholders, mainly in terms of human and organisational resources, as it requires considerable time, staff, and coordination capacity from institutions. Survey respondents from the Member States agreed that among the most affected stakeholders are youth organisations, local municipalities, and youth workers.

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196 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the interim evaluation of the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme and the final evaluation of the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme COM(2025) 395, 2025.

197 Böhler, J., Fennes, H., Karsten, A., and Mayerl, M., *Effects and outcomes of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme – Comparative Research Report 2014–2020*, 2022.

198 CIVITTA, *Assessing Erasmus+ programme Implementation in Lithuania: 2021-2027 Mid-term Review and 2014-2020 Final Evaluation*, 2024.

Regarding **the Key Actions (KA) of Erasmus+ at the EU level, KA1 (Learning Mobility of Individuals), KA2 (Cooperation among Organisations and Institutions), and KA3 (Support to Policy Development and Cooperation) all demonstrate positive cost-effectiveness** and systemic benefits.[199] On the other hand, in Lithuania, between 2021 and 2027, €10.3 million has been distributed for KA1 and KA2 activities.[200] While funding for youth sector applications has risen, it **remains below demand**, and the budget compared to education and training is unevenly distributed. Participation in Erasmus+ programmes can also often be hindered by **financial costs**, such as tuition fees, travel and living costs, as indicated by 73 % of respondents in the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) survey.[201] For instance, only 39 % of respondents reported receiving funding before departure, 39 % within 30 days of arrival, and 35 % later than that period. Interviewed EU-level participants also noted challenges linked to the complexity of the youth component of Erasmus+, which can be difficult for organisations or individuals unfamiliar with EU funding procedures**.**

At the Member State level, many municipalities in Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Portugal have **limited internal financial resources** to support youth initiatives. In Bulgaria, for example, 73 out of 132 municipalities (55 %) rely solely on local budgets, while only 59 out of 132 municipalities (45 %) use external sources such as EU programmes, national programmes, or partnerships with NGOs and private donors.[202] Additionally, only 34 out of 132 municipalities (26 %) have internal funding programmes specifically supporting youth initiatives, while 98 out of 132 (74 %) do not. Youth organisations in Lithuania face financial barriers due to **fragmented and/or inconsistent municipal regulations, including restrictions that limit funding eligibility** to locally registered organisations and narrow application windows.[203] These rules further reduce access to funding, sometimes leaving organisations without support and threatening their sustainability. Additional obstacles include **limited budget availability for school accreditation processes, rigid applications due to an overemphasis on general objectives in programme guidance, a lack of cross-border cooperation in certain actions, and inadequate information technology (IT) systems.**[204] According to an interviewed EU official, there are many outreach instruments, such as social media campaigns and the European Youth Portal, but many young people still do not know about the opportunities available to them.

199 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the interim evaluation of the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme and the final evaluation of the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme COM(2025) 395, 2025.

200 CIVITTA, *Assessing Erasmus+ programme Implementation in Lithuania: 2021-2027 Mid-term Review and 2014-2020 Final Evaluation*, 2024.

201 European Youth Forum, *Supporting the Inclusion of INGYOs in the EU Youth Dialogue*, 2024.

202 Република България Министерство на младежта и спорта, Анализ на състоянието на политиките за младежта на местно ниво в България, 2025.

203 Europos namai, *Bendruomeninės ir savanoriškos veiklos Lietuvoje tyrimas*, 2020.

204 European Youth Forum, *Supporting the Inclusion of INGYOs in the EU Youth Dialogue*, 2024.

5.4. Moving forward

The following section summarises the key findings from the Chapter according to the evaluation criteria, followed by an overview of potential areas for improvement.

Table 3 – Key Chapter 5 findings and potential improvements

Effectiveness – key findings
The EU Youth Strategy, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps have played a role in promoting youth inclusion, equality, and participation. Participation rates from recent EU Youth Dialogue cycles show **increased representation of minority and disadvantaged groups**, though **rural youth and NEETs remain underrepresented**. Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps have **expanded access and inclusion**, yet participation still tends to **favour more privileged youth**.
At Member State level, the EU Youth Strategy has **inspired positive developments**, such as **programmes on youth not in education, employment or training,** but progress remains **uneven and project based**. Persistent **information, mobility, and funding barriers**, as well as **limited institutional capacity**, constrain inclusion.
Youth organisations and youth work across Europe play a crucial role in **empowering young people by developing their skills, confidence, civic identity, and broader civic competences**, encouraging active democratic participation. However, their full potential is constrained by persistent challenges, including uneven participation, unequal access, particularly for disadvantaged or rural youth, weak institutional recognition, unstable funding, and limited integration into policymaking processes.
Efficiency – key findings
The EU Youth Strategy and its instruments do not create additional burdens; however, at the Member State level, implementing Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps remains a challenge due to **complex application procedures, heavy reporting, and financial constraints**, particularly for first-time, small organisations and youth from rural or underrepresented backgrounds.
Local youth organisations face **insufficient internal funding** to support youth initiatives, relying heavily on limited local budgets and unstable external sources. Funding programmes for youth are frequently **scarce or inconsistent**, with fragmented regulations and restrictive eligibility criteria further constraining access to available resources. This threatens the capacity to reach and include diverse young people.
Potential improvements
The European Commission and Member State authorities should continue strengthening the **EU Youth Dialogue** by **improving its visibility** and ensuring that young participants understand how their input is translated into national and European policies. Prioritising a more **diverse selection of international, national and local youth organisations** for the EU Youth Dialogue would enhance the representation of underrepresented communities and support more inclusive youth policy outcomes.

The European Commission should continue strengthening the EU Youth Dialogue and the programmes' participation mechanisms to **reach rural youth, youth not in education, employment and training, non-organised youth** and **ensure gender equality** in participation rates at the EU level. At the **Member State level,** public authorities should ensure that programmes and initiatives include more rural youth and youth not in education, employment and training, as well as ethnic minorities and migrant youth. This could be done through community-based outreach, decentralised participation mechanisms, and investment in local youth work, co-creating solutions with youth organisations and other civil society stakeholders.
The European Commission and Member State authorities should ensure that the European consultation mechanism is continuous and connected to National Youth Councils, youth organisations, and other relevant stakeholders to **enhance the consistency and institutionalisation of youth participation at all levels**. The external EU Stakeholders Network can be further utilised to ensure continuity between the EU Youth Dialogue cycles and ongoing youth participation measures at the EU and Member State levels.
The European Commission and Member State authorities should explore additional support measures within the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes to increase inclusivity and accessibility. More specifically, **participation of youth with fewer opportunities**, namely rural youth, youth not in education, employment or training, and youth from lower socio-economic status families, should be monitored. Simplified administrative barriers or application and participation support for **first-time or small organisations** remain relevant.
Member State authorities should continue strengthening the youth worker profession, including national qualification frameworks, training standards, and accreditation, where relevant. To do so, Member States should further support and collaborate in implementing the **European Youth Work Agenda.** Additionally, efforts within **the education system** could help introduce students to the role, value, and professional standards of youth work.
The European Commission and Member State authorities should continue to disseminate information on **youth participation opportunities**, as this is essential for promoting inclusion. It can be achieved through raising awareness, sharing best practices, and exchanging knowledge at the EU and Member States levels, including national, regional, and local levels. Youth, youth organisations, youth workers and other stakeholders should be involved.

6. Case study 2. Quality education and training

Key findings

Access to quality education and training is uneven across six Member States, with significant differences between them regarding the number of youth not in education, employment or training and the number of young people who graduate secondary school.

At both the EU and Member State levels, stakeholders see youth work as a useful channel towards formal education and training. Progress towards improving access to quality school education and higher education is mixed at the Member State level, with some progress in reducing the rate of early leavers and improving completion rates in certain Member States, while in others, school closures have had a negative impact on access to quality school education, which in turn reduces the opportunity for accessing higher education.

Despite its importance, there remains progress to be made in certain Member States regarding youth work, particularly regarding the need to further professionalise the sector. The European Youth Work Agenda is a key framework for the Member States to further improve the quality and sustainability of youth work.

The EU Youth Strategy addresses youth concerns regarding education to a mixed degree. While there is alignment in the focus on education generally [i.e. through EYG8 (Quality Education)], specific areas, including the digital transformation and sustainability, are only partially addressed.

The implementation of the EU Youth Strategy is constrained by the specific contexts of the Member States. In most Member States examined, youth work and youth organisations face insufficient funding, relying heavily on limited local budgets and unstable external sources. Funding programmes for youth are frequently scarce or inconsistent, with fragmented regulations and restrictive eligibility criteria further constraining access to resources. This creates financial instability for many organisations, threatening their sustainability and reducing their capacity to reach and include diverse young people.

This Chapter presents access to quality education and training within the context of the EUYS, drawing on EU and Member State level desk research, stakeholder interviews, and a survey. Firstly, beyond the context of the study (section 6.1), the Chapter explores the effectiveness of the EUYS in improving access to quality education and training (section 6.2). Secondly, the relevance of the EUYS to the concerns of youth in different Member States regarding quality education and training is presented (section 6.3). Thirdly, the efficiency of the EUYS regarding access to quality education and training is analysed (section 6.4). Section 6.5 provides conclusions and potential improvements.

6.1. Context of the case study

The EUYS aims to improve access to **quality formal,**[205] **informal,**[206] **and non-formal education and training,**[207] including VET[208] and apprenticeships,[209] which helps promote European values and citizenship. Within this context, the EUYS promotes European values, such as democracy, tolerance, and solidarity, and encourages young people to become active and responsible European citizens. This is also reflected in several **EYGs,**[210] such as EYG8 (Quality Learning), which aims to integrate and improve different forms of learning, equipping young people for the challenges of an ever-changing life in the 21st century.

The EUYS fully supports quality education and training and views it as key in fostering active citizenship, inclusive societies, and the employability of young people. EUYS also aims to support universal access to quality education, ensuring adequately funded and recognised non-formal education, creating more participative, personalised and cooperative learning-centred education methods, equipping young people with life skills, and ensuring citizenship education.[211] The EUYS also emphasises the importance of providing equal access to quality education and training, and to formal and non-formal learning environments, for young people in rural areas or those belonging to marginalised groups; another target is the strengthening of educators' capabilities to work with marginalised youth. **The EUYS aims to ensure young people's equal access to youth organisations and programmes (such as Erasmus+ and ESC), positioning these programmes as key in fostering active citizenship and skills**. While Case study 1. Youth participation, inclusion and equality above presents youth participation through a lens of youth inclusion in informal and non-formal education, this Chapter aims to provide greater focus on formal education and training, where possible; however, both topics are closely interlinked, as EUYS has a stronger focus on informal and non-formal learning.

High rates of basic skill underachievement, disparities in the level of skills development within and between Member States, as well as between students from differing socio-economic backgrounds, remain prevalent youth issues.[212] In the realm of non-formal education and training

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205 Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (e.g. in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification (Cedefop).

206 Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is mostly unintentional from the learner's perspective (Cedefop).

207 Learning which is embedded in planned activities not always explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view (Cedefop).

208 VET is the training in skills and teaching of knowledge related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation in which the student or employee wishes to participate. This may be undertaken at an educational institution, as part of secondary or tertiary education, or may be part of initial training during employment, for example as an apprentice, or as a combination of formal education and workplace learning (Eurostat).

209 In an apprenticeship, you divide your time between learning in school and training in a company. Usually, you will have a contract with the company and get paid for your work. When you finish your apprenticeship, you receive a fully recognised diploma or certification (European Commission).

210 Youth Goals, website.

211 Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 18 December 2018 on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C456/01).

212 Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1877 of 22 October 2021 on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027 (2021/C/7493); European Commission:

in 2023, only 12 % of young people (ages 15–29) on average participated in non-formal learning (with Bulgaria and Germany having the lowest participation rates),[213] as presented in Chapter 5. Regarding formal education, there is an EU-level target that the share of early leavers[214] from education and training should be less than 9 % by 2030, and as of 2024, this target is nearly met, with only 9.3 % of students being early leavers.[215] However, there are significant differences between Member States. For example, the 9 % target has already been met in Croatia, Portugal, Bulgaria, and Lithuania, at 2 %, 6.6 %, 8.2 % and 8.4 % respectively. Other Member States, such as Italy (9.8 %) and Germany (12.9 %) have not yet met the target. Similarly, there are large differences between Member States in the percentage of young people (aged 20–24) who have achieved at least upper secondary educational attainment, which is considered to be the minimum desirable educational attainment level for EU citizens.[216] Over 90 % have achieved this level of attainment in Croatia (97.7 %), Lithuania (92.1 %), and Bulgaria (90.2 %), fewer than 90 % have in Portugal (89.3 %) and Italy (86.5 %), and as few as 76 % have in Germany.[217] This variation highlights the challenges that the EUYS seeks to address in promoting quality education and training for young people.

6.2. Effectiveness

6.2.1. EUYS supporting equal access to quality education and training

The following section addresses both the EU and Member State levels by assessing how the EUYS supports equal access to quality education and training for young people. Subsequently, the extent to which youth work and volunteering are used as a channel for education, training, and employment is discussed. Finally, the extent to which Erasmus+ and the ESC ensure access to a diverse representation of young people is outlined.

Access to quality education and training is an important priority at the EU level. As part of the **European Education Area (EEA)**, whose common priorities with the EUYS include the improvement of quality, equity and inclusion in education and training, improving access to lifelong learning, mobility, it is highlighted that high-quality education and training is needed to provide citizens with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to thrive and to ensure Europe's economic resilience and social prosperity.[218] As part of the EEA, many initiatives have been taken to promote quality in education and training. To enable all learners to attain at least basic competences, the Council issued a **Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning**, providing a framework for eight key competences[219] needed for lifelong learning.[220] Another initiative linked to the EEA is the **Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training**, which promotes quality in education and

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Education and training monitor 2022 – Comparative report*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022.

213 European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *The situation of young people in the European Union – EU youth report 2024*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025.

214 Early leaver from education and training refers to a person aged 18 to 24 who has completed at most lower secondary education and is not involved in further education or training.

215 Eurostat, Early leavers from education and training by labour status, website.

216 European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Situation of young people in the European Union – Commission staff working document*, Publications Office, 2018.

217 Eurostat, Young persons (aged 20-24) with at least upper secondary educational attainment level by sex, website.

218 European Commission, Improving quality and equity - initiatives, website.

219 Literary competence; multilingual competence; mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering; digital competence; personal, social and learning to learn competence; citizenship competence; entrepreneurship competence; and cultural awareness and expression competence.

220 Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning (2018/C 189/01), 2018.

training by identifying better ways to invest in policies and supporting Member States in developing evidence-based approaches to policy design.[221] The **European Toolkit for Schools** specifically supports early childhood education and care, school education, and initial vocational education. This toolkit supports stakeholders at these levels of education with practical resources, videos and self-assessment tools to support high-quality education and training, and promote the exchange of experiences among school stakeholders and policymakers.[222] Although many of these initiatives may directly be grouped with the education policy area, as described above, the EUYS has a role in promoting both formal and informal/non-formal learning experiences, with EEA being a key umbrella framework for this.

In addition, at the EU level, **micro-credentials** are being used to improve access to quality education and training, giving learners a way of acquiring new labour market-relevant skills on top of a qualification, which can improve access to employment.[223] In addition, micro-credentials can increase the outreach of education institutions, especially in **VET**, giving access to education for learners who previously would not have been reached. Furthermore, **apprenticeships** and **dual education**[224] have also been used to improve access to quality education and training. Apprenticeships have been identified as helping young people make smoother transitions from school to employment, as well as adults in their upskilling and reskilling pathways.[225] Moreover, dual education and training offer the benefits of blending classroom with work-based learning to a large number of students and help boost employment rates.[226]

At the Member State level, the EUYS has supported equal access to quality education and training to an extent. Interviewees in both Bulgaria and Italy agreed that the **EUYS and its instruments have facilitated access to quality education and training.** However, it was noted in Bulgaria that this is primarily related to EU programmes rather than systemic reforms in formal education. In Lithuania, information on the impacts of the EUYS in the area of education and training was limited, meaning no assessment of formal education could be made by interviewees. In Portugal, efforts to align national youth policies with EYGs have been made, though this was mainly in regard to youth work and volunteering rather than formal education. In Germany, public perception is that the EUYS is mainly related to non-formal education, with one interviewed stakeholder even suggesting the EUYS and its instruments have no impact on quality education and training.

Regarding **school education** at the Member State level, Portugal has seen progress in reducing its rate of early leavers. Under the Portugal 2020 strategy, within the scope of the Europe 2020 Strategy, Portugal established the goal of reducing the percentage of young people between 18 and 24 years old who left school without completing secondary education to 10 %, and in 2019, this percentage fell to 10.6 %, the lowest value recorded in Portugal since this indicator began to be calculated (around two decades).[227] In comparison, the situation in Lithuania is less positive, with nearly a quarter (24 %) of public high schools in the country closing between 2008 and 2018,

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221 European Commission, Improving quality and equity - initiatives, website.

222 European Commission, European Toolkit for Schools, website.

223 CEDEFOP, *Microcredentials for labour market education and training The added value for end users*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023.

224 Programmes that combine school- or college- and work-based education. Both components are substantial (i.e go beyond a single internship or occasional class), although the work-based part usually occupies 50 % of the programme time or more (UNESCO).

225 CEDEFOP, Apprenticeships, website.

226 European Parliament, *FOCUS ON: Dual Education: a bridge over troubled waters?*, n.d.

227 European Commission, Youth Wiki, website.

impacting the exam scores of displaced students.[228] The closures were mainly due to the worsening demographic situation, with the aim of maintaining a somewhat efficient and effective school network. On average, they scored around 8 % lower in the mathematics exam and 10 % lower in the Lithuanian state exam. As a result of poorer exam scores, displaced students were 6.2 % less likely to continue their studies in higher education by enrolling in a university. An example of a national education progress programme aimed at addressing access to quality learning, although outside of the youth policy area, is Tūkstantmečio mokyklų programa (The Millennium Schools programme).[229] It aims to ensure equal access to modern, high-standard education across all participating municipalities.

EUYS instruments have expanded access to quality learning pathways in Italy, especially via Erasmus+ mobility and non-formal learning in the Universal Civic Service. An Italian stakeholder reports >76 000 Italian Erasmus+ participants in 2024 and >54 000 Universal Civic Service volunteers in 2023, over 10 000 of whom were young people with fewer opportunities, often from Southern/rural contexts, arguing that these instruments not only widened learning options but reinforced social inclusion.[230] Moreover, on a regional level, a stakeholder for Campania highlighted that public transport is free for students up to 26 years of age on public transport routes between home and school or university. The initiative supports sustainable mobility and eases access to education for young people and was proposed by the Regional Youth Forum. Nevertheless, differences between urban and rural areas persist according to interview data.

Regarding **higher education** at the Member State level, Portugal has made progress in expanding access to higher education, including through EU-supported reforms and alignment with Bologna Process goals, resulting in increased enrolment and completion rates among young people. To the contrary, in Lithuania, there has been little progress, and access to higher education has remained unequal. Students from lower socio-economic status (SES) have lower academic achievements and therefore are less likely to receive state-funded higher education study places. This is a financial barrier since higher education costs increase significantly.[231] Furthermore, youth with special needs or disabilities are less likely to enter higher education and to complete their studies on time.[232] Pupils from low-income families and those with disabilities, particularly males, were less likely to complete upper secondary education, limiting their chances of entering higher education. In 2021, only 50 % of pupils from low-income families enrolled in higher education institutions, a 29-percentage point lower rate than their peers, and this gap has widened since 2017. These disparities are especially pronounced in university admissions, where students from low-income backgrounds were nearly three times less likely to enrol than others, while differences in college admissions remained modest.

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228 Jakučionytė, E., Pusevaitė, I., Singh S., *School Closures and Implications for Student Outcomes: Evidence from Lithuania Working Paper Series*, 2022.

229 Tūkstantmečio mokyklų programa, website.

230 INDIRE, *Rapporto Erasmus+ Italia 2024*, 2024.

231 Pusevaitė, I., Jėckaitė, V., Vitkauskaitė, A., *Kaip skirtingo SES moksleiviams sukurti lygias galimybes įgyti aukštąjį išsilavinimą Aukštojo mokslo prieinamumas*, 2020.

232 Januševskaitė, G., Pusevaitė, I., Palevič, M., Urbis, V., Juškienė, A., Skirmantas, R., Jakštys R., *Lietuvos studijų būklė*, 2022.

6.2.2. Youth work and volunteering as a channel for education, training, and employment

Youth work, through its activities of a social, cultural, environmental and/or political nature, can be an essential channel into education, training, and employment, and vice versa. The general framework for the support of youth work in the EU is the European Youth Work Agenda which aims to, among other things, 'give particular attention to the implementation of the Agenda as part of the EUYS and, where possible, fully integrate youth work policies into all levels of youth policy and the associated strategies (national, regional and local) in the Member States'.[233] At the EU level, youth work shows a strong contribution to addressing the challenges young people are facing, including by developing participants' skills and competences which can be used to help gain employment.[234]

Europe Goes Local

A project to strengthen the youth work community of practice at the local level

The project is a platform supporting quality development in local youth work by facilitating dialogue and cooperation, providing concrete activities, learning, and networking opportunities, tools, and sources of knowledge. All partners are invited to contribute actively to the activities of the platform via sharing knowledge, creating tools, networking, advocacy and dissemination of the project outcomes.

An example of a good practice highlighted on this platform is the **Youth Centre Grabrik** project in Croatia. This is a youth centre in Croatia, and part of its actions have included the organisation of workshops to help young people acquire competences to help them become more employable and competitive in the labour market, through networking and volunteering, strengthen the community's social capital, and through the information they gain new knowledge about the opportunities provided through different mobility programs.

Source: Europe Goes Local, Youth empowerment means community growth, website; Europe Goes Local, Youth Centre Grabrik, website.

EU-level interviews highlighted that **youth work and volunteering have been described by participants as 'life-changing'; they provide opportunities that cultivate purpose, equip young people with valuable skills for life and employment, and activate engagement**. This is a particularly strong area, especially in the EUYD and programmes such as Erasmus+ and ESC, as they often focus on soft skills that are often missing from formal education environments. The interviews at the EU level also suggested that youth work gives a sense of belonging to youth workers, as well as giving them access to a trusted adult who is not a teacher or parent. However, they suggested that youth work is still not recognised enough for providing this access and sense of belonging. For example, youth clubs can have this benefit, but the perception is that it is just somewhere young people can play football and see friends, not enough focus is put on the fact that youth workers are there and can help.

An EU-level civil society representative also described **youth work as empowering to young people**, with an existing alumni network that operates informally within the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and allows people to help each other, making youth work more visible. In addition,

[233] Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01).

[234] European Commission: Directorate-General for Education and Culture, *The contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment Results of the expert group set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015 – Executive summary*, 2015.

an EU official highlighted that the **Europe Goes Local** project was a project that has brought policy and practice together and led to tangible achievements in youth work. However, issues remain with making employers more aware of the skills gained through youth work, and issues with the **official recognition of these skills and experiences**. Despite EU and national policy efforts, concrete use and availability of opportunities for validation of non-formal and informal learning are currently still lacking.[235] An interviewed civil society representative added that **there remains a lack of understanding from the employment sector about the transfer of the qualities and the skills learned during volunteering experiences** and how these are recognised by employers. Attempts have been made to improve the situation in this regard, with the Union of Skills including the aim of creating a Skills Portability initiative, which is intended to enhance the portability of skills and qualifications across the EU, independently of where they were acquired. This will make it easier to recognise and accept skills and qualifications across the EU through the promotion of the use of digital credentials.[236]

At the Member State level, there is similar positivity surrounding the impact of youth work as a channel towards formal education and training. In Bulgaria, interviewees agreed that youth work and volunteering significantly support transitions into education, training, and employment, especially for young people at risk of exclusion. **Youth work and volunteering provide accessible, practical learning environments that allow young people to develop competences often missing in formal education**. Volunteering helps young people acquire transversal skills such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving, intercultural awareness, and digital literacy. These competences enhance employability and prepare young people for further study or entry into the labour market. In addition, Youth NGOs play a central role by providing non-formal learning, civic education, and leadership training. For example, youth academies and peer-to-peer workshops strengthen soft skills, while thematic projects (environmental, social, cultural) allow young people to take responsibility and demonstrate initiative. Such activities not only contribute to employability but also help prevent social exclusion by connecting NEET youth with supportive networks and community participation.

In Lithuania, **both national and European youth work and volunteering experiences are recognised and create significant benefits for youth who intend to move into education or training**. Youth who participate in the Jaunimo Savanoriška Tarnyba (Youth Voluntary Service)[237] or those holding a Youthpass certificate from a long-term Erasmus+ and ESC volunteering project receive an additional 0.25 points when applying to higher education institutions.[238] Through this process, non-formal learning gains broader recognition in both formal education and society at large.[239] These extra entrance points were cited as one of the strongest motivators to enter the programme among the participants.[240] In addition, an interviewee shared an example of a Lithuanian youth NGO, Actio Catholica Patria, in Kaunas, that aims to mediate between young people and schools by supporting communication and helping those who may lack the social skills to represent themselves or express their position. Such youth work helps young people stay engaged in education and reduce the risk of social exclusion, leading to smoother transitions into learning and

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235 CEDEFOP, *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning THIRD EDITION*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023.

236 European Commission, Union of Skills, website.

237 Jaunimo Reikalų Agentūra, Jaunimo Savanoriška Tarnyba, website.

238 Kairė, S., *Jaunimo savanoriškos tarnybos (JST) programos įgyvendinimo ir mokymosi perspektyvos tyrimas: ataskaita*, 2024.

239 EU Survey, Published Results: FNAPSurvey2021, website.

240 Kairė, S., *Jaunimo savanoriškos tarnybos (JST) programos įgyvendinimo ir mokymosi perspektyvos tyrimas: ataskaita*, 2024.

employment. On the other hand, an interviewed official also shared insights that youth work and volunteering help prevent dropping out of the system (becoming a NEET) rather than helping move into the system.

Youth work and volunteering in Portugal also help young people move into education and training. For example, the interviews noted that programmes such as Programma Escolhas (Choices Programme) engage young people from vulnerable communities in structured activities **and can support inclusion and empowerment**. These experiences often help young people develop soft skills, build confidence, and ultimately reconnect with educational pathways. Interviewees also affirmed that **youth work and volunteering are increasingly integrated into national youth policy and aligned with EUYS**. The experience gained can then help young people transition into formal education or vocational training, particularly when supported by mentoring and structured follow-up. Germany is among the countries with comparatively well-developed structures for youth work and volunteering as well as legal regulations for voluntary services according to interview data. This is confirmed by Kiilakoski (2018), who categorises Germany as having a strong practice architecture supporting youth work.[241] In fact, volunteer work is recognised through the Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.[242] Moreover, survey data found that youth work and volunteering help young people feel empowered and treated as active citizens to a large and very large extent.

However, across the Member States, there is still progress to be made regarding youth work. In Portugal, interviewees noted that youth work **is not yet formalised**, and its role in educational transitions is not consistently recognised or funded, limiting its strategic use as a bridge into education and training. The story is similar in Bulgaria, where interviewees noted the competences gained through volunteering and youth work are not formally validated.

For the future, **more action is needed to ensure the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities to be able to access quality education and training**. Many improvements are related to the topic of youth inclusion, thus linking to those already presented in the report (see Chapter 5). In addition, one interviewed EU official noted that it is necessary to **tackle technical volunteering issues**, such as issues with visa procedures and the recognition of volunteering, and to support youth organisations – especially smaller organisations – in taking full advantage of the opportunities available, as well as ensuring greater synergies between the various EU programmes targeting youth.

6.2.3. The role of EU programmes in ensuring diverse perspectives

At the EU level, steps were taken to ensure that Erasmus+ and the ESC can be accessed by youth with fewer opportunities. Data on both programmes show strong progression on inclusion (EYG3), **suggesting better reach of young people with fewer opportunities** (see section 5.2 above for more details). Erasmus+ seeks to promote equal opportunities and access, inclusion and fairness across all its actions, and this leads to a diverse representation of young people. Erasmus+ Youth Exchanges are particularly suitable for the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities because group mobility offers an international mobility experience in the safety of a group; the short duration of Youth Exchanges makes their involvement appropriate; and the involvement of local participants facilitates first participation in European projects. Erasmus+ requires projects to take a conscious approach to inclusion and diversity, from the planning stage through preparation, implementation, and follow-up. The ESC ensures the participation of youth with fewer opportunities

[241] Kiilakoski, T., Diversity of Practice Architectures on Education and Career Paths for Youth Workers in Europe: An Analytical Report, *Council of Europe Publishing*, 2018.

[242] European Commission, Youth Wiki, website.

by contributing to the costs incurred by organisations providing additional support to volunteers with fewer opportunities to help them successfully participate and complete their projects.[243]

However, at the Member State level, **while it was acknowledged that steps are taken to ensure access to Erasmus+ and the ESC, in practice, limitations exist**. In Bulgaria and Lithuania, interviewees noted that while the programmes are better tailored to adapt to youth with fewer opportunities, namely migrants, youth with disabilities or rural youth, in practice, the ability for these groups to participate in the programmes remains limited. According to an interviewee, in Germany, programmes such as Erasmus+ and the ESC are not socially inclusive but rather exclusive, as they primarily reach young people from educated, middle-class backgrounds. The same argument was made by stakeholders from MV and NRW federal states: not all potential candidates are effectively reached and involved, as barriers to access persist for disadvantaged youth, particularly in rural areas. In Bulgaria, many rural youth, particularly in municipalities without active youth organisations or youth centres, do not benefit from Erasmus+ or ESC due to a lack of access to information, partners and logistical support, and in Lithuania, the programmes tend to be more accessible to 'high achievers'. Similar arguments were made by an interviewee from Germany, as individuals who come from disadvantaged backgrounds may not be part of youth organisations. An Italian stakeholder added that engaging youth with fewer opportunities, NEETs and those from rural areas requires targeted support to access EU programmes.

Despite the steps taken to improve access to the programmes, **there remain significant barriers which prevent certain youth groups from being able to participate**. For example, in Portugal, young people from rural areas, low-income families, or marginalised communities face barriers of access, awareness, and affordability. While there are examples of successful outreach, such as through the afore-mentioned Programa Escolhas (Choices Programme) or local youth centres, these remain isolated efforts rather than part of a systematic national strategy. Youth from rural areas face geographical isolation and a lack of local infrastructure, and youth outside formal education are less likely to be reached by the programmes due to limited awareness and outreach, and young migrants face bureaucratic hurdles, and their participation is not systematically tracked or supported in Portugal. More inclusive outreach, financial support, and local engagement would be needed to ensure equitable access.

However, **there are some success stories at the Member State level regarding the ability of Erasmus+ and the ESC to help disadvantaged groups into formal education**. In Bulgaria, interviewees noted that ESC projects have been particularly effective in offering structured opportunities with strong mentoring and support, targeting disadvantaged youth such as refugees, young people with disabilities, Roma and rural youth. For many of these groups, this has been the first step towards re-engagement with education or training, helping to build confidence and motivation. Similarly, in Italy, the reach of the programmes is broad and improving, but uneven. Erasmus+ and the ESC are engaging a more diverse set of young people in Italy, such as students, apprentices/VET learners, and youth organisations. Nevertheless, according to interviewees, some groups are still not included enough in Italy, including NEETs, non-organised youth, and those in remote/peripheral areas with weaker access to information/support channels.

Lastly, The European Youth Forum provides a number of suggestions for how **Erasmus+** could improve its youth access to quality education and training.[244] This includes the need for **more precise definitions of the groups considered as participants with fewer opportunities.** In addition,

[243] European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *European Solidarity Corps 2025 Call*, 2025.

[244] European Youth Forum, The Future of Erasmus+ Programme, 2024b.

inclusivity should be considered in project budgets. Furthermore, **support should be given to participants from rural and remote areas**. Suggestions are also provided to improve the **ESC** and how it helps with youth access to quality education and training. The European Youth Forum recommends **that efforts should be made to reach out to as many young people with fewer opportunities as possible** to increase the numbers participating, and should look to improve data collection so as to understand how each specific group is targeted and which groups have the lowest participation rate.[245] Furthermore, the minimum age for participating in solidarity activities should be reduced to 16 to increase the number of disadvantaged people that the programme can help. Finally, both the EC and Erasmus+ National Agencies should reinforce communication, outreach, and capacity-building activities, targeting specifically youth organisations to increase their engagement, either as sending or hosting organisations.

6.3. Relevance

Youth may be more inclined to participate in EUYS actions on education and training if their concerns are addressed through the opportunities offered. Many topics become increasingly relevant for youth, including the housing crisis, social media, radicalisation, peace and security, defence, and physical and especially mental health (see section 3.2 for more). This section instead focuses on the concerns of youth in regard to education and training.

As can be seen in Figure 2 in section 3.2, Quality Learning (EYG8) was the third most important topic for participants in the ongoing 11th Cycle of the EUYD (January 2025 – June 2026). Overall, the **EUYS and EYGs address the current concerns of youth on education and training to a mixed degree.** The EYGs correspond to many of the main concerns of young people in the Member States (e.g. Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Portugal), though their perceived impact and practical relevance vary. Interviewed stakeholders in the Member States noted that the EYGs align with the concerns of youth in the area of education and training in general.

However, within education and training, there remain areas of youth concern that can be further strengthened by the EUYS post-2027. The urgency of **digital transformation**, especially amid the recent rise of AI, was identified as a challenge requiring greater focus and investment within education and training, in particular a focus on digital skills and supporting adaptation to online learning. In addition, there were different opinions among Member States concerning **sustainability**. In Bulgaria, Italy, and Portugal this was noted by interviewees as an area that the EUYS already addresses. However, in Germany it was noted that the climate crisis is in fact a concern of youth which the EUYS does not suitably address. Linked to this, there were differing opinions on whether the EYGs address the green transition in education and skills, with half of EU-level survey respondents holding that it is the case only to a small or some extent, while a minority holding that this is the case to a large extent.

6.4. Efficiency

EU-level and Member State level interviewees expressed divergent views on the efficiency of EUYS measures in supporting equal access to quality education and training for young people. The EUYS has introduced important measures to support equal access to quality education and training, and many interviewed EU officials suggested that the **EUYS and its instruments have not created extra burdens, with some suggesting that the benefits of the EUYS negate the burden of any additional work**. In Germany, interviewed stakeholders suggested that, given that the EUYS is not

[245] European Youth Forum, The Future of the European Solidarity Corps Programme, 2025b.

a binding policy, no information regarding burdens as a result of it is available, though interviewees from NRW suggested that there are financial burdens and increased workloads as a result of the increased inclusion of young people from diverse backgrounds. Another stakeholder, speaking for MV, noted that, in the context of inclusion, additional financial resources may be specifically allocated for this purpose, which can make the process less burdensome rather than more so. The interviewee further explained, however, that the available resources are insufficient to assess whether such measures are ultimately burdensome or not. Similarly, interviewed Lithuanian stakeholders did not provide any insights. However, in other Member States, a number of burdens to stakeholders were identified, especially in Bulgaria, Portugal and Croatia. These burdens per stakeholder type in Bulgaria, Portugal, and Croatia are outlined below.

In Bulgaria, **local authorities and municipalities**, especially rural ones, face burdens related to sustainability and capacity. Even when motivated, they often lack the financial and human resources to implement educational initiatives aligned with EUYS priorities. Transport for rural youth, provision of digital infrastructure, and access to modern learning spaces remain significant challenges. Moreover, municipalities rarely have dedicated staff for youth policy, which forces existing personnel to add youth-related responsibilities to their workload. For example, in both Portugal and Bulgaria, local Governments face difficulties surrounding the costs of activities, especially as some outreach activities are not systematically supported by national or EU funds. The burden is especially heavy in rural or low-capacity municipalities, where youth policy is often underdeveloped. Survey respondents in Bulgaria highlighted that local authorities also face burdens.

A German stakeholder presented a similar argument: organisations may vary in size, and some municipalities may have more funds than others. There are, therefore, cases where time is a constraint, human resources may be limited, and funding may not be enough. The actors that have fewer resources simply lack the capacity to engage with measures that support social inclusion and equality. The stakeholder added that applications for these measures are rather complex and suggested simplifying them to facilitate procedures and therefore reduce burdens.

For **national authorities**, the main burden is fragmentation and lack of coordination, according to Bulgarian interviewees. For example, in Bulgaria, while the national youth strategy references the EUYS, there is weak integration in **education**, employment and social policies. Monitoring mechanisms are underdeveloped and underfunded, leaving gaps in assessing whether equal access to education is improving. National authorities are thus burdened with the obligation to report on EUYS-related progress without having sufficient instruments or reliable data to do so effectively. This burden on national authorities was supported by Bulgarian survey respondents.

For **young people with fewer opportunities** themselves, particularly those from rural areas, Roma communities, NEETs and other disadvantaged groups, the burden is manifested as barriers to access. Lack of information, financial limitations, weak mobility infrastructure and digital divides often prevent them from fully benefiting from EUYS instruments. Even when opportunities exist, they require additional effort and resources to access resources that disadvantaged youth and their families may not have. For example, in Bulgaria, NEET youth often require mentoring, stipends, and tailored support to participate in training opportunities. Survey respondents in Bulgaria and Croatia reported that, in many cases, these opportunities are provided ad hoc by NGOs or international donors rather than systematically ensured by national frameworks. Regarding NRW, in Germany, a stakeholder stated that to ensure true inclusivity, costs will surely be higher, as a greater effort compared to the status quo is required. This point was made by a national-level survey respondent providing an answer from the perspective of a youth organisation. The respondent stated that integrating young people from diverse backgrounds significantly increases workload due to the need for individualised solutions instead of one-size-fits-all regulations. This often leads to conflicting participant needs and additional effort. This is considered a correct approach, however there is the

necessity for funding compensation and greater flexibility from programme providers like Erasmus+ and the ESC to support inclusive participation.

Overall, the implementation of EUYS measures imposes burdens on a wide variety of stakeholders, many of which can limit stakeholders' ability to implement these measures effectively. However, interviews in Bulgaria noted that these burdens reflect **deeper structural challenges**, as discussed in Chapter 5, such as reliance on project-based funding, weak institutional capacity, and insufficient recognition of youth organisations as equal policy partners. Unless these systemic issues are addressed, it was stated that the EUYS instruments risk reinforcing inequalities instead of fully overcoming them. Therefore, these identified burdens may be conditioned by the broader context regarding youth policy and not be a direct result of the EUYS instruments themselves.

6.5. Moving forward

The following section summarises the key findings from the Chapter according to the evaluation criteria, followed by an overview of potential areas for improvement.

Table 4 – Key Chapter 6 findings and potential improvements

Effectiveness – key findings
The EU Youth Strategy and its instruments have supported access to quality education and training at the EU-level, in particular through the framework of the European Education Area. **In Member States, however, the impact remains uneven**. There has been progress supporting access to quality education and training in some Member States, while in others, persistent structural barriers in formal education continue to limit equal access.
Youth work and volunteering are important channels into education, training, and work**. Both the EU and Member State levels assess the impact of youth work positively as a channel towards formal education, training, and employment.** However, progress is still needed in certain Member States to use youth work in this way. In particular, there is a need to further professionalise it, where relevant.
Progress towards improving access to quality school education and higher education is mixed at the Member State level, with some progress in reducing the rate of early leavers and improving completion rates in certain Member States, while in others, school closures have had a negative impact on access to quality school education, which in turn reduces the opportunity for accessing higher education.
Relevance – key findings
The EU Youth Strategy addresses youth concerns regarding education to a mixed degree. While there is alignment in the focus on education generally - i.e. through EYG8 (Quality Education) -, specific areas, including the digital transformation and sustainability, are only partially addressed.

Efficiency – key findings
EU Youth Strategy implementation is constrained by the specific contexts of the Member States. In **most** of the six Member States examined, youth work and youth organisations face insufficient internal funding to support youth initiatives, relying heavily on limited local budgets and unstable external sources, such as project-based funding. Funding programmes for youth are frequently scarce or inconsistent, with fragmented regulations and restrictive eligibility criteria further constraining access to available resources. This creates financial instability for many organisations, threatening their sustainability and reducing their capacity to reach and include diverse young people. In turn, **this adds additional pressure on implementing EU Youth Strategy-related initiatives.**
Potential improvements
For the EU Youth Strategy post-2027, the European Commission should consider measures to ensure the **link between education and the labour market, and the links between informal, non-formal, and formal education and training**.
The European Commission should continue strengthening the links between the EU Youth Strategy and formal education and training, particularly in the area of **vocational education and training**, where stakeholders provided limited relevant insights.
The final years of the EU Youth Strategy should also focus on managing the transition between current and emerging youth priorities (housing crisis, social media, radicalisation, defence, peace and security, and physical and especially mental health). The European Commission should integrate these emerging topics into the remaining implementation period to ensure the EUYS remains relevant and forward-looking.
Member State authorities should take steps to help overcome the **barriers marginalised groups face in accessing formal education**. Support should be provided to help overcome a lack of information surrounding their options and financial limitations for marginalised youth, and in the case of rural youth, support should be given to help them overcome the physical barriers of living in isolated rural areas.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

This Chapter presents the key conclusions of the analysis conducted (section 7.1). The conclusions are drawn against the established evaluation criteria. It then presents the final overarching recommendations for the EU Youth Strategy, with a special focus on post-2027 suggestions. The conclusions and recommendations are informed by all research methods used in this study – desk research, stakeholders' interviews, survey and the project team's expert insights. Detailed findings and suggested improvements for each study topic are provided in the respective Chapters above.

7.1. Conclusions

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the EU Youth Strategy was assessed in terms of the extent to which different European Youth Goals (EYGs) were pursued at the EU level and in the six Member States examined (Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal), the effectiveness of EU Youth Strategy's instruments and initiatives for youth mainstreaming, and the extent to which the EU Youth Strategy has promoted both youth inclusion and equality, and access to quality education and training.

- **EYGs implementation is uneven between the EU-level and different Member States due to the non-binding nature of the EU Youth Strategy and EYGs**, varying national priorities and a lack of comprehensive EU Youth Strategy and EYGs monitoring. The EU Youth Strategy and EYGs provide a shared vision but lack mechanisms to ensure its implementation at the Member State level. While some Governments align their respective youth strategies more closely with EYGs, for others the influence is weaker, with their youth strategies mainly based on the national context. For this reason, certain EYGs received more consistent attention from multiple EU-27 Member States - e.g., EYG3 (Inclusive Societies), EYG5 (Mental Health and Wellbeing), and EYG9 (Space and Participation for All) -, while others received less attention - e.g., EYG6 (Moving Rural Youth Forward).
- **Since the European Year of Youth 2022, youth mainstreaming has advanced via new instruments and developments** that signal early progress – the Youth Check, the internal European Commission's Youth Correspondents network, external Youth Stakeholders group, Youth Dialogues with Commissioners, and the established EU Youth Coordinator role. The EU Youth Dialogue remains the most visible instrument for gathering youth views for policymaking across the Member States, yet its effectiveness varies in its operational implementation and follow-up. However, youth mainstreaming remains fragmented across the EU policy areas and within the Member States, with progress in policy areas traditionally closely related to youth (e.g., education and training, employment), and less consistent implementation in areas such as health, environment and sustainability, defence, among others. Institutional, structural, cultural, perception-related, resource, and capacity-related barriers continue to prevent youth mainstreaming.
- **The EU Youth Strategy, through the EU Youth Dialogue, Erasmus+, and European Solidarity Corps, promoted and inspired youth inclusion and participation, including those with fewer opportunities at the EU and Member State level, although unevenly.** Participation rates indicate increased representation of young people with fewer opportunities, although rural youth, those not in education, employment, or training, and non-organised youth remain underrepresented. At the Member State level, certain youth groups (e.g., migrant youth, ethnic minorities) are also under-represented. Persistent information, mobility, and funding barriers, as well as limited institutional capacity,

constrain the inclusion of underrepresented youth. Many national initiatives rely on EU-funded projects rather than on systemic, Government-led approaches, underscoring the importance of the EU Youth Strategy and EU funding.

- **The EU Youth Strategy and its instruments have facilitated access to quality education and training at the EU-level, in particular through the framework of the European Education Area and the European Youth Work Agenda**. In Member States, however, the effectiveness remains uneven. There has been progress in some Member States in reducing early school leaving and improving school completion rates. In other Member States, structural barriers in formal education and training systems remain. The potential of youth work to improve access to quality education and training is not fully realised across all six Member States.
- **Youth work and volunteering empower young Europeans by building skills, confidence, and civic identity, as well as democratic participation**. It is an essential channel for youth with fewer opportunities into education, training, and employment. However, the potential of youth organisations and youth work **is hindered by weak institutional recognition, unstable, and project-based funding.**

Relevance

The relevance of the EU Youth Strategy was assessed in terms of the extent to which the EYGs have addressed new cross-cutting issues, the youth mainstreaming approach streamlined across policy areas, and the EU Youth Strategy's relevance to the concerns of youth in different Member States.

- **In terms of youth mainstreaming, a dedicated youth policy coordination framework remains essential,** as stakeholders agree that a unified EU Youth Strategy provides a vision and establishes long-term strategic priorities for further alignment. The **core areas of the EU Youth Strategy (i.e., Engage, Connect, Empower) remain foundational,** with these embodying a focus on youth participation, mobility, and youth work as a continued youth policy focus. In addition, **better integration of youth concerns within sectoral policies** of different European Commission's Directorates-General (e.g., on the topics of competitiveness, skills, democracy, citizenship, EU values) is needed to increase youth mainstreaming.
- **The EYGs only partially address new cross-cutting issues that have emerged since their creation in 2018**. These issues are also reflected in the youth's concerns, which have evolved since then. The static set of 2019-2027 EYGs lacks adaptability to address the changing socio-economic and geopolitical context. Key cross-cutting issues to consider beyond 2027 include peace and security, defence, radicalisation, disinformation, affordable housing, digitalisation's long-term impact, environmental disasters, and mental health, among others.

Coherence

The coherence of the EU Youth Strategy was assessed in terms of: the role of the EU Youth Strategy's Work Plans in implementing the EYGs; the EU Youth Strategy's coherence with Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes; and the EU Youth Strategy's external coherence with wider EU policy.

- **EU Youth Strategy is internally coherent with the EU Youth Strategy's Work Plans, the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.** EU Youth Strategy's Work Plans help implement the EYGs and clarify EU-level priorities, but they are known to only a limited range of stakeholders and stakeholder types. The objectives and priorities of the **Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps are broadly aligned** with those of the EU Youth Strategy, and in most Member States, the two programmes drive the national EU

Youth Strategy's implementation. However, practical implementation shows misalignment in some respects, including unclear geographical scope (e.g., EU Youth Dialogue) and insufficient links to the EU Youth Strategy in project evaluation criteria, among others.

- **The EU Youth Strategy is externally coherent as the EYGs align well with wider EU-level policy priorities** and have synergies with sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies such as the European Green Deal, the Citizenship Package, and the Children's Participation Platform. However, the alignment is weaker in areas that have gained relevance since 2019 (e.g., peace and security, threats to democracy, shortage of affordable housing).

Efficiency

The efficiency of the EU Youth Strategy was assessed in terms of the extent to which the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy and its instruments causes burdens (e.g., financial, human) to any stakeholder group within the scope of the two case studies: 1) youth participation and 2) access to quality education and training.

- **At the EU level, the EU Youth Strategy and its instruments do not create major additional burdens beyond implementation costs.** At the Member State level, however, Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps activities remain a challenge due to complex applications, reporting requirements, and financial constraints, especially for small organisations and underrepresented youth. These findings were consistent across the case studies on inclusion and equality and on access to education and training, as stakeholders struggled to distinguish between the two in terms of efficiency.
- **Member State national contexts limit the EU Youth Strategy's implementation.** In most Member States studied, youth work and youth organisations **face insufficient funding, relying on limited local budgets and short-term project support**. National youth funding is often scarce, inconsistent, with fragmented regulations and restrictive eligibility criteria further constraining access to available resources. This financial instability threatens organisational sustainability, limits outreach to diverse young people and increases pressure on the implementation of EU Youth Strategy-related initiatives. Unless these systemic issues are addressed, the EU Youth Strategy's instruments risk reinforcing inequalities instead of fully overcoming them. Therefore, these identified burdens may be conditioned by the broader youth policy context and may not be a direct result of the EU Youth Strategy's instruments themselves.

7.2. Recommendations

The ten recommendations below stem from the study's key findings and are organised by expected implementation timeframe: short-term (0-2 years, e.g., preparing the post-2027 EU Youth Strategy) and medium-term (3-5 years). Some principles, such as youth diversity and inclusion, remain relevant long-term. Each recommendation identifies the stakeholders responsible for the implementation or coordination, as well as those to be consulted.

Recommendation 1 (short-term). The European Commission should consider a hybrid youth coordination framework that combines a strategic direction with sectoral accountability. The EU Youth Strategy should maintain an overarching strategic vision, anchored in the Engage, Connect, and Empower areas or their underlying objectives that embody youth policy. Youth mainstreaming actions, visible within the EU Youth Strategy, should also be translated and embedded in the sector-specific action plans across the different Directorates-General of the European Commission with dedicated funding. The European Commission (Directorate-General for

Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) should further consult its Youth network, other DGs, and EU and national youth organisations to identify priority policy areas for youth mainstreaming.

Recommendation 2 (short-term). The European Commission should review and update the EYGs to reflect new societal realities and cross-cutting issues affecting youth, such as peace and security, including defence, affordable housing, threats to democracy, digitalisation, and the transition between education and work, among others. This review should involve broad consultations with youth organisations, youth organisations working with youth, and draw on researchers (e.g., from the European Commission's Youth Stakeholders group or the Council of Europe's Pool of European Youth Researchers) to ensure long-term trends and foresight findings are considered. In its final years, the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) should integrate emerging topics into its activities (e.g., final EU Youth Dialogue cycles) to ensure continuity toward the post-2027 EU Youth Strategy and inform the new EYGs. Consultations on these topics could be embedded within existing EYGs, for example, the cost of living under Inclusive Societies (EYG3) and Quality Employment for All (EYG7). The process to develop new EYGs should include youth with fewer opportunities, including an approach to engage non-organised youth.

Recommendation 3 (short-term). The European Commission should further evaluate and propose how to further empower and resource the EU Youth Coordinator as a central coordination mechanism. The European Commission should evaluate the success of the role with an aim to further strengthen it. The need for a stronger, formal political mandate, a dedicated budget, and a reporting function should be assessed. The EU should aim to enhance horizontal coordination and the EU Youth Coordinator's accountability within the European Commission and its DGs and across EU institutions, consultative bodies (e.g., the European Economic and Social Committee) and relevant stakeholders (e.g., Council of Europe). The EU Youth Coordinator and their team (currently within the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) should serve as a hub connecting youth-related EU initiatives (including sectoral initiatives and programmes within the European Commission) and support Member States in adopting similar coordination mechanisms at the national/regional level.

Recommendation 4 (short-term). The European Commission and Member States authorities should reinforce youth participation mechanisms to ensure continuity between youth consultations and that youth voices, as a result of these consultations, are embedded within policy design. The European Commission should further strengthen the EU Youth Dialogue, as well as other new instruments (e.g., the Youth Check, Youth Dialogues with Commissioners), to ensure young people understand how their engagement impacts policymaking (e.g., by publishing which specific policies incorporated youth voice and how). At the Member State level, national and regional authorities should ensure that the EU Youth Dialogue findings are publicly available and similarly assessed for their effectiveness, including continuous EU Youth Dialogue implementation rather than one-off consultations. In cases where the EU Youth Dialogue organisation is entrusted to the National Youth Councils, Member State authorities should ensure that they are equipped with resources to ensure that EU Youth Dialogue findings are publicly available. Additionally, Member State authorities should follow these principles to further strengthen other national or regional youth participation and/or mainstreaming mechanisms (e.g., national/regional youth checks, advisory councils or boards). There is a need for multi-level governance and better articulation between institutions and civil society to ensure that youth policies are coherent, inclusive, and responsive to local realities.

Recommendation 5 (short-term). The European Commission and Member State authorities (e.g., National Erasmus+ Agencies) should further strengthen inclusion, diversity and visibility within the EU Youth Dialogue, Erasmus+, and the European Solidarity Corps by widening participation to underrepresented groups such as rural youth, youth not in education, employment, or training (NEETs), ethnic communities, and non-organised youth. The European Commission and the Member State authorities should further expand community outreach and strengthen the engagement and empowerment of youth organisations. Broadening participation to include a more diverse range of international, national, and local organisations, alongside offering decentralised engagement opportunities and targeted support, would help overcome information, mobility, and funding barriers. Member State authorities should further support local youth work to help reach non-organised youth. Reinforcing these measures across the EU Youth Strategy at both EU and Member State levels would promote more equitable access for all young people. Member State authorities should consider that while preparing for the EU Youth Strategy post-2027, they should ensure that the principle of inclusion and equality is embedded within their national and regional youth strategies and underlying actions.

Recommendation 6 (medium-term). The European Commission should work with youth policy researchers to revise the EU Youth Dashboard and develop a monitoring and evaluation system for the EU Youth Strategy post-2027. This includes updating situation indicators to reflect changing youth realities and strengthening policy indicators to track EU Youth Strategies' activities and results, including those in the Work Plans. Existing research groups and already conducted studies[246] should inform this design. A robust system would improve accountability, support evidence-based evaluation, and provide continuity, with progress reported through the EU Youth Report. EU and Member State stakeholders may be involved to draw inspiration from the existing monitoring and evaluation systems within the youth sector. Lastly, the European Commission should consider updating the EU Youth Strategy's Work Plans to improve accessibility through clearer language, modern formats, and targeted outreach.

Recommendation 7 (medium-term). The European Commission and Member State authorities should strengthen youth mainstreaming through institutional capacity, clearer roles, evaluation of new tools, and the integration of youth mainstreaming in the EU Youth Strategy post-2027. To target existing barriers, youth mainstreaming should be consolidated through participatory methodologies, guidance, and capacity-building for EU and national, regional and local authorities (e.g., to target perception-related barriers on the importance of youth). The European Commission and the Member State authorities should systematically include youth in the policy design, implementation, and assessment cycle. The European Commission, after piloting the new mainstreaming tools, such as the Youth Check, EC internal and external networks, and Youth Dialogues with Commissioners, should evaluate and improve them. In the EU Youth Strategy post-2027, the newly emerged tools should be clearly integrated and explained in terms of their relationship with existing internal and external instruments, such as the European Economic and Social Committee's Youth Test or EU Youth Dialogue. Their transparency, methodology, and policy impact must be systematically assessed. The European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, other respective Policy evaluation units) should further promote the good practices of Youth Checks, with piloting activities implemented across the interested Member States.

[246] See, for example, policy dashboard suggestions in the European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and Petkovic, S., Proposal for an updated dashboard of EU youth indicators – Support services to Expert Groups and mutual learning activities in the field of youth policy, Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021.

Recommendation 8 (medium-term). The European Commission and Member State authorities should further enhance accessibility, administrative simplicity of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps and support first-time youth organisations. While the European Commission should further consider how to simplify application and reporting procedures, the Member State authorities (e.g., National Erasmus+ agencies) should offer technical assistance to first-time or small organisations to widen access and participation. Member State authorities should also ensure that there are no additional administrative burdens beyond those required by the programmes. Moreover, the European Commission and the Member State authorities should further establish clear inclusion targets and monitor the participation of underrepresented youth. Member States should further investigate why certain groups are underrepresented, by, for example, conducting qualitative studies. The European Commission should revisit these actions during the final Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps 2021-2027 evaluation.

Recommendation 9 (medium-term). Member State authorities should further strengthen the recognition and professionalisation of youth work and skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning. The European Commission and partners, such as the Council of Europe, Member States, where relevant, should work toward formal recognition of the youth work through qualification frameworks, training standards, and accreditation systems, enabling mutual recognition and mobility. Member State authorities should ensure that the European Youth Work Agenda is translated into national and regional action and funding plans. Member State authorities should continue strengthening the recognition of competences acquired via non-formal and informal learning, providing guidance for employers on tools such as Youthpass and Europass. Member State authorities and civil society should also promote civic education, youth participation in democratic processes, and the promotion of human rights and European values.

Recommendation 10 (medium-term). The EU and Member State authorities should improve communication, visibility, and stakeholder awareness of the EU Youth Strategy, its instruments, and initiatives on the national, regional and local levels. A limited number of stakeholders consulted were able to provide comprehensive insights into the EU Youth Strategy and its instruments, or the EU Youth Strategy as a whole. Member State authorities should increase awareness among less-involved stakeholders, such as regional and local authorities, small non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and non-organised youth, to strengthen alignment with EU-level priorities. The European Commission, other EU bodies and Member States should strengthen the sharing of best practices in youth participation, inclusion, and empowerment. These practices should be more visible across the press, various networks and platforms, and local communities.

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Annex 1. Methodology

The study was developed relying on several methods of data collection: desk research; interviews; a survey; and final report drafting.

Six Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal) were selected as the geographical focus of this report, in addition to the analysis conducted on the EU-level. Country selection and the application of research methods are described in more detail below. For an analysis of the study questions according to the Better Regulation criteria for evaluation, please refer to Annex 2.

Study objectives and evaluation criteria

The **overall aim** of the study was to support the European Parliament's (EP) implementation report on the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) 2019-2027, prepared by the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT). This study, which is part of the European Implementation Assessment prepared by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), assesses the implementation of the EUYS at the EU level and in six selected Member States since 2019, based on the most recent evidence collected. In particular, the study research project had the following **objectives**, consistent with the Technical Specifications provided by the EP:

1. To assess the **11 European Youth Goals** (EYGs) in terms of their effectiveness, relevance in the light of the new cross-cutting issues that emerged since their creation, and coherence with the EU programmes, EUYS Work Plans and EU policy.
2. To examine how effectively the **youth have been mainstreamed across the** EU and Member States, assessing both the integration of youth perspectives across policy areas and the use of EUYS instruments for youth mainstreaming, including barriers.
3. To analyse **youth participation** at the EU level and the selected Member States, with a particular focus on social inclusion, equality of youth, and youth with fewer opportunities (case study 1).
4. To analyse the EUYS' role and linkages with improving access **to quality education and training** for young people (case study 2).

Evaluation criteria used in the study at the EU and Member State level are:

- **Effectiveness** of the measures taken to achieve the EYGs, youth participation, and access to education and training by looking at the EUYS instruments, examples of actions and results.
- **Efficiency** of the EUYS in terms of any burdens (e.g., financial, human) created for particular stakeholder groups in relation to the study objectives on youth participation and quality education and training.
- **Relevance** of the EUYS by considering whether and to what extent EYGs address the new cross-cutting issues of the EU, including youth concerns about the future (e.g., climate change).
- **Coherence** refers to the extent to which the EUYS Work Plans facilitated the implementation of the EYGs, and the extent to which programmes (Erasmus+, ESC) work together to fulfil the objectives of the EUYS (internal coherence). It also includes the coherence of the EYGs with other EU policies and strategies (external coherence).

The evaluation criteria and research questions were established in accordance with the European Parliament's Technical Specifications, which were discussed and approved during the Inception and subsequent meetings. As the evaluation criteria can be understood differently in each Chapter, the complete mapping of evaluation criteria – research question – Chapter (i.e. study objective) is provided in Annex 2. The EUYS added value is outside the scope of this analysis. Due to the limitations of the study (short time-frame), no cost-benefit analysis is performed to evaluate the efficiency of the EU intervention, and the research questions aiming to evaluate efficiency focused on significant burdens brought to stakeholders beyond the implementation costs.

Definitions

The following key definitions are used in the study:

'***Youth participation*** *in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engaging in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society'.*[247]

'***Youth work*** *is a summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. The main objective of youth work is to provide opportunities for young people to shape their own futures'.*[248]

'***People with fewer opportunities*** *means people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, a migrant background, or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties or for any other reasons, including those that can give rise to discrimination under article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the programme*'.[249]

'***Youth mainstreaming*** *is the integration of a youth perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all policies and programmes that concern and affect young people. Youth mainstreaming also aims to shape institutional and policymaking processes that provide space and opportunities for young people to have a say in the decisions that affect them'.*[250]

Country selection

The selection of the Member States was performed and agreed with EPRS during the inception meeting. Six Member States were selected for the analysis: **Bulgaria**, **Croatia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania,** and **Portugal**. Several indicators were used for the selection, as follows: (see Table 5 below for individual Member State results):

- Youth specific:
  - 16–29-year-olds participating in formal/informal voluntary activities or active citizenship
  - 18–30-year-olds answer 'yes' to the question 'Do you intend to vote in the upcoming European elections?'

247 European Commission, Youth Wiki, website.

248 Ibid.

249 Source: European Commission, Participant with fewer opportunities, website.

250 European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks – A comparative overview*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

    - National Youth Strategy alignment with the EUYS (No strategy/somewhat aligned/closely aligned)
    - Number of NEETs;
- General indicators:
    - European region (Southern, Northern, Western, Central and Eastern);
    - Size of the Member State (large/medium/small).

In addition to these indicators, 'Mainstreaming of youth issues in other policy fields at national level' was examined and strongly considered; however, due to data gaps in ten Member States, the data gap was deemed too large to advise selection. The selection was performed to ensure a balanced selection of the Member States across all indicators, highlighting the leading performers and those facing challenges in respect to the objectives of the study, while also ensuring geographical representation and a balanced set of Member States in terms of their size. Accordingly, the selection of Member States to be examined was conducted as follows:

- A wide spread of geographical regions was selected, with one from Western Europe, three from Central and Eastern Europe, and two from Southern Europe. Only Northern Europe lacks coverage, as selecting leading performers and those facing challenges was prioritised over geographical region. In some classifications, Lithuania may be considered as part of Northern Europe.
- An even split in terms of Member State size was selected, with two large, two medium, and two small.
- At least one Member State with youth strategy alignment was selected, with three closely aligned with the EUYS, one somewhat aligned, and two having no strategy.
- The selected Member States have a wide range of performance in the ranked indicators, with two Member States in the top three, three in the bottom six, and one country in the middle.

As a result, Bulgaria is a medium-sized country in the Balkan subregion (part of the Central and Eastern region). Its selection was primarily linked to the fact that, when the three ranked indicators are averaged together, Bulgaria ranks as the bottom country in the EU. Similarly, Lithuania, the second lowest-ranked country in the EU, offers a unique perspective as a small Member State in the Baltic subregion (part of the Central and Eastern region, or sometimes classified as a Northern European country). Germany was selected as it is the top country in the EU in the three ranked indicators (albeit without data for youth participation in informal/formal activities), while also providing additional geographical scope as a large country in Western Europe. Portugal was selected to represent Southern Europe due to its ranking as the third-best country in the EU in the ranked indicators. Finally, Italy and Croatia complete the selection as countries which do not have a national youth strategy. In addition, Croatia is a country in the middle of the ranked indicators, thus it provides a different dimension, while Italy is the lowest-ranked large Member State, which also gives an interesting variation in its indicators due to placing 6th in the indicator on youth voting in the EU election, while being in the bottom five for both other ranked indicators. The final selection provided a set of countries offering rich and diverse experiences and examples of the EUYS and youth policy implementation.

Desk research

The literature review was used as one of the key data collection methods, aiming to gather evidence to inform EU and Member State-level study questions. The full list of literature analysed can be found in the References.

A wide range of sources was consulted, such as academic and grey literature published by EU bodies, think tanks, and civil society organisations (e.g., studies, evaluations, policy reports, white papers,

guidelines). Both qualitative and quantitative data (e.g., indicators on youth participation and engagement) were analysed, where available. The following strategies were also applied to identify additional relevant sources: in addition to scientifically documented sources, we analysed data (presentations, summaries, reports) of various seminars, conferences and other events related to the topic, as well as quantitative data. National Experts and Client representatives conducted validation and control of the initial list of sources. The snowballing method and additional sources suggested by the interviewees were used. The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used:

- *Relevance*. The literature should provide insights that can be used to answer at least one of the study questions.
- *Recognition*. Preference was given to academic publications with high citation rates (ten citations and higher). This criterion was not applied to grey sources.
- *Timespan*. To ensure that we analysed the most recent developments, we considered sources published since 2019 (a longer period for the publications was necessary to clarify the historical background of particular challenges).
- *Availability*. Full-text versions that were available to the Project Team (PRT) either in open-source databases or databases to which the PRT has access through active licences.

A desk research analysis tool in Excel was prepared to systematically analyse the information collected in line with the established research questions and evaluation criteria.

Interviews

To collect information and insights from experts and stakeholders consistent with study objectives and to answer the study questions, EU-level and Member State-level semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews served as the central data collection method for this study and were conducted with different key stakeholders: 1) public authorities (e.g., respective ministries, youth departments and/or agencies); 2) civil society (e.g., youth organisations, national youth councils); 3) youth policy experts and researchers. The interviews also served as a basis to identify any additional literature or data sources. Semi-structured online interviews (e.g., via Microsoft Teams or Zoom) were carried out, lasting 60-90 minutes. The complete list of the interview respondents is provided in Annex 6.

In total, the PRT conducted **ten EU-level interviews** with 11 representatives of the key EU bodies involved in youth policy, key civil society organisations, international organisations, academics and/or youth policy experts. For the study, it was crucial to consider the youth perspective; thus, the PRT engaged civil society organisations, representing the largest youth organisations and National Youth Councils in Europe.

For Member States, the PRT conducted a total of 27 interviews with 30 Member State representatives in all six **Member States.** A different number of interviews was conducted for each Member State, depending on its size, to take into account differences in population, administrative complexity, and influence on EU youth policy (3-4 interviews for small, 4-5 for medium-sized and 5-6 for large Member States). Group interviews with two participants were conducted, where appropriate (e.g., members of the same unit within the Ministry or another organisation). The group interviews are indicated in Annex 6. Lastly, several interviewees, due to their time constraints, only agreed to participate in the study by providing their responses to the interview questionnaire in writing. In these cases, clarifications were sent by email. The cases where responses were collected in writing are noted in Annex 6. The final number of interviews conducted in each Member State is as follows:

- Bulgaria: five with five individuals

- Croatia: four interviews (one in written form) with four individuals
- Italy: five interviews (two in written form, two with partial responses in written form and one fully orally) with five individuals
- Germany: five interviews (one in written form) with five individuals
- Lithuania: four interviews with six individuals
- Portugal: four interviews with five individuals

For Germany, in addition to interviews at the federal level, two interviews were conducted with respective federal-state representatives (Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania and North Rhine-Westphalia, one interview in each state). For Italy, two interviews were conducted with the representatives of the selected region (Campania) in addition to the national level. At the request of the interview participants, some answers were collected in writing only, while not all stakeholder types were responsive in all Member States, in particular, public authorities.

The final list of interviewees for each Member State was developed in cooperation with the National Experts (NE) and validated by the EP. Interviews with the six selected Member States were conducted by the NEs in each country's native language (within or outside the core project team) using a pre-defined questionnaire and guidance provided by the project team, both in writing and via an online call. Interview questionnaires are provided in Annex 3, while the list of engaged stakeholders is provided in Annex 6.

The project team assessed the quality of data collected during the interviews. Data quality check relied on the following criteria: 1) exhaustiveness of information: do the results provide enough information to answer study questions or complete the case study? 2) consistency of information: do the different sources complement rather than contradict each other? Follow-up questions and clarifications were sent to interviewees, where relevant.

A write-up was prepared for each interview, summarising the answers to research questions. Lastly, the collected interview and desk research data was analysed in a 'Member State report', prepared by each Project Team member and/or National Expert, responsible for a specific Member State. Each member was provided with a template and written guidance for the analysis. A dedicated meeting was organised to discuss the guidance for drafting the country report and conducting the interview programme in each Member State.

Survey

To ensure that sufficient evidence and examples on all study questions are collected, a survey was conducted in parallel with EU-level and Member State-level interviews with key stakeholders. The aim of the survey was to supplement and validate interviews by gathering additional examples, experiences, and evidence from stakeholders, along with any other contextual, relevant information. This is not a representative survey. All key types of stakeholders at the EU and Member State levels were invited to participate, including EU bodies, civil society, youth policy experts and academics. This helped collect data from the selected Member States and supplement and/or validate the information collected via interviews. To ensure a high response rate, the survey design prioritised efficiency (e.g., closed questions), given the short timeline of the project. The questionnaires consisted of yes/no, multiple choice, open-ended, and Likert scale questions. The EU-level and MS-level survey questionnaires are provided in Annex 4, while an overview of the survey results can be found in Annex 5.

The survey was conducted from 3rd to 30th October 2025 and was available in English (EU-level) and in the national languages for each of the six selected Member States (Bulgarian, Croatian, Lithuanian, Italian, German, and Portuguese). For the technical implementation of the survey, we used the Alchemer surveying platform, which helps facilitate multiple-language surveys and

provides additional features (e.g., automatic email campaigns, monitoring responses, identification of partial responses, contacting respondents). National Experts were engaged to revise the translated survey questionnaires, ensuring clarity and correct terminology usage. The final list of respondents was revised and finalised with the help of National Experts, who also helped disseminate the survey.

In total, we received 41 full responses, ten from the EU-level and 31 from stakeholders in the Member States. In total, 376 direct invitations were sent, with additional reach possible due to snowballing effect. All collected responses were translated into English using DeepL automatic translation (a paid account), except for Croatian, which was translated into English using the EU's eTranslation software, as it is not a supported language on DeepL. The survey responses were then analysed by using Microsoft Excel, developing charts and relevant descriptive statistics and breakdowns. Organisations which filled in the survey can be found in Annex 6.

Final report drafting

To prepare the final study report, all results and insights provided by the different data collection methods were taken into account and considered by using a thematic qualitative analysis. Data triangulation was done not only to ensure that for drafting recommendations, all data collected was considered, but also to allow the authors to distance themselves from the particularities of the data collected by each individual method. Based on this, draft conclusions and recommendations were prepared. To further discuss and validate the findings, conclusions and recommendations were reviewed by the Quality Assurance Expert in writing and in an internal recommendation drafting workshop (online meeting) with the project team and National Experts on 10 November 2025. Based on this, recommendations were further improved and finalised.

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used to a limited extent in the project. Built-in Microsoft Office tools were used when conducting interviews via Microsoft Teams to automatically transcribe and take minutes of some interviews. In addition, ChatGPT Pro 5.1 was used to help with the summarisation and analysis of anonymised collected data. All AI outputs were thoroughly double-checked and revised by researchers before use.

Study limitations

The study has a broad scope and a short timeline, and there are differences in the quality and availability of primary and secondary data across Member States. The Member States examined in this report illustrate specific aspects of the analysis rather than provide an exhaustive, systematic comparison for each research question. As a result, not all six Member States appear in each thematic section, as data may be unavailable or the case may not offer sufficiently relevant insight.

Stakeholder engagement limitations included limited stakeholder availability for interviews. In certain Member States (e.g., Italy, Portugal), respective Ministries did not agree or did not participate in the interviews due to a lack of time or due to unspecified reasons. The timeframe for the interview programme implementation was prolonged due to the limited availability of other stakeholders (e.g., National Youth Councils). Moreover, many interviewees could not provide a comprehensive overview of the EUYS as a whole or its specific instruments. Lastly, the depth of answers to different interview questions differed depending on the stakeholder, with some providing comprehensive answers to each question, and others not being able to comment or aware of certain aspects.

Additionally, time constraints prevented a comprehensive analysis of each EUYS instrument and youth mainstreaming across all policy areas; therefore, the areas that emerged as core during stakeholder consultations are analysed. Similar limitations can be seen regarding the depth of the

analysis in Germany and Italy, where examples from selected federal states (Germany) or a region (Italy) were provided, but are not exhaustive.

Table 5 – Indicators used to inform Member State selection

Total rank (indicators 3, 4, 5 placing combined)	Member State	1. Geographic region	2. Size (by population)	3. 16-29 year olds participating in formal/informal voluntary activities or active citizenship (%)		4. 18-30 year olds answering 'yes' to the question 'Do you intend to vote in the upcoming European elections?' (%)		5. NEETs (%)		6. Strategy alignment with EUYS	7. Mainstreaming of youth issues
				Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value		
15*	**Germany**	Western	Large	-	-	7.	65	8.	8.7	Closely	-
16	**Netherlands**	Western	Medium	1.	77.6	14.	59	1.	4.9	No strategy	-
19	**Portugal**	Southern	Medium	8.	14.9	2.	77	9.	8.7	Closely	-
19	**Denmark**	Northern	Medium	4.	23.9	9.	62	6.	8.0	No strategy	Strong
20	**Poland**	Central & East	Large	5.	21.6	4.	69	11.	9.4	No strategy	Moderate
22	**Sweden**	Northern	Medium	2.	53.4	18.	56	2.	6.3	Closely	Moderate
25	**Ireland**	Western	Medium	10.	13.3	11.	61	4.	7.6	No strategy	Strong
29	**Slovenia**	Central & East	Small	3.	31.7	21.	53	5.	7.6	Closely	Moderate
30	**Belgium**	Western	Medium	15.	10.5	3.	69	12.	9.9	Closely	-
30*	**Finland**	Northern	Medium	-	-	16.	58	14.	10.0	Closely	Strong
33	**Czechia**	Central & East	Medium	9.	14.5	17.	56	7.	8.6	No strategy	-
34	**Croatia**	Central & East	Small	11.	12.4	8.	65	15.	10.6	No strategy	-
37	**Austria**	Western	Medium	14.	10.5	13.	61	10.	9.2	Closely	Strong

Total rank (indicators 3, 4, 5 placing combined)	Member State	1. Geographic region	2. Size (by population)	3. 16-29 year olds participating in formal/informal voluntary activities or active citizenship (%)		4. 18-30 year olds answering 'yes' to the question 'Do you intend to vote in the upcoming European elections?' (%)		5. NEETs (%)		6. Strategy alignment with EUYS	7. Mainstreaming of youth issues
				Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value		
45	**Slovakia**	Central & East	Medium	13.	10.9	15.	58	17.	10.7	Closely	Limited
46	**Malta**	Southern	Small	18.	9.2	25.	47	3.	7.2	Closely	Limited
48	**Romania**	Central & East	Medium	20.	7.8	1.	78	27.	19.4	No strategy	-
48	**Spain**	Southern	Large	23.	5.1	5.	68	20.	12.0	Closely	Moderate
48	**Estonia**	Central & East	Small	7.	15.3	22.	52	19.	11.0	Closely	Strong
49	**Cyprus**	Southern	Small	6.	17.2	20.	53	23.	12.9	No strategy	Limited
50	**France**	Western	Large	19.	9.0	10.	62	21.	12.5	No strategy	-
54	**Latvia**	Central & East	Small	12.	11.8	26.	46	16.	10.7	Closely	Moderate
56	**Italy**	Southern	Large	24.	3.7	6.	67	26.	15.2	No strategy	-
58	**Greece**	Southern	Medium	22.	6.5	12.	61	24.	14.2	Somewhat	Moderate
58	**Hungary**	Central & East	Medium	16.	9.8	24.	51	18.	10.9	Somewhat	-
61	**Luxembourg**	Western	Small	21.	7.3	27.	41	13.	9.9	Closely	Moderate
65	**Lithuania**	Central & East	Small	17.	9.2	23.	52	25.	14.7	Closely	Moderate

Total rank (indicators 3, 4, 5 placing combined)	Member State	1. Geographic region	2. Size (by population)	3. 16-29 year olds participating in formal/informal voluntary activities or active citizenship (%)		4. 18-30 year olds answering 'yes' to the question 'Do you intend to vote in the upcoming European elections?' (%)		5. NEETs (%)		6. Strategy alignment with EUYS	7. Mainstreaming of youth issues
				Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value		
66	**Bulgaria**	Central & East	Medium	25.	3.4	19.	54	22.	12.7	Somewhat	Limited

Notes: Selected countries are highlighted in green. Indicator 7 was not used to inform the country selection due to having data gaps for too many MS.
'*' indicates MS with no data for Indicator 3, thus their total rank is based only on Indicators 4 and 5.
Sources by indicator:
Indicator 2: Large (>10 % of total EU population); medium (1-9.9 % of total EU population); small (<1 % of total EU population).
Indicator 3: Eurostat, Persons participating in formal/informal voluntary activities or active citizenship by sex, age and educational attainment, website.
Indicator 4: European Commission, Eurobarometer 3181, *Youth and Democracy*, website.
Indicator 5: Eurostat, Young persons neither in employment nor in education and training by labour status (NEET rates, 15-29 year olds), website.
Indicator 6: European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Kantar Public, Ramboll Management Consulting, and Technopolis Group, *Support study for the interim evaluation of the EU youth strategy 2019-2027 – Annexes*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, p. 263.
Indicator 7: European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Kantar Public, Ramboll Management Consulting, and Technopolis Group, *Support study for the interim evaluation of the EU youth strategy 2019-2027 – Annexes*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, p.28.

Annex 2. Study questions

Table 6 – Analysis of the study questions according to the Better Regulation evaluation criteria

Study question	Judgement criteria	Indicators/descriptions	Focus area / case study	GEO scope	Methods
1. EFFECTIVENESS					
1.1. Which EYGs have been implemented and to what extent? What are the actual effects/progress made in the contribution to the 11 goals?	Implementation of the EYGs have produced intended effects/progress was achieved	• Extent to which EYGs have been implemented (list of goals and their level of implementation as perceived by stakeholders) • Analytical description of the effects/progress made across 11 goals	Policy coherence of the EUYS	EU, six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (Member State level)
1.2. Which EYGs (if any) have emerged as core goals?	The goals which, among all 11 goals, emerged as the most important ones	• Perception of the most important, core EYGs • Analytical description including the reasoning behind	Policy coherence of the EUYS	EU, six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (Member State level)

Study question	Judgement criteria	Indicators/descriptions	Focus area / case study	GEO scope	Methods
		the choice of the EYGs.			
1.3. To what extent have the EC instruments used specifically for youth mainstreaming supported effective mainstreaming in some or all policy areas (e.g., education, employment, health)? In the selected MS? In the EC's work?	Youth issues have been integrated into other policy areas Youth involvement in other policy areas	• Extent to which the youth issues have been mainstreamed in other policy areas (e.g. education, employment, health); • Analytical description of examples and ways youth issues have been mainstreamed, success stories or good practices identified, barriers/weaknesses	Mainstreaming of the EUYS goals	EU, six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (EU, Member State level)
1.4. To what extent and how has the EUYS and its instruments promoted youth inclusion and equality, ensuring the participation of young	The EUYS and its instruments (e.g., EU youth dialogue) promoted the inclusion and equality of young people, including young people with fewer opportunities?	• Extent to which the EUYS and its instruments promoted the inclusion of young people, incl. youth with fewer opportunities	Youth participation in EU policies (case study 1)	EU, six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (EU, Member State level)

Study question	Judgement criteria	Indicators/descriptions	Focus area / case study	GEO scope	Methods
people, including youth with fewer opportunities?[251]		• Analytical description of EUYS promotion of youth inclusion and equality (per different identified characteristics)			
1.5. How have youth organisations been involved in encouraging democratic processes, volunteering, building a more active and responsible citizenry, promoting social inclusion and furthering youth participation and youth work?	Youth organisations have been involved in furthering youth participation and youth work in regard to democratic processes, volunteering, citizenry, social inclusion	• Extent to which youth organisation have been involved in furthering youth participation and youth work in regard to democratic processes, volunteering, citizenry, social inclusion • Analytical description, examples of good	Youth participation in EU policies (case study 1)	Six selected Member States	Desk research (Member State level) Interviews (Member State level) Survey (Member State level)

[251] As defined in the Technical Specifications (p.5) – 'people with fewer opportunities' means people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, a migrant background, or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties or for any other reasons, including those that can give rise to discrimination <...> face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities <...>'.

Study question	Judgement criteria	Indicators/descriptions	Focus area / case study	GEO scope	Methods
		practices and shortcomings			
1.6. To what extent are youth work and volunteering in Europe empowering young people? To what extent are young people recognised as active citizens?	Youth work and volunteering in Europe are empowering young people Young people are recognised as active citizens in their Member State and Europe	• Extent to which youth work and volunteering are empowering young people • Extent to which young people are recognised as active citizens in their MS and Europe • Analytical description, examples of good practices and shortcomings	Youth participation in EU policies (case study 1)	EU level, six selected Member States	Desk research (Member State level) Interviews (Member State level) Survey (Member State level)
1.7. To what extent does the EUYS support equal access to quality education for young people, including those with fewer opportunities? Does the EUYS provide a clear framework and tools?	The EUYS and its instruments support equal access to quality education for young people, including those with fewer opportunities The EUYS provides a clear framework and tools to support equal access to quality education	• Extent to which EUYS and its instruments support equal access to quality education for young people, including those with fewer opportunities	Quality education (case study 2)	EU, Six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (EU, Member State level)

Study question	Judgement criteria	Indicators/descriptions	Focus area / case study	GEO scope	Methods
		• Stakeholder views on the clarity of the EUYS framework and tools to support equal access to quality education • Analytical description, examples of good practices and shortcomings			
1.8. To what extent is youth work used as a channel into education, training or work? As a way to prevent exclusion?	Youth work is used as a channel into education, training or work Youth work is used to prevent exclusion	• Extent to which youth work is used as a channel into education, training or work, prevent exclusion • Analytical description, examples of good practices and shortcomings	Quality education (case study 2)	EU, Six selected Member States	Desk research (Member State level) Interviews (Member State level) Survey (Member State level)
1.9. To what extent and how do EU programmes (Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps) ensure	Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps ensure access to a diverse representation of young people	• Extent to which Erasmus+ and European Solidarity	Quality education (case study 2)	Six selected Member States	Desk research (Member State level)

Study question	Judgement criteria	Indicators/descriptions	Focus area / case study	GEO scope	Methods
access to a diverse representation of young people in terms of experiences, perspectives, and (social) backgrounds?		Corps ensure access to a diverse representation of young people • Analytical description, examples of good practices and shortcomings			Interviews (Member State level) Survey (Member State level)
2. EFFICIENCY					
2.1. To what extent and how have the EU instruments designed to further social inclusion and equality of youth been implemented efficiently?	Stakeholders agree that the EU instruments (e.g., EU Youth Dialogue) do not create burdens beyond implementations costs	• Stakeholder views on the burdens (e.g., human, financial) beyond the implementation costs. • Analytical description and examples of instruments which create burdens (e.g., financial, human).	Youth participation in EU policies (case study 1)	EU, six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (EU, Member State level)
2.2. To what extent and how the EUYS measures to support equal access to quality education for	Stakeholders agree that the EUYS measures to support equal access to quality education do not create	• Stakeholder views on the burdens (e.g., human, financial)	Quality education (case study 2)	EU, six selected	Desk research (EU, Member State level)

Study question	Judgement criteria	Indicators/descriptions	Focus area / case study	GEO scope	Methods
young people, including those with fewer opportunities been implemented efficiently?	burdens beyond implementation costs	beyond the implementation costs. • Analytical description and examples of instruments which create burdens (e.g., financial, human).		Member States	Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (EU, Member State level)
3. RELEVANCE					
3.1. To what extent have the 11 EYGs addressed the new cross-cutting issues, such as cost of living and housing, the digital transformation and security?	New cross-cutting issues are addressed by the 11 EYGs	• The extent to which new cross-cutting issues are addressed by the 11 EYGs • Stakeholders' views on the new cross-cutting issues being addressed by the 11 EYGs, existing gaps and the need for integration	Policy coherence of the EUYS	EU, six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (Member State level)
3.2. To what extent are the youth's concerns and the potential impact on their future (e.g., climate change and sustainability, digital	Youth concerns and the potential impact on their future are addressed in / aligned with the current EUYS	• The extent to which youth concerns and the potential impact on their future are	Quality education (case study 2)	Six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (Member State level)

Study question	Judgement criteria	Indicators/descriptions	Focus area / case study	GEO scope	Methods
transformation, response to recent crises) addressed in the current EUYS?		addressed in / aligned with the EUYS • Stakeholder views on EUYS alignment with the youth concerns and the potential impact on their future, existing gaps			Survey (Member State level)
3.3. Which core elements of the EU youth policy should stay as part of the EUYS when shifting from an overarching youth strategy covering all areas of interest to young people to a youth mainstreaming approach? Which elements of the EUYS would be best dealt with by other policy areas?	Elements of EUYS (e.g., goals, instruments) which should be dealt with by other policy areas (e.g., education, employment, health) or stay in EUYS (youth policy)	• List of elements of EUYS which should be dealt with by other specific EU policy areas or by youth policy. • Analytical description of the explanation behind the list of elements of EUYS, examples of policy areas and EUYS elements.	Mainstreaming of the EUYS goals	EU	Desk research (EU level) Interviews (EU level) Survey (EU level)

4. COHERENCE					
4.1. Internal coherence. To what extent and how have the EUYS Work Plans facilitated the implementation of the EYGs?	EUYS Work Plans influenced/facilitated the achievement of EYGs	• Level of recognition of EUYS Work Plans facilitating the implementation of EYGs • Analytical description on how work plans influenced the implementation of EYGs, examples	Policy coherence of the EUYS	EU, six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (Member State level)
4.2. Internal coherence. To what extent have EUYS objectives been coherently translated into programmes (e.g., Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps)? What are the strengths of this structure? What are its weaknesses?	EUYS and the programmes (e.g., Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps) are coherent internally (aligned with EUYS objectives and with one another)	• Extent to which the EUYS and programmes are coherent internally (aligned with EUYS objectives and with one another) • Examples of strengths and weaknesses of the EUYS structure in relation to programmes (e.g., Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps)	Policy coherence of the EUYS	EU, six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (Member State level)

4.3. External coherence. To what extent the EYGs coherent with current wider EU policies and its priorities?	EYGs is coherent with existing wider EU policies and its priorities which relate to the EUYS challenges and objectives	• Extent to which the EUYS is coherent with existing wider EU policies and its priorities which relate to the Strategy's challenges and objectives • Examples of EU policies and its priorities with which EUYS is aligned / not aligned	Policy coherence of the EUYS	EU, six selected Member States	Desk research (EU, Member State level) Interviews (EU, Member State level) Survey (Member State level)
5. POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS / RECOMMENDATIONS					
5.1. [Cross-cutting] What are the recommendations to improve the EUYS policy coherence / youth mainstreaming / access to quality education and training / youth participation in EU policies in terms of its efficiency, effectiveness, relevance? For the implementation years left? Post-2027? [Links with all previous study questions]	• High-priority recommendations (persistent, recurring recommendations) • Feasibility (realistic within technical, financial, and policy constraints) • Potential effects (e.g., significantly	• Effectiveness (e.g., improving youth mainstreaming) • Efficiency (e.g., underutilised actions, suggestions) • Relevance enhancement (e.g. relevant cross-cutting issues, gaps, alignment)	All	EU, six selected Member States	Triangulation of evidence gathered using all above listed methods

	enhancing youth participation and mainstreaming) • Alignment with EU youth policy priorities	• Coherence (e.g., coherence with EU policies).			

Annex 3. Interview questionnaires

Table 7 – EU-level interview questionnaire

Introductory questions
Could you briefly introduce yourself? For example: Which organisation(s) do you represent? What is your role in this/these organisation(s)? How long have you been working in this organisation(s)? If experience is relatively short, where have you been working before *(this will help us better understand the interviewee's points of view)?* How familiar are you with the EUYS? What is your role in relation to it?
Effectiveness of EUYS 2019-2027
[Researcher shows the list of 11 EUYS goals on slide 1: Q1.1. How would you assess the overall implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) in relation to the 11 European Youth Goals since the start of EUYS in 2019? Q1.2. Are there goals that have emerged as central ones or have been deprioritised during implementation of the EUYS? Why? Q1.1.,1.2. What specific achievements have you observed in relation to the EUYS goals since 2019? Please comment on each goal separately. *By 'achievements' we mean, for example: EU level impact; a national result or regional outcome; an organisational or local success story.* *[Stops sharing]* Q1.3. How well do you think the EUYS instruments for including youth in other policies (youth mainstreaming) have worked in practice at the European level? Comment each policy area separately (e.g., education, employment; health and well-being; other policy areas). *[Examples of tools and policy areas are given, if respondent is stuck]. Examples of policy areas and tools:* Policy areas: education and training; employment; health and well-being; environment and sustainability; digitalisation. Youth mainstreaming instruments: youth mainstreaming roundtables during the European Year of Youth 2022; Youth Checks; Youth Ambassadors; open methods of coordination; youth policy dialogues; exchange of good practices, building capacity, mutual learning activities. Q1.3. What are the barriers or weaknesses for youth mainstreaming[252] within these policy areas? Across them all? Why?

[252] Youth mainstreaming 'involves the integration of a youth perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes that concern and affect young people. Youth mainstreaming also aims to shape institutional and policymaking processes that provide space and opportunities for young people to have a say in the decisions that affect them' (European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks – A comparative overview*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, p.5)

Q1.4. How well has the EUYS and its instruments promoted youth inclusion and equality since 2019? Youth with fewer opportunities[253], including youth from rural areas? Please provide examples of achievements.

[Examples of EUYS instruments are given, if respondent is stuck]: EU Youth Dialogue; EU Youth Coordinator; EU Youth Stakeholder Group; EU Youth Portal; Youth Checks; Policy dialogues with Commissioners, President's Advisory Board.

Q1.6. Do you think youth work[254] and volunteering in Europe is empowering young people? To what extent young people are recognised as active citizens in the EU? Please provide examples, facts (e.g., for specific group of young people, within specific policy area).

Q1.7. In what ways has the EUYS and its instruments successfully promoted equal access to quality education and training for young people, including those with fewer opportunities (e.g., from rural areas) since 2019? Provide examples of achievements (e.g., per specific level of education, youth group, etc).

[Examples of EUYS instruments are given, if respondent is stuck]: EU Youth Dialogue; EU Youth Coordinator; EU Youth Stakeholder Group; EU Youth Portal; Youth Checks; Policy dialogues with Commissioners, President's Advisory Board.

Efficiency of EUYS 2019-2027

Q2.1. In your view, do the actions of EUYS for promoting inclusion and equality create burdens (e.g., costs, extra efforts) to stakeholders? Please provide examples of specific instruments and stakeholder types.

[Examples of EUYS instruments are given, if respondent is stuck]: EU Youth Dialogue; EU Youth Coordinator; EU Youth Stakeholder Group; EU Youth Portal; Youth Checks; Policy dialogues with Commissioners, President's Advisory Board.

Examples of stakeholder types: EU institutions/bodies; national and/ or regional/ local authorities; youth; civil society organisations and/or NGOs; experts and youth researchers; international organisations and bodies; general public.

Q2.2. In your view, do the actions of EUYS to support equal access to quality education create burdens (e.g., costs, extra efforts) to stakeholders? Please comment on specific instruments and stakeholder types.

Relevance of EUYS 2019-2027

Q3.1. How do you think the 11 goals of the EUYS have responded to horizontal/transversal challenges that emerged during implementation of the EUYS since 2019?

Example of challenges: Covid-19; cost of living and housing; unemployment; environment and climate; digitalisation and impact on social media; geopolitical security incl. radicalisation challenges; physical and mental health and well-being, sport.

Q3.3. Looking ahead, if the EU moves from a broad youth strategy to a process of youth mainstreaming across different policy areas, which parts of the current EUYS do you think should definitely be kept? Are there any parts that would be better handled specifically within other policy areas instead (instead of mainstreaming them across different policy areas)? Which? Please comment on specific parts and policy areas.

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253 'People with fewer opportunities' means people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, a migrant background, or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties or for any other reasons, including those that can give rise to discrimination under article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the programme.' See, European Commission, *Participant with fewer opportunities*, website.

254 *Youth work* is a key component of the EUYS as it covers numerous types of paid or voluntary activities implemented by youth and/or for youth. Youth work is '*a summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. The main objective of youth work is to provide opportunities for young people to shape their own futures'* (European Union-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, Glossary on youth, website).

Coherence of EUYS 2019-2027
Q4.1 (internal coherence). Are you aware of EUYS Work Plans? If 'Yes', how have the EUYS Work Plans facilitated the implementation of EUYS goals? 2019-2021 Work plan? 2022-2024? An ongoing 2025-2027 Work Plan? If 'No' – move to the next question. Q4.2. (internal coherence) To what extent do you think the goals of the EUYS have been clearly and effectively reflected in the design and delivery of programmes like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps (past programme, to be placed under Erasmus+ post-2027)? Can you give examples of how these programmes support specific EUYS goals? Do you see any gaps - areas where the link between EUYS and programme implementation could be improved? Q4.3. (external coherence) How well do the goals of the EUYS align with current EU-level policy priorities which relate to the EUYS challenges and objectives (e.g., in areas such as education and training, employment, health and well-being, others)? Are there any inconsistencies or overlaps that stand out? Provide examples of EU policy priorities, specific policy areas where EUYS is aligned / not aligned
Potential improvements, recommendations for EUYS 2025-2027 and EUYS post-2027
Q6.1. In relation to the previous questions, how should the EUYS 2019-2027 be improved for its last years of implementation? In terms of its effectiveness in achieving the goals? Efficiency? Internal and external coherence? Relevance? Q6.2. Looking ahead to the post-2027 period, what should EUYS' successor keep or improve from the current one? For example, are there specific goals (like youth participation, mental health, or inclusion), instruments and programmes (such as Erasmus+, the EU Youth Dialogue), or approaches (e.g. mainstreaming youth across policy areas, setting work plans) that should be maintained, revised, or replaced? Are there any gaps or emerging issues that you think the next EUYS should address more strongly?
Closing questions
7. Is there anything you would like to add to your previous answers? 8. Are you aware of any other recent literature or data sources (e.g., reports, studies, projects) that we should investigate during our study? Please share. Links: *add here* 9. Are you aware of any key EU-level stakeholders that we should reach out to during our study/interviews? Please share. Name surname: *add here* Position, organisation: *add here* Email contact: *add here* 10. Do you agree to be contacted for any follow up questions or participation at the study (e.g., survey)? Y/N

Source: Visionary Analytics, 2025

Table 8 – MS-level interview questionnaire

Introductory questions
Could you briefly introduce yourself? For example: 0. Which organisation(s) do you represent? What is your role in this/these organisation(s), especially in relation to youth policy? How long have you been working in this organisation(s)? If experience is relatively short, where have you been working before (this will help us better understand the interviewee's point of view)? 1. How familiar are you with the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027 (EUYS)? What is your role in relation to it?
Country-level background
2. Please briefly describe the status of a national/regional youth strategy in your country (present/not present). To what extent is the national/regional youth strategy in your country informed by/modelled after the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027? 3. To start, could you briefly describe the most important developments in youth policy in your country over the past 2–3 years? This could include major achievements, new initiatives, or significant challenges (e.g., changes in the political landscape).
Effectiveness of EUYS 2019–2027
[Researcher shows the list of 11 EUYS goals on slide 1]: **Q1.1.** How would you assess the overall implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) in your country? In relation to the 11 European Youth Goals since the start of EUYS in 2019? **Q1.2.** Which of the European Youth Goals have been most relevant or actively pursued in your country? Why? Which goals were deprioritised and why? *Ask separately about the most relevant goals and those that were not a focus* **Q1.1.,1.2.** What specific achievements have you observed in relation to the EUYS goals since 2019 in your country so far? Please comment on each goal separately and provide examples of specific achievements. *By 'achievements' we mean, for example: a national result or regional outcome; an organisational or local success story.* *[Stops sharing]* **Q1.3**. How well do you think the EUYS instruments for including youth in other policies (youth mainstreaming[255]) have worked in practice in your country? In your country, are youth consulted systematically in policymaking outside traditional youth domains? Comment on each policy area separately. *[Examples of EUYS instruments and policy areas are given, if the respondent is stuck]. Examples of policy areas and instruments:* - Policy areas: education and training; employment; health and well-being; environment and sustainability; digitalisation, other.

[255] Youth mainstreaming 'involves the integration of a youth perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes that concern and affect young people. Youth mainstreaming also aims to shape institutional and policymaking processes that provide space and opportunities for young people to have a say in the decisions that affect them' (European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks – A comparative overview*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024).

- Youth mainstreaming instruments: youth mainstreaming roundtables during the European Year of Youth 2022; Youth Checks; Youth Ambassadors; open methods of coordination; Youth Dialogue; exchange of good practices, building capacity, mutual learning activities.

Q1.3. What are the barriers or weaknesses for youth mainstreaming within these policy areas in your country? Across them all? Why?

Q1.4. How well has the EUYS and its instruments promoted youth inclusion and equality since 2019 in your country? Youth with fewer opportunities[256], including youth from rural areas? Please provide examples of achievements.

[Examples of EUYS instruments are given, if respondent is stuck]: EU Youth Dialogue; EU Youth Coordinator; EU Youth Stakeholder Group; EU Youth Portal; Youth Checks; Policy dialogues with Commissioners, President's Advisory Board.

Q1.5. In your country, how have youth organisations helped young people get involved in democracy, active citizenship and volunteering, promoting social inclusion and youth participation? Please provide specific examples.

Q1.6. Is youth work[257] and volunteering, helping young people in your country to feel empowered? Is it recognised? To what extent are young people recognised and treated as active citizens in your country? Please provide examples, facts (e.g., for a specific group of young people, within a specific policy area).

Q1.7. In what ways has the EUYS and its instruments successfully promoted equal access to quality education and training for young people in your country? Including youth with fewer opportunities (e.g., from rural areas) since 2019? Provide examples of achievements (e.g., per specific level of education, youth group, etc).

[Examples of EUYS instruments are given, if respondent is stuck]: EU Youth Dialogue; EU Youth Coordinator; EU Youth Stakeholder Group; EU Youth Portal; Youth Checks; Policy dialogues with Commissioners, President's Advisory Board.

Q1.8. Does youth work and volunteering in your country help young people move into education and training? Work/employment? Is it recognised? How does it help prevent social exclusion? Please explain.

Q1.9. In your view, how well do programmes like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps reach a diverse range of young people in your country with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives? Provide examples of groups of youth that are reached/not reached.

Efficiency of EUYS 2019-2027

Q2.1. In your view, do the actions/instruments of EUYS for promoting inclusion and equality create burdens (e.g., costs, extra efforts, resources) to stakeholders in your country? Please provide examples of specific instruments and stakeholder types.

[Examples of EUYS instruments are given, if respondent is stuck]: EU Youth Dialogue; EU Youth Coordinator; EU Youth Stakeholder Group; EU Youth Portal; Youth Checks; Policy dialogues with Commissioners, President's Advisory Board.

256 '*People with fewer opportunities*' means people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, a migrant background, or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties or for any other reasons, including those that can give rise to discrimination under article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the programme.' See, European Commission, Participant with fewer opportunities, website.

257 *Youth work* is a key component of the EUYS as it covers numerous types of paid or voluntary activities implemented by youth and/or for youth. Youth work is '*a summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. The main objective of youth work is to provide opportunities for young people to shape their own futures*' (European Union-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, Glossary on youth, website).

Examples of stakeholder types: national and/ or regional/ local authorities; youth; rural youth; NEETS; civil society organisations and/or NGOs; experts and youth researchers; international organisations and bodies; general public, others.

Q2.2. In your view, do the actions of EUYS to support equal access to quality education create burdens (e.g., costs, extra efforts) to stakeholders in your country? Please comment on specific instruments and stakeholder types.

If the interviewee is stuck, provide clarifications or reformulate questions, e.g. are sufficient resources allocated to implement the EUYS in your country? Your national/regional youth strategy? Which types of stakeholders face extra burdens when implementing the EUYS? Why?

Relevance of EUYS 2019-2027

Q3.1. How do you think the 11 goals of the EUYS have responded to horizontal/transversal challenges that emerged during the implementation of the EUYS since 2019? Are there any other challenges relevant to your country?

Examples of challenges: Covid-19; cost of living and housing; unemployment; environment and climate; digitalisation and impact on social media; geopolitical security incl. radicalisation challenges; physical and mental health and well-being, sport.

Q3.2. How well do the EUYS correspond to your country's youth's concerns and the potential impact on their future (e.g., climate change and sustainability, digital transformation, response to recent crises)? Please explain.

Coherence of EUYS 2019-2027

Q4.1. To what extent are the EUYS's instruments and other areas (e.g., programmes, initiatives, goals) coherent and aligned with one another? EUYS Work plans?

If the respondent is aware of the EUYS Work Plans, ask about any of the past and ongoing plans and their usefulness in reaching EUYS goals, coherence (2019-2021, 2022-2024, 2025-2027).

Q4.2. To what extent do you think the Youth Goals of the EUYS have been clearly and effectively reflected in the design and delivery of programmes like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps (past programme, to be placed under Erasmus+ post-2027)? Can you give examples of how these programmes support specific EUYS goals? Do you see any gaps – areas where the link between EUYS and programme implementation could be improved?

Q4.3. To what extent is the national/regional youth strategy / youth policy work (if there is no strategy) aligned with other strategies or policies at the national/regional level in your country? Do you see any influence for this alignment by the EUYS and wider EU policies, strategies and priorities? Are there any inconsistencies or overlaps that stand out? Provide examples.

Potential improvements, recommendations for EUYS 2025-2027 and EUYS post-2027

Q6.1. In relation to the previous questions, how should the EUYS 2019-2027 be improved for its last years of implementation? In the EU as a whole? In your country?

Q6.2. Looking ahead to the post-2027 period, what youth policy aspects (e.g., priorities, initiatives) are important to your country? What should EUYS' successor keep or improve from the current one?

For example, are there specific goals (like youth participation, mental health, or inclusion), instruments and programmes (such as Erasmus+, the EU Youth Dialogue), or approaches (e.g. mainstreaming youth across policy areas, setting work plans) that should be maintained, revised, or replaced? Are there any gaps or emerging issues that you think the next EUYS should address more strongly as it is relevant for your country?

Closing questions
7. Is there anything you would like to add to your previous answers? **8**. Are you aware of any other recent literature or data sources (e.g., reports, studies, projects) in your country that we should investigate during our study? Please share. a) Links: add here 9. Are you aware of any key national/regional-level stakeholders that we should reach out to during our study (e.g., interviews, survey)? Please share. a) Name surname: *add here* b) Position, organisation: *add here* c) Email contact: *add here* **10**. Do you agree to be contacted for any follow-up questions or participation in the study (e.g., via email, to help disseminate the survey)? Y/N

Source: Visionary Analytics, 2025

Annex 4. Online survey questionnaire

Survey title: The implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027

Introduction

Dear Respondent,

We invite you to take part in the European Parliament's survey of the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027 (EUYS). This survey targets key stakeholders, including policy authorities, public sector agencies, civil society organisations, youth policy experts, and researchers. It is being carried out at the EU level and in six selected Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, and Portugal.

The survey forms part of the study 'The implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027 in selected EU Member States assessing policy coherence and mainstreaming' (working title), carried out by Visionary Analytics. Commissioned by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), the study supports the European Parliament's upcoming EUYS implementation report, prepared by the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT). This report will guide efforts in the last phase of the current EUYS (2025–2027) and provide insights for the next EUYS after 2027.

The survey will inquire about the policy coherence of the EUYS in relation to the 11 EU Youth Goals and assess youth mainstreaming across various policy areas. It will also cover youth participation, with a focus on including young people with fewer opportunities, as well as access to quality education and training. You can find the European Parliament's letter of support here.

We kindly ask you to complete the survey **by 17 October 2025.** It takes approximately **20** minutes. You can stop at any time, save your answers, and finish filling in the survey later. This can be done by selecting 'Save and continue later' at the top of the screen.

DATA PRIVACY AND INFORMED CONSENT

The data controller of your personal data is the European Parliament (the 'controller'). Visionary Analytics, UAB (the 'processor') has been engaged by the controller to perform the survey for the purpose of the study referenced above on its behalf and is acting within the realm of a task carried out by the controller in the public interest.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your personal data will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons regarding the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data (the 'Regulation'). Within the limits set by the Regulation, you have the right to access, rectify, erase and/or port your personal data, as well as to restrict or object to the processing of your personal data by the controller.

Unless expressly agreed by you otherwise, your answers provided within the survey will be anonymised, aggregated and published as part of the study report. None of your personal details (e.g., name, surname, e-mail address, phone number) will be published or disclosed by the controller.

Further information related to the processing of your personal data can be found in the controller's privacy statement. The privacy statement of the controller explains in detail the reason for the processing of your personal data, what personal data is collected, the way it is collected and handled and how the controller ensures the protection of all personal data provided. It also specifies the contact details of the controller with whom you may exercise your rights, the Data Protection Officer and the European Data Protection Supervisor.

You can find the controller's privacy statement here. **Please read it carefully before taking part in the survey**.

Q0-1. Please select to continue*

☐ I confirm that I have read the Privacy Statement and agree with the processing of my personal data for the purposes stated therein.

If you do not agree to participate in the survey but would like to provide the requested information in an alternative way or have questions about the survey or the study, please contact us at youth@visionary.lt.

Thank you for your participation!

Q0-2*. Please select your country [list, single choice]

Respondents representing an EU-level stakeholder will be directed to an English-language questionnaire. Respondents representing a Member State will, by selecting their country, be directed to a questionnaire which is available in the corresponding national language (e.g. Bulgarian, German, Italian, Lithuanian, Portuguese or Croatian).

- EU-level, if selected, moved to EU-level questionnaire
- Bulgaria *if selected, moved to MS-level questionnaire (p7 onwards)*
- Croatia *if selected, moved to MS-level questionnaire (p7 onwards)*
- Germany *if selected, moved to MS-level questionnaire (p7 onwards)*
- Italy *if selected, moved to MS-level questionnaire (p7 onwards)*
- Lithuania *if selected, moved to MS-level questionnaire (p7 onwards)*
- Portugal *if selected, moved to MS-level questionnaire (p7 onwards)*

EU-LEVEL QUESTIONNAIRE (English only)

Background questions

Q1-1*. Please indicate the name of the organisation that you represent [open question]

Q1-2*. Please choose the type of your organisation [list, single choice]

- EU institution (e.g., EC, EU agency)
- Civil society (e.g., NGO, youth organisation)
- Youth policy expert, researcher
- Other (please specify)

Q1-3*. How familiar are you with the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027? [Likert scale, single choice]

- Familiar to a great extent (5)
- Familiar to a considerable extent (4)
- Moderate extent (3)
- Slightly familiar (2)
- Not familiar at all (1)
- Do not know / cannot answer the question

EUYS effectiveness

In this section, we will ask about how effective and successful the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) has been in reaching its goals. We will focus on the measures taken – including its main goals and instruments – to understand how well they have worked in practice.

Q2-1*. How would you assess the overall implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) in relation to the 11 European Youth Goals (EYGs) so far? Please rate each goal below on the scale provided. [list, single choice]

	Very poorly (no or minimal progress; goal is largely unaddressed)	Poorly (some limited implementation, but major gaps remain)	Moderately (goal has been partially implemented; mixed results)	**Well** (goal has been implemented effectively, with positive effects)	**Very well** (goal has been fully and coherently implemented; strong, measurable effects seen)	Do not know
1. Connecting EU with youth	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. Equality of all genders	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. Inclusive societies	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. Information & constructive dialogue	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. Mental health & wellbeing	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. Moving rural youth forward	○	○	○	○	○	○
7. Quality employment for all	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Very poorly (no or minimal progress; goal is largely unaddressed)	Poorly (some limited implementation, but major gaps remain)	Moderately (goal has been partially implemented; mixed results)	**Well** (goal has been implemented effectively, with positive effects)	**Very well** (goal has been fully and coherently implemented; strong, measurable effects seen)	Do not know
8. Quality learning	○	○	○	○	○	○
9. Space and participation for all	○	○	○	○	○	○
10. Sustainable green Europe	○	○	○	○	○	○
11. Youth organisations & European programmes	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q2-2*. Which of the European Youth Goals emerged as central / have been prioritised in the implementation so far? Please select 3-4. [list, multiple choice]

1. Connecting EU with youth
2. Equality of all genders
3. Inclusive societies
4. Information & constructive dialogue
5. Mental health & wellbeing
6. Moving rural youth forward
7. Quality employment for all
8. Quality learning
9. Space and participation for all
10. Sustainable green Europe
11. Youth organisations & European programmes

Q2-3. Please comment on your answers above – which specific 2-3 key achievements have you observed in relation to each of the prioritised goals? [open question]

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

Q2-4. Please comment on your answers above – what 2-3 key challenges are there for those goals rated poorly or very poorly? [open question]

1. ...
2. ...
3. ....

Q2-5*. To what extent have the key EUYS' instruments for promoting youth mainstreaming across other policy areas been effective in practice at the European level? Please rate each instrument below on the scale provided. [list, single choice]

Youth mainstreaming involves the integration of a youth perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes that concern and affect young people. Youth mainstreaming also aims to shape institutional and policymaking processes that provide space and opportunities for young people to have a say in the decisions that affect them (EC / EACEA / Youth Wiki, 2024).

	Very poorly (largely ineffective, with little or no impact)	**Poorly** (somewhat ineffective, showing limited success or only sporadic impact)	**Moderately** (achieved a moderate level of effectiveness, with noticeable impact)	**Well** (effective overall, demonstrating consistent and significant positive impact)	**Very well** (highly effective, showing strong and widespread positive impact across policy areas)	Do not know
EU Youth Coordinator	○	○	○	○	○	○
The European Commission's Youth Network	○	○	○	○	○	○
The EU Youth Stakeholders group	○	○	○	○	○	○
EU Youth Dialogue	○	○	○	○	○	○
Youth Check	○	○	○	○	○	○
European Year of Youth 2022	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q2-6. Please give examples of 2-3 key opportunities for youth mainstreaming across different policy areas, indicating specific policy areas in your answers (e.g., education, employment) [open question]
1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

Q2-7*. Please give examples of 2-3 key challenges for youth mainstreaming across different policy areas, indicating specific policy areas in your answers (e.g., education, employment) [open question]

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

Q2-8*. Please rate the following statements:

*'**People with fewer opportunities**' means people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, a migrant background, or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties or for any other reasons, including those that can give rise to discrimination under article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the programme.' See, European Commission, Participant with fewer opportunities, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps guides: Glossary, n.d.*

*In this study, **education and training** is understood as informal, non-formal forms of learning/education as well as the different formal education levels such as secondary education, vocational education and training, higher education.*

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
To what extent does the EUYS and its instruments effectively promote youth inclusion and equality, especially for youth with fewer opportunities?	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent does the EUYS and its instruments effectively promote equal access to quality education and training for young people, especially those with fewer opportunities?	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q2-9. Can you provide 2-3 examples of how EUYS has effectively promoted youth inclusion and equality, including improved access to quality education and training for young people? How were these results achieved? [open question]

Youth inclusion and equality:
1.
2.
3.

Access to quality education and training:

1.
2.
3.

EUYS efficiency

In this section, we will ask about how efficiently the EUYS and its measures have supported youth participation and access to quality education and training. We are interested in whether these measures have created any additional burdens – financial, human, or otherwise – for particular stakeholder groups such as public authorities, civil society, and particular groups of youth (e.g., rural youth).

Q3-1*. Please rate the following statements:

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
To what extent do the actions of EUYS aimed at promoting youth inclusion and equality place significant burdens on stakeholders? (e.g., extra costs, administrative efforts)	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do the actions of EUYS to support equal access to quality education and training place significant burdens on stakeholders? (e.g., extra costs, administrative efforts)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3-2. Based on your answers above, which stakeholders face significant burdens in implementing EUYS to support youth inclusion and equality? Access to education and training? Provide examples of stakeholder types (e.g., youth organisations, youth workers, rural youth) and specific burdens that should be addressed or improved. [Open question]

Youth inclusion and equality:

1.
2.
3.

Access to quality education and training:

1.
2.
3.

EUYS relevance and capacity

In this section, we will ask about how relevant the EUYS is. We are particularly interested in whether its goals address new and emerging issues, taking into account the youth's concerns about their impact in the future.

Q4-1*. To what extent have the 11 European Youth Goals addressed the following new cross-cutting challenges? Please rate each challenge below on the scale provided.

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
Rising cost of living (e.g., inflation, increased food and/or energy prices, higher transport costs)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lack of affordable housing (e.g., difficulties for young people to rent or buy homes, overcrowded housing, poor housing conditions)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Digital transition – access issues (e.g., ensuring equal access to digital devices and internet)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Digital transition - skills (e.g., improving digital skills; supporting adaptation to online learning and remote working environments)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Green transition – learning & awareness (e.g., promoting environmentally friendly lifestyles; encouraging climate action and sustainable consumption; supporting young people's involvement in climate activism)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Green transition – skills & jobs (e.g., promoting green jobs; improving green competences, education on sustainable development, biodiversity, recycling, renewable energy)	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
Mental health and well-being (e.g., access to counselling and psychological support; reducing stigma around mental health; tackling stress, burnout, and loneliness among young people)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Growing security concerns (e.g., wars and conflicts; terrorism; cyber security threats; personal safety; increasing social polarisation and hate speech)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q4-2*. Based on the lessons learned from implementing the EUYS, which elements of **EU youth policy should remain within the EUYS as it shifts towards a youth mainstreaming approach?** Which elements would be better addressed through other EU policy areas? Please give 2-3 specific examples, mentioning specific policy areas and/or EUYS instruments, European Youth Goals or other EUYS initiatives/actions [Open question]

1. ...
2. ....
3. ....

EUYS coherence

In this section, we will ask about how coherent and consistent the EUYS is. We would like to know how well its different instruments and programmes work together to achieve the EUYS objectives (internal coherence), and how well the EUYS aligns with other policies and strategies at the EU level (external coherence).

Q5-1*. Please rate the following statements:

Note: the EU Youth Strategy operates in 3-year work cycles. The priorities for each cycle are set by the Council together with the European Commission in EU Youth Strategy Work Plans.

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
To what extent have the EUYS Work Plans facilitated the	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
implementation of the EUYS' goals?						
To what extent have the goals of the EUYS been clearly and effectively reflected in the design and delivery of programmes like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps?	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do the EUYS goals fit with the EU's broader policies, strategies and priorities?						

Q5-2. Based on your answers above, what do you see as the main strengths and weaknesses of the EU Youth Strategy's coherence — both internally and in relation to other EU policies and priorities? [open question]

Strengths:
1. ...
2. ....
3. ....

Weaknesses:

1. ...
2. ....
3. ....

Potential improvements

Q6-1*. Looking ahead, how could the delivery of the EUYS be improved during its final implementation phase (2025–2027)? Provide 2-3 specific suggestions [open question]

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

Q6-2*. What key areas and actions should be prioritised in the EUYS after 2027? Why do you consider these areas and actions important? Provide 2-3 specific suggestions [open question]

1. ...
2. ....
3. ....

Closing questions

Q7-1. Is there anything you would like to add? [open question]

Q7-2. Upon completion of this survey, we may want to contact you to clarify your answers and/or obtain additional information. If you agree, please provide us with your contact details for a possible follow-up. [multiple answers, text fields]

a) Name, surname:_____

b) Organisation:_____

c) Telephone:_____

d) E-mail:_____

Thank you for participating in this survey!

MEMBER STATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1-1a*. Please select the level and/or region for which you will be providing answers [list, single choice]

- Germany: federal level
- Germany: Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania
- Germany: North Rhine-Westphalia
- Italy: national level
- Italy: Campania

Q1-1b. Please indicate the level of governance for which you will be providing answers [list, single choice]

- National
- Regional
- Local

Q1-2*. Please choose the type of your organisation [list, single choice]

- Policy authority, public agency (e.g., Ministry, Youth Department or agency)
- Civil society (e.g., NGO, youth organisation)
- Youth policy expert, researcher
- Other (please specify)

Q1-3*. How familiar are you with the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027? [Likert scale, single choice]

- Familiar to a great extent (5)
- Familiar to a considerable extent (4)
- Moderate extent (3)
- Slightly familiar (2)
- Not familiar at all (1)
- Do not know / cannot answer the question

Q1-4*. Does your region/country have a national youth strategy? [list, single choice]

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

EUYS effectiveness

In this section, we will ask about how effective and successful the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) has been in reaching its goals. We will focus on the measures taken – including its main goals and instruments – to understand how well they have worked in practice.

Q2-1*. How would you assess the overall implementation of the 11 European Youth Goals (EYGs) in your region/country so far? Please rate each goal below on the scale provided. [list, single choice]

	Very poorly (no or minimal progress; goal is largely unaddressed)	Poorly (some limited implementation, but major gaps remain)	Moderately (goal has been partially implemented; mixed results)	**Well** (goal has been implemented effectively, with positive effects)	**Very well** (goal has been fully and coherently implemented; strong, measurable effects seen)	Do not know
1. Connecting EU with youth	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. Equality of all genders	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. Inclusive societies	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. Information & constructive dialogue	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. Mental health & wellbeing	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. Moving rural youth forward	○	○	○	○	○	○
7. Quality employment for all	○	○	○	○	○	○
8. Quality learning	○	○	○	○	○	○
9. Space and participation for all	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Very poorly (no or minimal progress; goal is largely unaddressed)	Poorly (some limited implementation, but major gaps remain)	Moderately (goal has been partially implemented; mixed results)	**Well** (goal has been implemented effectively, with positive effects)	**Very well** (goal has been fully and coherently implemented; strong, measurable effects seen)	Do not know
10. Sustainable green Europe	○	○	○	○	○	○
11. Youth organisations & European programmes	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q2-2*. Which 3-4 of the 11 European Youth Goals have been most relevant or actively pursued in your regional/national context? [list, multiple choice]

1. Connecting the EU with youth
2. Equality of all genders
3. Inclusive societies
4. Information & constructive dialogue
5. Mental health & wellbeing
6. Moving rural youth forward
7. Quality employment for all
8. Quality learning
9. Space and participation for all
10. Sustainable green Europe
11. Youth organisations & European programmes

Q2-3. Please comment on your answers above – which specific 2-3 key achievements have you observed in relation to each of the prioritised goals? [open question]

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

Q2-4. Please comment on your answers above – what 2-3 key challenges are there for those goals rated poorly or very poorly? [open question]

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

Q2-5*. To what extent have the key EUYS instruments for promoting youth mainstreaming across other policy areas been effective in practice in your country/region? Please rate each instrument below on the scale provided. [list, single choice]

Youth mainstreaming *involves the integration of a youth perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes that concern and affect young people. Youth mainstreaming also aims to shape institutional and policymaking processes that provide space*

and opportunities for young people to have a say in the decisions that affect them (EC / EACEA / Youth Wiki, 2024).

	Very poorly (largely ineffective, with little or no impact)	**Poorly** (somewhat ineffective, showing limited success or only sporadic impact)	**Moderately** (achieved a moderate level of effectiveness, with noticeable impact)	**Well** (effective overall, demonstrating consistent and significant positive impact)	**Very well** (highly effective, showing strong and widespread positive impact across policy areas)	**Do not know**
EU Youth Coordinator	○	○	○	○	○	○
The European Commission's Youth Network	○	○	○	○	○	○
The EU Youth Stakeholders group	○	○	○	○	○	○
EU Youth Dialogue	○	○	○	○	○	○
Youth Check	○	○	○	○	○	○
European Year of Youth 2022	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q2-6. Please give examples of 2-3 key opportunities for youth mainstreaming across different policy areas in your region/country, indicating specific policy areas (e.g., education, employment) [open question]

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

Q2-7*. Please give examples of 2-3 key challenges for youth mainstreaming across different policy areas in your region/country, indicating specific policy areas (e.g., education, employment) [open question]

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

Q2-8*. Please rate the following statements about your country/region:

*'**People with fewer opportunities**' means people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, a migrant background, or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties or for any other reasons, including those that can give rise to discrimination under article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the programme.' See, European Commission, Participant with fewer opportunities, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps guides: Glossary, n.d.*

***Youth Work** is a summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. The main objective of youth work is to provide opportunities for young people to shape their own futures. See, European Union-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, n.d., Glossary on youth*

*In this study, **education and training** is understood as informal, non-formal forms of learning/education as well as the different formal education levels such as secondary education, vocational education and training, higher education.*

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
To what extent does the EUYS and its instruments effectively promote youth inclusion and equality, especially for youth with fewer opportunities in your region/country?	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent does the EUYS and its instruments effectively promote equal access to quality education and training for young people in your region/country, especially those with fewer opportunities?	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do programmes like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps reach a diverse range of young people in your region/country? (e.g. youth with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives)	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do youth organisations in your region/country help young people get involved in democracy, active citizenship and volunteering, promoting social inclusion and youth participation?	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do you think youth work and volunteering in your region/country help young people	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
feel empowered and treated as active citizens?						
To what extent is youth work in your region/country used to help young people move/transition into education, training, and/or work?	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q2-9*. How has EUYS effectively promoted youth inclusion and equality, including improved access to quality education and training for young people in your region/country? How were these results achieved?
Provide specific examples [open question]

Youth inclusion and equality:

1.
2.
3.

Access to quality education and training:

1.
2.
3.

EUYS efficiency

In this section, we will ask about how efficiently the EUYS and its measures have supported youth participation and access to quality education and training. We are interested in whether these measures have created any additional burdens – financial, human, or otherwise – for particular stakeholder groups such as public authorities, civil society, and particular groups of youth (e.g., rural youth).

Q3-1*. Please rate the following statements:

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
To what extent do the actions of EUYS aimed at promoting youth inclusion and equality place significant burdens on stakeholders in your region/country? (e.g., extra costs, administrative efforts)	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do the actions of EUYS to support equal access to quality education and training place significant burdens on	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
stakeholders? (e.g., extra costs, administrative efforts)						

Q3-2. Based on your answers above, which stakeholders in your region/country face significant burdens in implementing EUYS to support youth inclusion and equality? Access to education and training? Provide examples of stakeholder types (e.g., youth organisations, youth workers, rural youth) and specific burdens that should be addressed or improved. [Open question]

Youth inclusion and equality:

1.
2.
3.

Access to quality education and training:

1.
2.
3.

EUYS relevance and capacity

In this section, we will ask about how relevant the EUYS is. We are particularly interested in whether its goals address new and emerging issues, taking into account the youth's concerns about their impact in the future.

Q4-1*. Please rate the following statements about your region/country:

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
To what extent have the 11 EU Youth Goals addressed the new cross-cutting and transversal challenges relevant to your region/country so far (e.g., digital transition, living costs, housing crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, security, others)?	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent does the EUYS correspond to your region's/country's youth's concerns and the potential impact on their future (e.g., climate change and sustainability, digital transformation, response to recent crises)?	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q4-2. Please comment on your choices above – which of the 2-3 crucial cross-cutting challenges relevant to your region's/country's youth should EUYS focus on more? Why? [open]

1. ...

2. ...

3. ...

EUYS coherence

In this section, we will ask about how coherent and consistent the EUYS is. We would like to know how well its different instruments and programmes work together to achieve the EUYS objectives (internal coherence), and how well the EUYS aligns and your regional/national youth policy aligns with other policies and strategies (external coherence).

Q5-1*. Please rate the following statements:

Note: the EU Youth Strategy operates in 3-year work cycles. The priorities for each cycle are set by the Council together with the European Commission in EU Youth Strategy Work Plans.

	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	Do not know
Questions about the EUYS:						
To what extent have the EUYS Work Plans facilitated the implementation of the EUYS' goals?	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent have the goals of the EUYS been clearly and effectively reflected in the design and delivery of programmes like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps?	○	○	○	○	○	○
To what extent do the EUYS goals fit with the EU's broader policies, strategies and priorities?						
Questions about the regional/national youth policy:						
To what extent is the regional/national youth strategy of your region/country aligned with other regional/national strategies or policies in your country?						
To what extent is the regional/national youth strategy of your region/country aligned with the EUYS (e.g., goals, objectives)?						

Q5-2. Please comment on your choices above – how does the EUYS influence the alignment of your regional/national youth strategy with other strategies / strategic priorities in your country? [open question]

Potential improvements

Q6-1*. Looking ahead, how could the delivery of the EUYS be improved during its final implementation phase (2025–2027) in the EU? In your region/country? [open question]

Q6-2*. What key areas and actions important to your region/country should be prioritised in the EUYS after 2027? Why do you consider these areas and actions important? [open question]

Closing questions

Q7-1. Is there anything you would like to add? [open question]

Q7-2. Upon completion of this survey, we may want to contact you to clarify your answers and/or obtain additional information. If you agree, please provide us with your contact details for a possible follow-up. [multiple answers, text fields]

e) Name, surname:_____

f) Organisation:_____

g) Telephone:_____

h) E-mail:_____

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Annex 5. Survey results

The figures below present descriptive statistical analysis of the EU and Member States survey conducted as part of the study. The results are provided at the EU level and are pooled across Member States. Respondents' answers to open questions are integrated into the analysis provided in the main report.

Background characteristics

Figure 4 – Q0-2. Share of EU-level and Member State respondents per Member State.

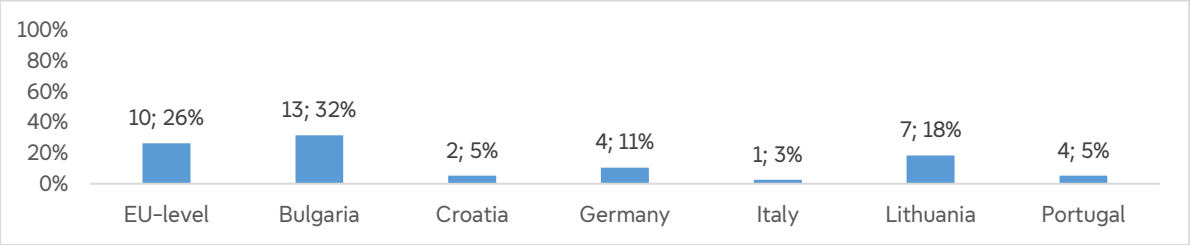


Figure 5 – Q1-2. Share of respondents per stakeholder type.

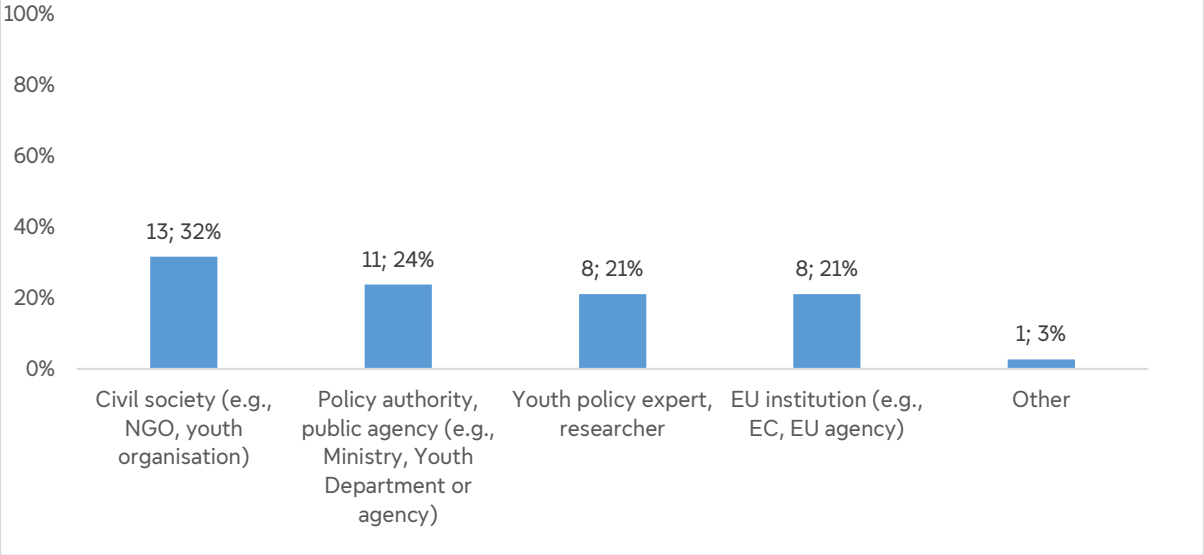


Figure 6 – Q1-1b. Share of respondents per level of governance.

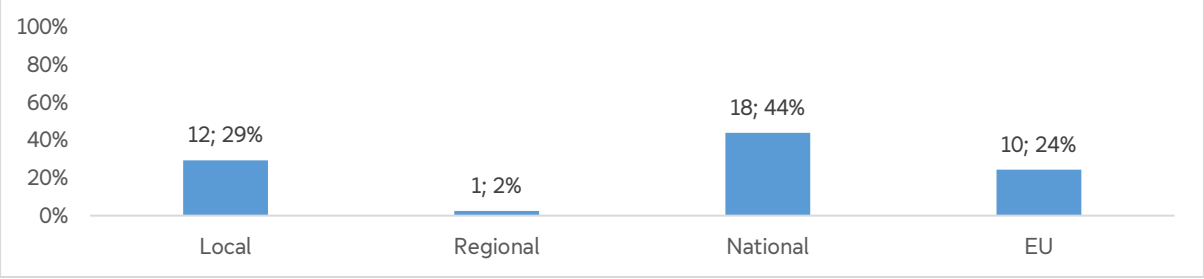
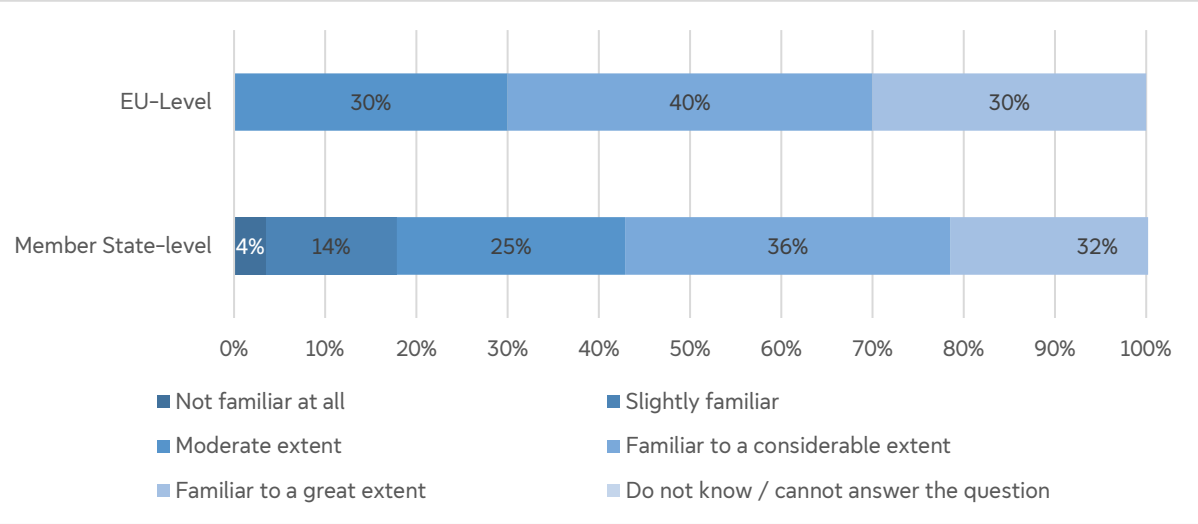


Figure 7 - Q1-3. How familiar are you with the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027? (EU-level n=10; all Member States m=31).



Effectiveness

Figure 8 - Q2-1. How would you assess the overall implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) in relation to the 11 European Youth Goals (EYGs) so far? (EU-level, n=10).

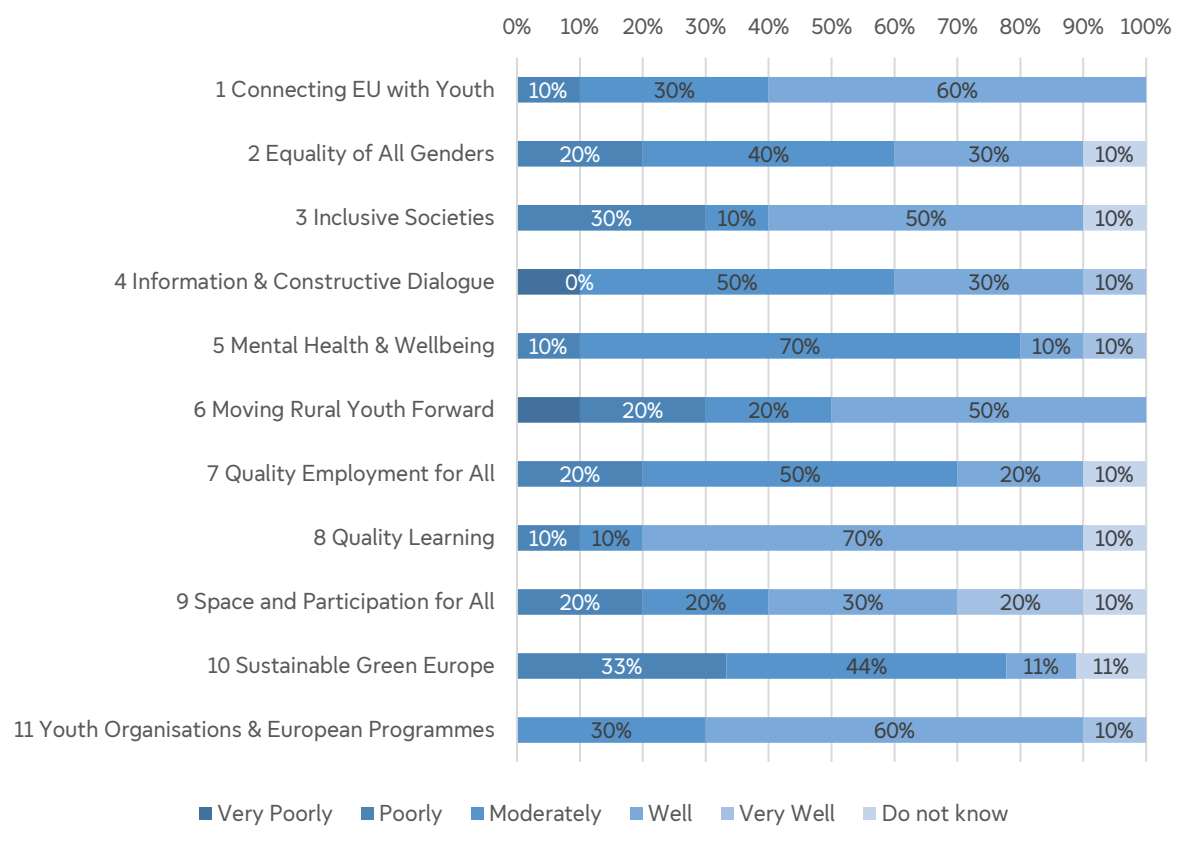


Figure 9 – Q2-1. How would you assess the overall implementation of the 11 European Youth Goals (EYGs) in your region/country so far? (all Member States, m=31).

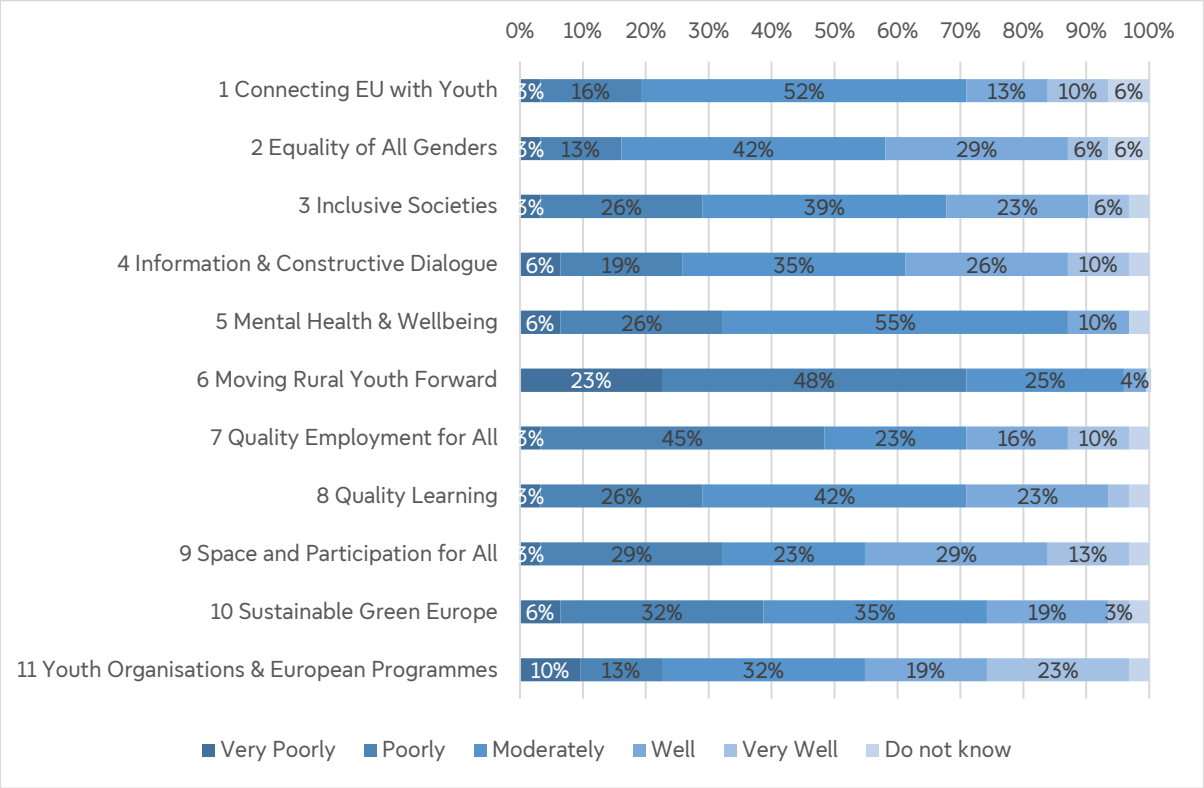


Figure 10 – Q2-2. Share of respondents who chose EYGs which have been actively pursued on the EU level (n=10) and in the Member States (m=31).

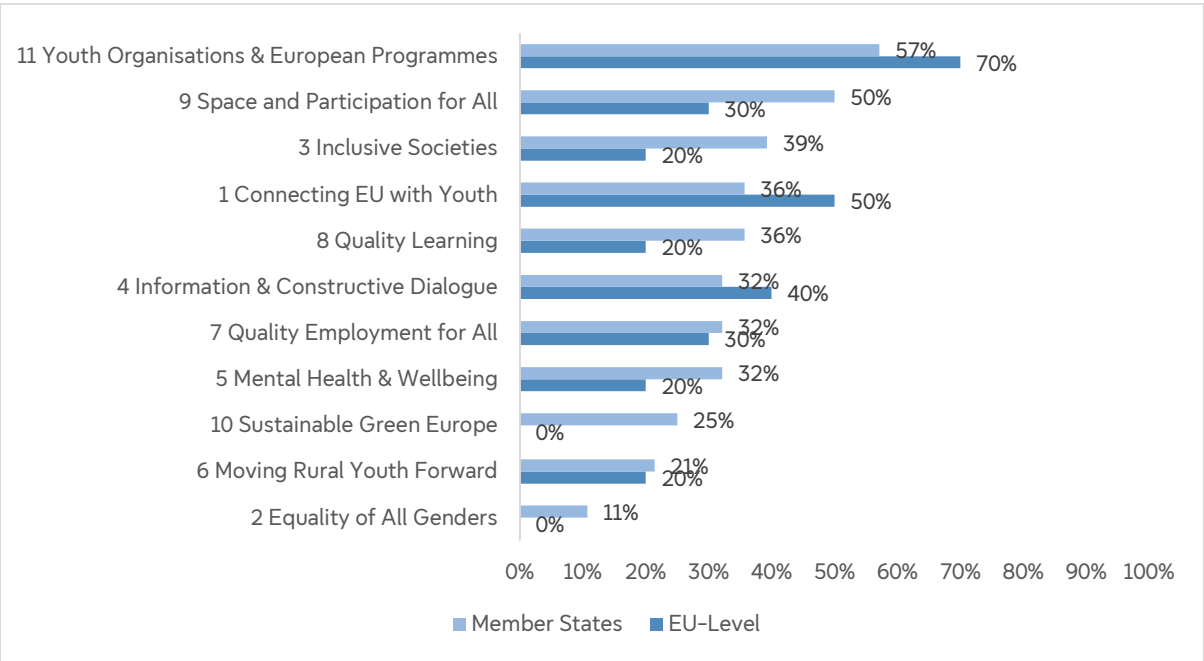


Figure 11 – Q2-5. To what extent have the key EUYS instruments for promoting youth mainstreaming across other policy areas been effective in practice at the European level? Please rate each instrument below on the scale provided (EU level, n=10).

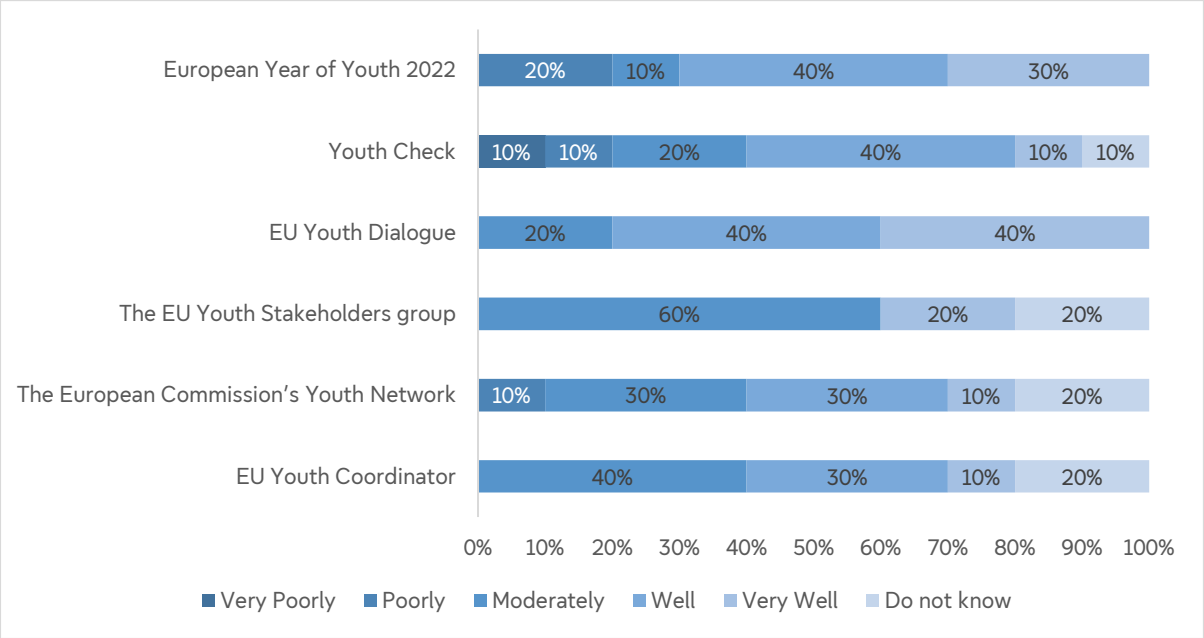


Figure 12 – Q2-5. To what extent have the key EUYS instruments for promoting youth mainstreaming across other policy areas been effective in practice in your country/region? Please rate each instrument below on the scale provided (all Member States, m=31).

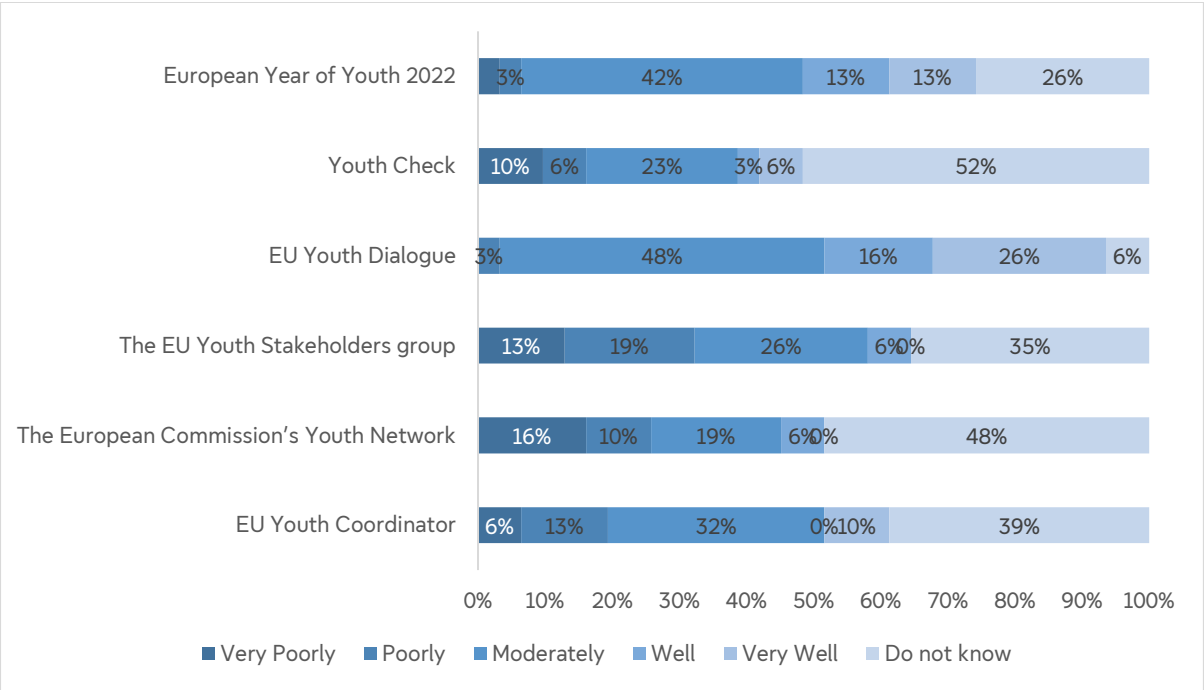
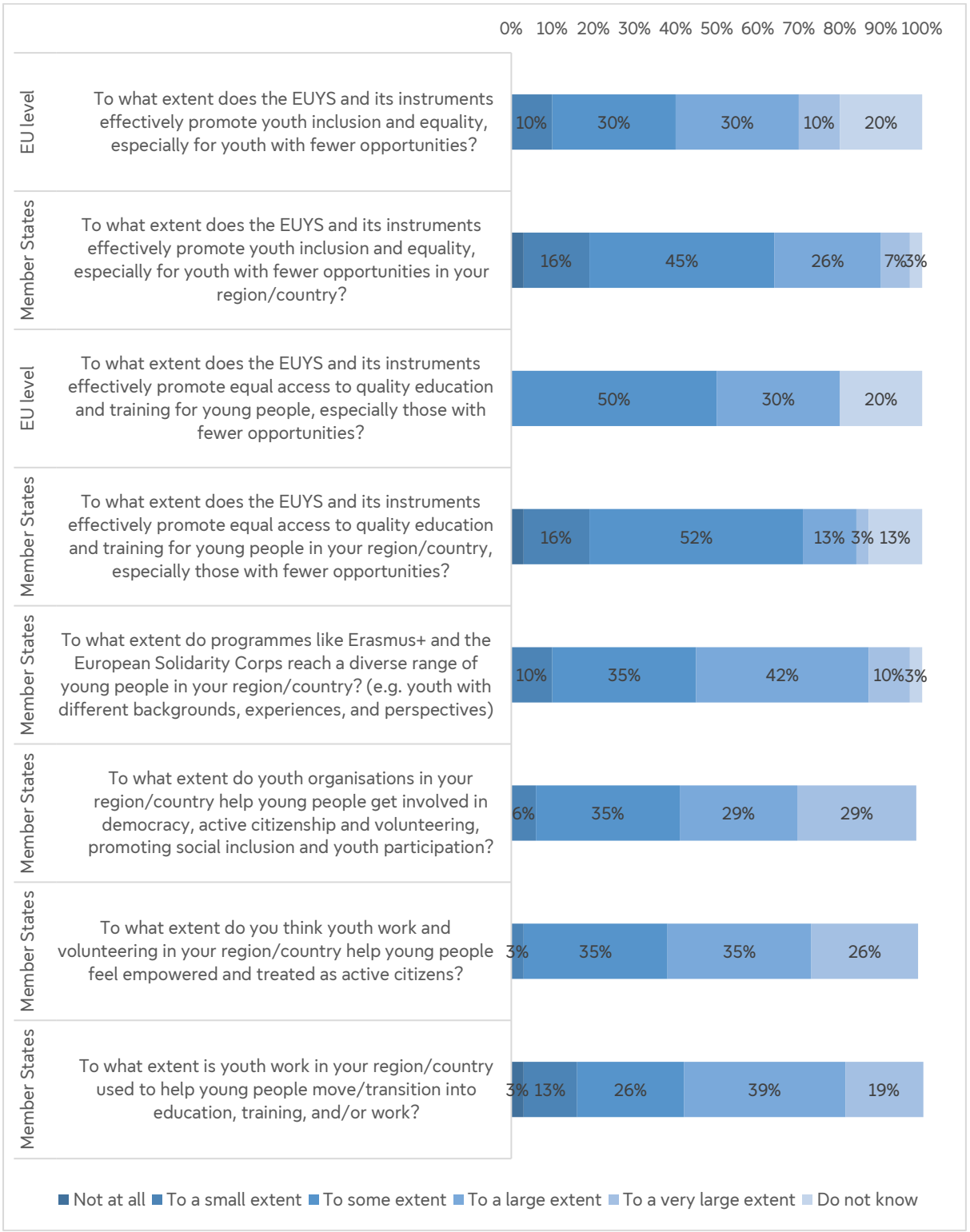
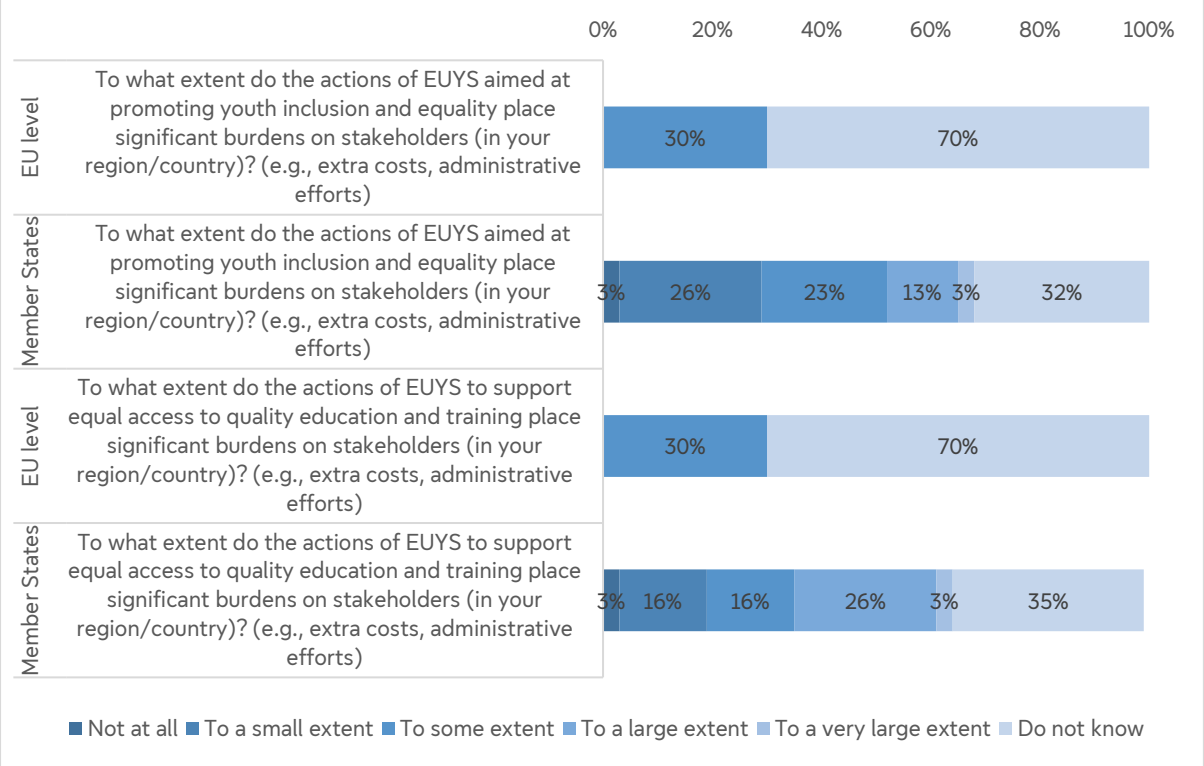


Figure 13 – Q2-8. Please rate the following statements (EU level, n=10; all Member States, m=31).



Efficiency

Figure 14 – Q3-1. Please rate the following statements (EU level, n=10; all Member States, m=31).



Relevance

Figure 15 – Q4-1. To what extent have the 11 European Youth Goals addressed the following new cross-cutting challenges? Please rate each challenge below on the scale provided (EU level, n=10).

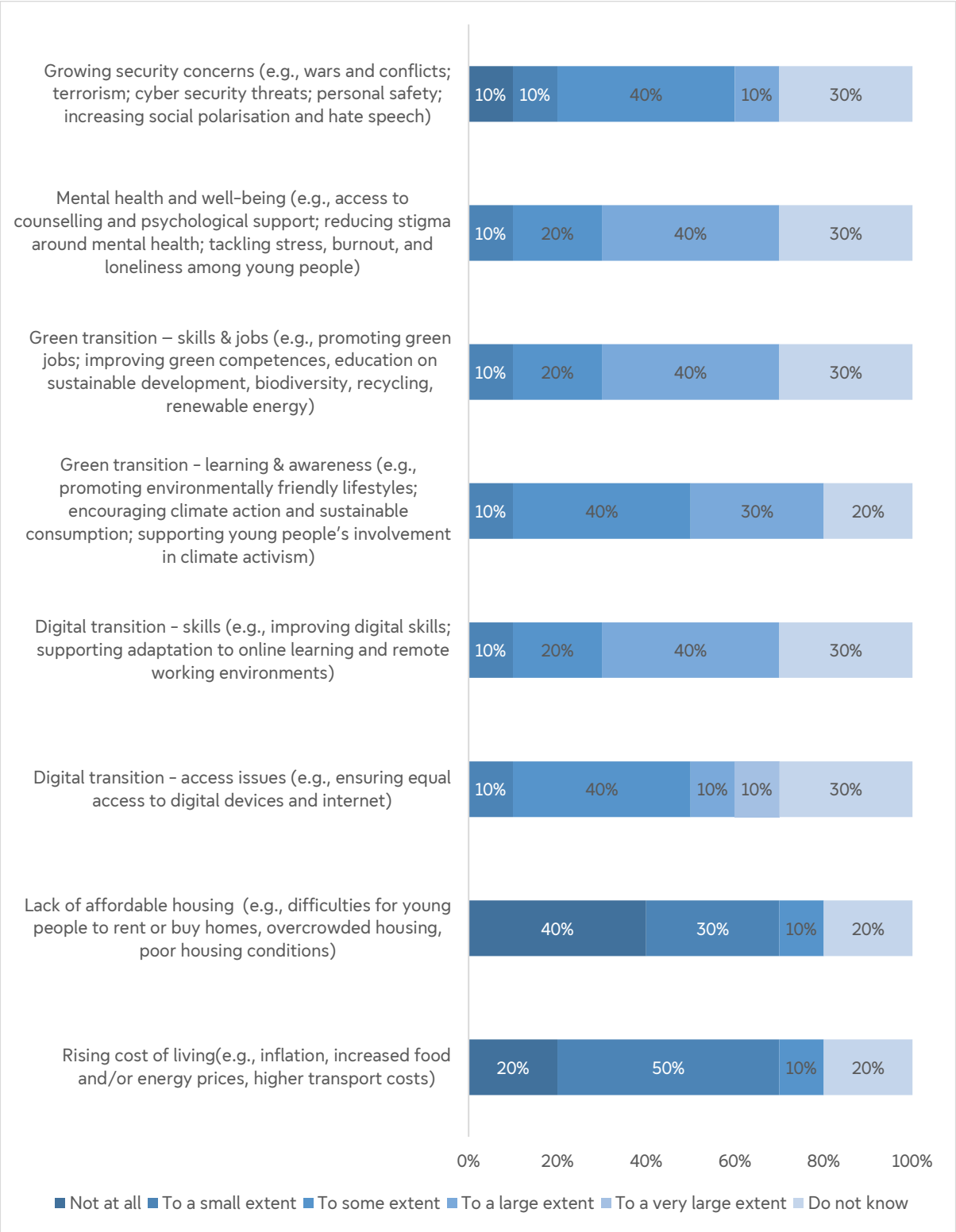
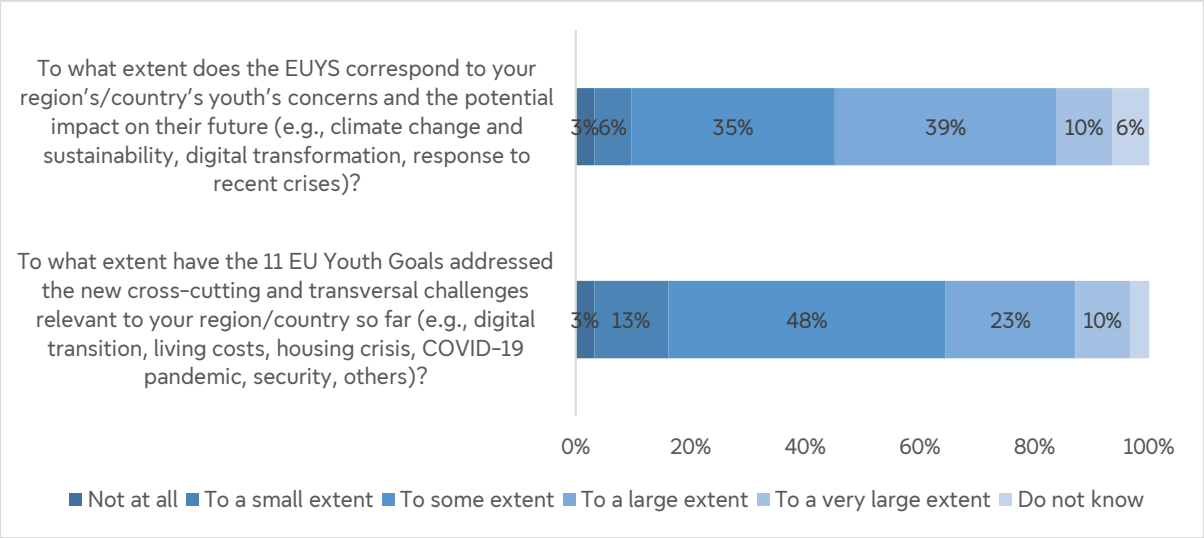


Figure 16 – Q4-1. Please rate the following statements about your region/country (all Member States, m=31)



Coherence

Figure 17 – Q5-1. Please rate the following statements about the regional/national youth policy: (all Member States, m=31).

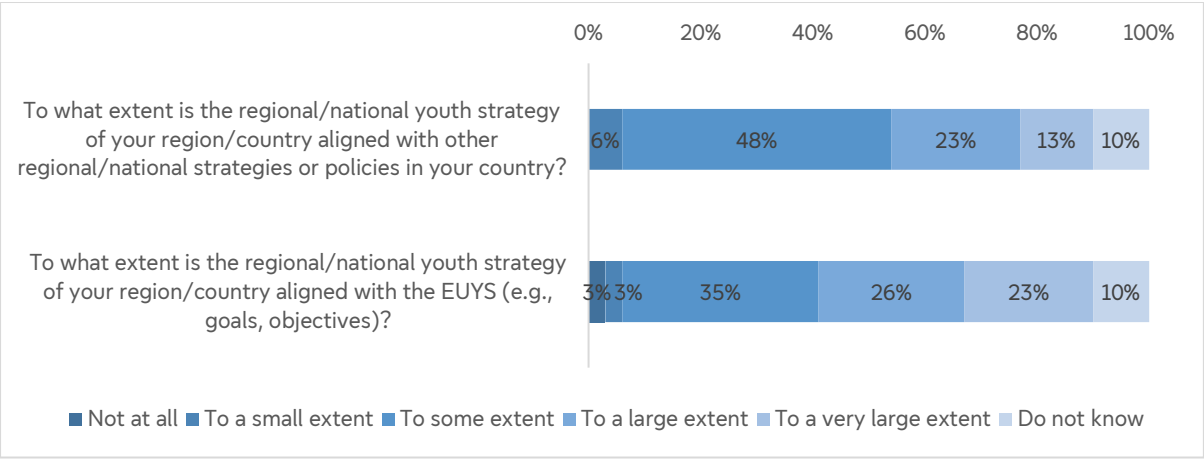
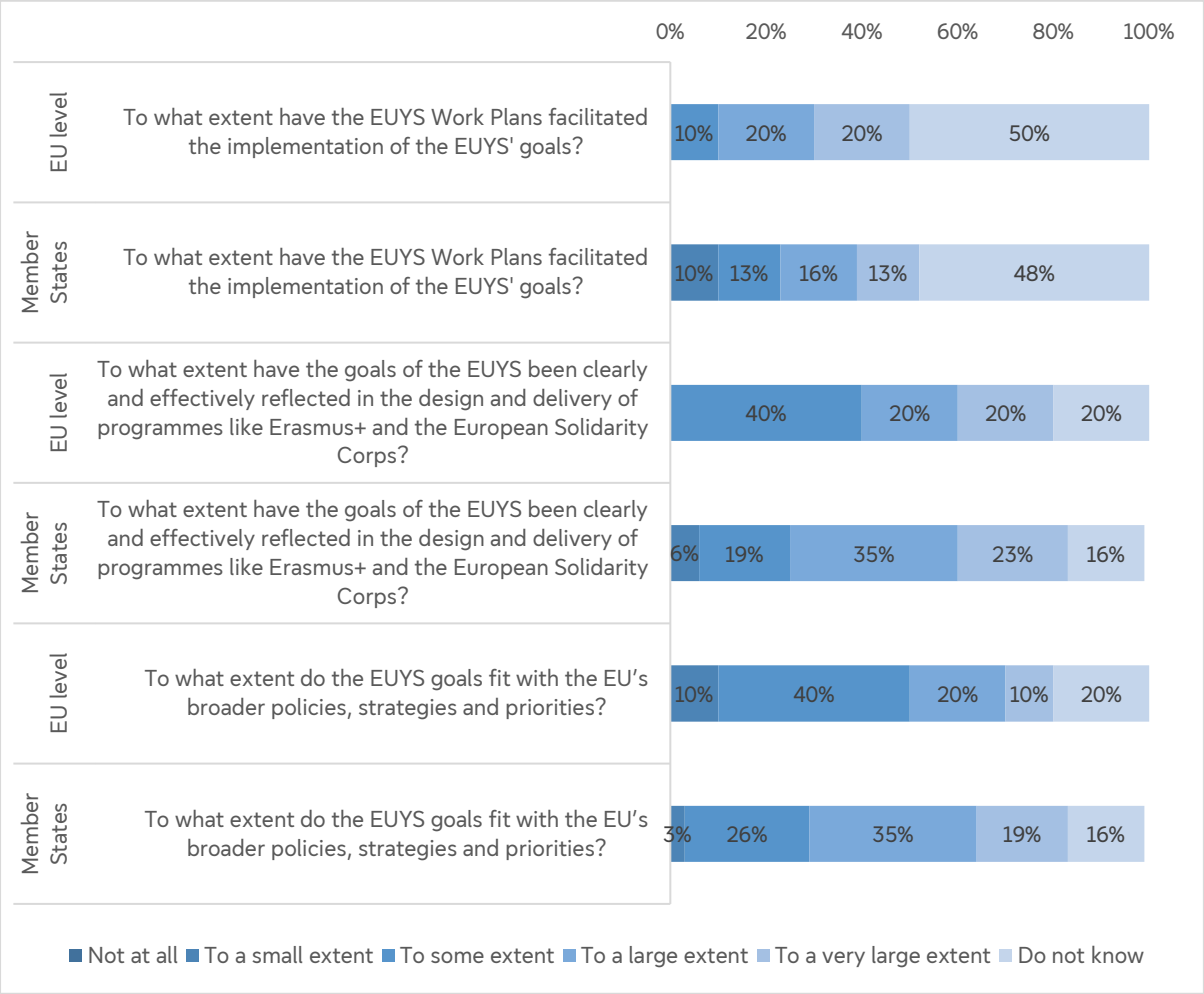


Figure 18 – Q5-1. Please rate the following statements about the EUYS (EU level, n=10; all Member States, m=31).



Annex 6. List of stakeholders engaged during the study

Table 9 – List of stakeholders engaged

No.	Name, surname	Member State	Stakeholder type	Organisation
EU-level interviews				
1	Interviewee 1	-	European institution	The Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission
2	Interviewee 2	-	European institution	DG EAC, European Commission
3	Interviewee 3	-	European institution	DG EAC, European Commission
4	Interviewee 4	-	EU consultative body	European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)
5	Interviewees 5 and 6 (interviewed together)	-	International organisation	Council of Europe
6	Interviewee 7	-	Civil society	Erasmus Student Network (ESN)
7	Interviewee 8	-	Civil society	European Youth Forum (EYF)
8	Interviewee 9	-	Civil society	Centre for European Volunteering (CEV)
9	Interviewee 10	-	Youth policy experts/researchers	University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
10	Interviewee 11	-	Youth policy experts/researchers	RAY Network
Member State interviews				
11	Interviewee 1	Bulgaria	National authorities, public agencies	Ministry of Youth and Sports, Directorate for Youth Policies
12	Interviewee 2	Bulgaria	National authorities, public agencies	Ministry of Education and Science
13	Interviewee 3	Bulgaria	National authorities, public agencies	Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC)
14	Interviewee 4	Bulgaria	Civil society	National Youth Forum (NYF)
15	Interviewee 5	Bulgaria	Youth policy experts/researchers	European Steering Committee for Youth
16	Interviewee 6	Croatia	National authorities, public agencies	Ministry of Science, Education and Youth

No.	Name, surname	Member State	Stakeholder type	Organisation
17	Interviewee 7	Croatia	National authorities, public agencies	Ministry of Science, Education and Youth
18	Interviewee 8 (in writing)	Croatia	Civil society	Croatian Youth Network
19	Interviewee 9	Croatia	Youth policy experts/researchers	Institute for Social Research in Zagreb
20	Interviewee 10	Germany	National authorities, public agencies	-
21	Interviewee 11	Germany	Regional authority	Ministry for Children, Youth, Family, Equality, Refugees, and Integration of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia
22	Interviewee 12	Germany	Civil society	Child and Youth Welfare Association
23	Interviewee 13 (in writing)	Germany	Civil society	German Federal Youth Council
24	Interviewee 14	Germany	Regional civil society	State Youth Council of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
25	Interviewee 15 (in writing)	Italy	Regional authority	Regional Directorate of Campania, Education, Social Policies, Youth Policies
26	Interviewee 16 (in writing)	Italy	Civil society	National Youth Council
27	Interviewee 17	Italy	Regional civil society	Youth Forum of Campania
28	Interviewee 18 (partially in writing)	Italy	Youth policy experts/researchers	Scientific Committee of the Youth Policies Observatory
29	Interviewee 19 (partially in writing)	Italy	Youth policy experts/researchers	External Expert
30	Interviewees 20 and 21 (interviewed together)	Lithuania	National authorities, public agencies	Ministry of Social Security and Labour
31	Interviewees 22 and 23 (interviewed together)	Lithuania	Civil society	Agency of Youth Affairs
32	Interviewee 24	Lithuania	Civil society	Lithuanian National Youth Council
33	Interviewee 25	Lithuania	Youth policy experts/researchers	Vilnius University

No.	Name, surname	Member State	Stakeholder type	Organisation
34	Interviewees 26 and 27 (interviewed together)	Portugal	National authorities, public agencies	Portuguese Institute of Youth and Sports
35	Interviewee 28	Portugal	Civil society	Portuguese National Youth Council
36	Interviewee 29	Portugal	Civil society	TESE Development Association
37	Interviewee 30	Portugal	Youth policy experts/researchers	ICS-ULisboa
Organisations/institutions which responded to the online survey				
38	Respondent 1	-	European institution	The Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission
39	Respondent 2	-	European institution	European Commission
40	Respondent 3	-	European institution	European Commission
41	Respondent 4	-	European institution	European Commission
42	Respondent 5	-	European institution	European Commission
43	Respondent 6	-	European institution	European Parliament, CULT Committee
44	Respondent 7	-	European institution	European Parliament
45	Respondent 8	-	European institution	European Parliament
46	Respondent 9	-	Civil society	World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (Europe)
47	Respondent 10	-	Youth policy experts/researchers	Flemish National Agency of Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps
48	Respondent 11	Bulgaria	Local authority	Pernik Municipality
49	Respondent 12	Bulgaria	Local authority	Stara Zagora Municipality
50	Respondent 13	Bulgaria	Local authority	International Youth Centre Burgas
51	Respondent 14	Bulgaria	Civil society	National Youth Centre – Pernik
52	Respondent 15	Bulgaria	Civil society	Bulgarian Scouts
53	Respondent 16	Bulgaria	Civil society	Maverick NGO/ Sofia Youth Centre

No.	Name, surname	Member State	Stakeholder type	Organisation
54	Respondent 17	Bulgaria	Civil society	Youth Association for Peace and Development in the Balkans
55	Respondent 18	Bulgaria	Youth policy experts/researchers	Ministry of Youth and Sports
56	Respondent 19	Bulgaria	Youth policy experts/researchers	Varna Free University
57	Respondent 20	Bulgaria	Youth policy experts/researchers	Sofia University – St. Kliment Ohridski
58	Respondent 21	Bulgaria	Youth policy experts/researchers	National Sports Academy
59	Respondent 22	Bulgaria	Youth policy experts/researchers	Syllogia Foundation
60	Respondent 23	Bulgaria	Youth policy experts/researchers	European Committee of the Regions
61	Respondent 24	Croatia	Civil society	Youth Network Croatia
62	Respondent 25	Croatia	Civil society	Croatian Debate Society
63	Respondent 26	Germany	Civil society	Protestant Youth Association in Germany
64	Respondent 27	Germany	Civil society	German Caritas Association
65	Respondent 28	Germany	Regional civil society	State Youth Council of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
66	Respondent 29	Germany	Youth policy experts/researchers	German Youth Institute
67	Respondent 30	Italy	Civil society	Ture Nirvane Community Social Cooperative
68	Respondent 31	Lithuania	National authorities, public agencies	Ministry of Social Security and Labour
69	Respondent 32	Lithuania	National authorities, public agencies	Educational Exchange Support Fund
70	Respondent 33	Lithuania	Civil society	Agency of Youth Affairs
71	Respondent 34	Lithuania	Civil society	Lithuanian Scouts
72	Respondent 35	Lithuania	Civil society	National Association of Youth Coordinators
73	Respondent 36	Lithuania	Civil society	Lithuanian Students' Union
74	Respondent 37	Lithuania	Youth policy experts/researchers	Mykolas Romeris University
75	Respondent 38	Portugal	Regional authority	Loures Municipality

No.	Name, surname	Member State	Stakeholder type	Organisation
76	Respondent 39	Portugal	Regional authority	Nelas Municipality
77	Respondent 40	Portugal	Regional authority	Vila Franca de Xira Municipality
78	Respondent 41	Portugal	Civil society	Red Cross Portugal

Source: Visionary Analytics, 2025

Annex 7. Instruments, initiatives and programmes

Table 10 – Key EUYS 2019-2027 instruments and other EU and Member State programmes, projects and/or initiatives referenced in the report

Programme name	Brief Description
EUYS instruments and EUYS-related initiatives, EU programmes	
Communicating the EU Strategy	Online platforms, including the European Youth Portal, the Eurodesk Network, and the SALTOs, as well as events such as the European Youth Week, provide information and opportunities to young people.
EU Work Plans for Youth	The EU Youth Strategy operates in 3-year work cycles. 3-year plans jointly developed by the Council and the EC describe priorities and plans of action, reflecting the period's specific needs and guiding the stakeholders toward successful implementation
EU Youth Coordinator (EUYC)	The EU Youth Coordinator facilitates the EC's Youth Network of youth correspondents from across the EC and chairs the EU Youth Stakeholders Group. Enhances cross-sectoral cooperation between the EC and youth and ensures smooth communication towards youth.
EU Youth Dialogue (EUYD)	Facilitates a dialogue between young people and youth organisations, and decision makers, experts and other important actors, increasing youth's participation in decision-making processes. The main objectives of EUYD are to encourage young people to express their views on EU policy initiatives by interacting with Commissioners and to integrate youth views into the EU's political agenda.
EU Youth Stakeholders Group	The aim of the EU Youth Stakeholders Group is to engage European youth organisations, national youth councils, youth researchers, representatives of Member States and other EU institutions in the implementation of the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022 and the 2019-2027 EU Youth Strategy, and to facilitate exchanges and youth consultations on forthcoming EU policy initiatives. The group serves as a platform for knowledge and good-practice exchange within the context of EUYS and the Youth Dialogue, facilitates the Youth Check process, and leads towards joint initiatives.
European Commission's Youth Network	It is an internal EC's network with representatives from each Directorate-General aimed to support youth mainstreaming within different policy areas, facilitate the Youth Check process and other EUYS initiatives and actions.
European Youth Work Agenda	The European Youth Work Agenda is the central and approved framework for the support of youth work in Europe. Promotes and strengthens the involvement in youth work, its practices and policies, strongly connecting the practice to the concept of Empower.
Evidence-based Youth Policymaking and Knowledge Building	Data, studies and reports developed by experts, through national authorities and other organisations such as the Council of Europe, allow evidence-based policymaking.
Future National Activities Planners (FNAPs)	Developed to increase transparency in the implementation at multiple levels, the FNAPs enable the Member States to share their priorities regarding the EUYS, while the Member States can also learn from each other and engage on a strategic level.
Mobilising and Monitoring EU	Respective Committees of Erasmus+ and ESC monitor the funds used to support the programmes, maintaining transparent and efficient use of the funds.

Programme name	Brief Description
Programmes and Funds	
Mutual Learning and Dissemination	Relevant stakeholders, including the Member States and the EC, share good practices, engage in peer learning activities and counselling, which aim to advance youth policy
Participatory Governance Mechanisms	Aimed at ensuring young people and their representative organisations' involvement in the implementation of the EUYS, it involves the EUYS Platform, National Youth Councils.
Youth Check	The youth check supports the EUYS, especially the objective 'to improve policy decisions regarding their impact on young people across all sectors'. The youth check helps future-proof EU policymaking and contributes to intergenerational fairness. The EC applies the youth check on key initiatives of the EC's work programme. The process is mandatory for all initiatives in Annex I of the programme.
Youth Information and Support	Focuses on providing quality information, services and access to programmes to youth through various channels.
Eurodesk	Eurodesk is a European youth information network created in 1990 to help young people experience the world and become active citizens. It also runs various information portals, including the European Youth Portal, and social media channels to reach young people. Eurodesk is funded through the Erasmus+ programme as a policy support network of the EUYS.
Youth Policy Dialogues	The main objectives of Youth Policy Dialogues are to encourage young people to express their views on EU policy initiatives by interacting with Commissioners and to integrate youth views in the EU's political agenda. The dialogues foster open discussions, share insights, and build connections with young people. They focus on pressing issues and empower young people by engaging them in democratic life.
European Solidarity Corps	The European Solidarity Corps provides grants to organisations through call for proposals. The European Solidarity Corps brings together young people to build a more inclusive society, supporting vulnerable people and responding to societal challenges. It offers an inspiring and empowering experience for young people who want to help, learn and develop.
EC President's Youth Advisory Board	Born out of President von der Leyen's Political Guidelines for 2024–2029, the President's Youth Advisory Board will bring together 28 young representatives, one from each EU Member State's National Youth Council and one from the European Youth Forum, to advise the Commission on policies relevant to young people. Youth-led organisations from candidate countries and potential candidates for EU accession are invited to join as observers, reflecting the EU's broader vision of unity and participation.
EU Youth Conference	The EU Youth Conferences, as part of the EU Youth Dialogue, aims to gather youth delegates and policymakers to discuss topics in relation to the EU youth policy, EU programmes and other priorities. The most recent EU Youth Conference was organised under the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 21-23 September 2025, in Copenhagen.
European Year of Youth 2022 (EYY2022)	EYY2022, organised throughout 2022, shined a light on the importance of European youth to build a better future – greener, more inclusive and digital. During the EYY, young people seized the many opportunities to engage in more than 13 000 activities in 67 countries. Youth were given a voice, and it was heard!

Programme name	Brief Description
	Through social media, during debates and encounters between our politicians and young citizens, young people expressed their views and aspirations.
European Youth Event (EYE)	Every two years, the EYE (European Youth Event) brings together thousands of young people from across the European Union and beyond, right at the heart of European democracy. The EYE is a unique opportunity for 16- to 30-year-olds to inspire and get inspired, to debate directly with Members of the European Parliament and other European decision-makers, and to exchange views with experts, activists, and content creators.
European Youth Portal	The European Youth Portal offers European and country level information about opportunities and initiatives that are of interest to young people who are living, learning and working in Europe. It addresses young people, but also other stakeholders working in the field of youth (youth organisations, youth workers, policy makers, etc.).
European Youth Work Convention	Youth work refers to activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. The main objective of youth work is to provide opportunities for young people to develop their potential and shape their own future. The most recent, 4th European Youth Work Convention was a major event that brought 500 people from all over Europe to Malta to discuss and shape the future of youth work. European Youth Work Conventions have been organised every five years since 2010.
Erasmus+	Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport. The 2021-2027 programme places a strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life. It supports priorities and activities set out in the European Education Area, Digital Education Action Plan and the European Skills Agenda.
Other EU programmes and/or European projects and initiatives mentioned in the report	
#Engaged4YOUth	On 3 December 2024, the Coordinators of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) endorsed the renewal of the CULT Committee's #Engaged4YOUth strategy and proposed a number of actions for 2024-2029 (e.g., follow-up on the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022; a strong cooperation with other EP committees; follow-up on the interim evaluation of the EUYS).
Action Plan on Basic Skills	This action plan sets out short- to medium-term steps for the European Union and EU countries to improve basic reading, mathematics, science, digital and citizenship skills and promote excellence, from early years through all stages of school education and in adult learning. The plan aims to boost basic skills teaching and learning; support educators; enable supportive environments.
ALMA Programme	The ALMA programme ('Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve') supports disadvantaged young people aged 18–29 in integrating into society by improving their skills, knowledge, and employability. It is implemented by EU countries with support from the European Commission and targets vulnerable groups such as those facing disability, long-term unemployment, low qualifications, or migration backgrounds. The programme combines three phases: preparatory training in the home country, a 2–6 month supervised work-related mobility experience in another EU country with mentoring, and follow-up support to help participants use their new skills for employment or further education at home.
Better Internet for Kids (BIK+)	The EU strategy for a Better Internet for Kids (BIK+) aims to improve age-appropriate digital services and ensure every child is protected, empowered, and respected online. BIK+ reflects the contributions of a wide range of views,

Programme name	Brief Description
	primarily those of children. Children will be involved in its implementation and monitoring. Its vision is to provide age-appropriate digital services where every child in Europe is protected, empowered, and respected online, ensuring that no one is left behind.
Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV)	The CERV programme, running from 2021 to 2027, aims to foster open, democratic, equal, and inclusive societies grounded in the rule of law. It focuses on four pillars: promoting equality and rights, which includes advancing gender equality, combating discrimination, and mainstreaming non-discrimination policies across society; encouraging citizens' engagement and participation, by supporting civic involvement, fostering exchanges between citizens of different EU Member States, and raising awareness of Europe's shared history and democratic values; combating violence through the Daphne initiative, which addresses gender-based violence, child abuse, and other forms of violence; and protecting and promoting EU values, ensuring that fundamental rights and democratic principles are upheld across the Union.
Citizens' Engagement Platform	The Citizens' Engagement Platform – an online space that allows European Union citizens to exchange ideas and contribute to EU policymaking. As one of the key objectives of the European Commission is the stronger citizen participation in its democratic processes and policies, the European Citizens' Panel is an optimal solution to have your say and be engaged in the EU policymaking process on equal footing.
Citizenship Package	The EU Citizenship Package was adopted on 6 December 2023. It intends to further advance EU citizenship rights and make them more tangible for EU citizens. As part of the package the Commission presented new guidance on the right to free movement, a guide of good electoral practices for citizens with disabilities, a compendium of e-voting practices, as well as a guide to EU citizenship.
Creative Europe	Since 2014, Creative Europe has been supporting projects to foster cultural diversity, promote artistic expression, and boost the economic potential of the creative industries. The Creative Europe programme is divided in 3 strands: CULTURE; MEDIA; CROSS-SECTORAL.
Defence of Democracy Package	The Defence of Democracy package was put forward on 12 December 2023. It includes a Communication reviewing progress under the European Democracy Action Plan, a legislative proposal establishing common transparency and accountability standards for interest-representation activities conducted on behalf of third countries, and two recommendations: one to promote free, fair and resilient elections, and another to strengthen the participation of citizens and civil society organisations in policymaking. It includes the European Democracy Shield and the EU Strategy for Civil Society.
Development Education and Awareness-Raising (DEAR)	The DEAR Programme engages Europeans in global social, economic, and environmental issues, emphasising the links between local and global challenges. It works with civil society organisations and local authorities to promote critical understanding, global citizenship, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). DEAR projects empower people to address pressing issues like climate change and inequality, fostering active citizenship, justice, and co-responsibility. Funded projects involve multiple countries, youth and adult education, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to build a fairer, more sustainable society.
Digital Education Action Plan	The Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 sets out a common vision of high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe. It aims to help national education and training systems adapt to the digital age. The plan was

Programme name	Brief Description
	adopted in 2020, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It calls for greater cooperation at EU level to address the challenges and opportunities arising from the accelerating digital transformation. It also seeks to enhance support for teachers, students, policy makers, academia and researchers at national, EU and international level.
EU Children's Participation Platform	The EU Children's Participation Platform boosts children's voices and helps them contribute to decision-making at EU level. Through the Platform, we help children, and teens under the age of 18 connect and talk to policy makers and decision-makers. They discuss topics that affect their lives and activate their rights as EU citizens.
The EU Strategy for Civil Society	As part of the European Democracy Shield, with the EU Strategy for Civil Society, the Commission is stepping up its engagement with civil society and will further support and protect civil society organisations in their work. The Strategy proposes concrete actions at EU and national level.
EU4Health	The EU4Health Civil Society Alliance brings together organisations that share the vision of a Europe where all people are as healthy as they can be throughout their lives. COVID-19 has shown EU action on health is more urgently needed than ever Europe cannot wait for the next pandemic for more EU action on health. The time to invest in a healthy future is now.
Europe Goes Local	Europe Goes Local is a European cooperation platform for quality development in local youth work through advocacy, exchange of knowledge, peer learning and networking. Europe Goes Local's mission is to strengthen the youth work community of practice at the local level, consistent with the European Youth Work Agenda and from the perspective of municipalities and of local youth work actors.
European Citizens' Initiative	The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is every EU citizen's right to get involved in EU policymaking and put the issues that matter most to them on the European agenda. It is a bottom-up way of starting a political debate and raising awareness of common causes which unite people across borders. There are two ways to get involved: you can choose to sign ongoing citizens' initiatives that you support – this takes just a few minutes to do – or you can launch a citizens' initiative with other EU citizens.
European Climate Pact Ambassadors	European Climate Pact Ambassadors are people who commit to informing, inspiring and supporting climate policy and action in their communities and networks. The Pact Ambassadors play a vital role in explaining and inspiring climate action. They make climate change easier to understand by clarifying its causes, its impacts on daily life, and the practical steps that can be taken to address it. Ambassadors encourage neighbours, communities, organisations and Governments to take meaningful action for the climate, fostering a shared sense of responsibility.
European Education Area	The European Education Area initiative helps European Union Member States work together to build more resilient and inclusive education and training systems. The European Education Area will work in synergy with the European Skills Agenda and the European Research Area to harness knowledge, making it the foundation of Europe's recovery and prosperity.
European Green Deal	The European Green Deal is transforming the EU into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. The Green Deal invests in innovation, clean technology, and green infrastructure while ensuring a just transition for the communities most affected. It aims to cut emissions by at least 50 % by 2030,

Programme name	Brief Description
	rising towards 55 %, while legally binding the 2050 neutrality goal through the European Climate Law. It pushes forwarda clean transition that protects people and planet, is economically sound and socially fair.
European Oceans Pact	The Ocean Pact is a comprehensive strategy to better protect the ocean, promote a thriving blue economy and support the well-being of people living in coastal areas. The European Ocean Pact brings together the European Union's policies and actions related to the ocean and creates a unified and coordinated plan for managing the ocean.
European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan	The European Pillar of Social Rights sets out 20 key principles and rights essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan turns the principles into concrete actions to benefit citizens. It also proposes headline targets for the EU to reach by 2030.
European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)	The ESF+ is the EU's main tool for investing in people and supporting the European Pillar of Social Rights, with a budget of €142.7 billion for 2021–2027. It contributes to employment, social, education, and skills policies, supports structural reforms, and helps Member States recover from the COVID-19 pandemic by addressing labour, education, health, and inequality challenges. ESF+ combines four previous funds, namely the European Social Fund (ESF), the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the Youth Employment Initiative, and the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme, to enhance economic, territorial, and social cohesion across the EU. It is managed mainly by Member States with Commission oversight.
European Toolkit for Schools	The European Toolkit for Schools presents concrete ideas for improving collaboration within, between, and beyond schools, aiming to enable all children and young people to succeed in school. School leaders, teachers, parents, and others involved in different aspects of school life can find helpful information, examples of measures taken, and resource materials to inspire their efforts to provide effective, high-quality early childhood and school education. The aim of the Toolkit is to support exchange and experience among school practitioners and policy makers.
Green Track Campaign	#TheGreenTrack campaign 2022, launched by the European Commission in collaboration with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) and Biodiversity Action Europe (BAE), has concluded. The campaign has enabled young people across Europe to voice their hopes and concerns about nature, biodiversity and Europe's sustainable future. Over the past several months, the Green Track effectively mobilised thousands of young Europeans, ahead of CBD COP 15, the major UN Biodiversity Conference.
Horizon Europe	Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. Following the Multiannual Financial Framework Midterm Review (MTR) decision, the indicative funding amount for Horizon Europe for the period 2021-2027 is €93.5 billion. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth.
Intergenerational Fairness Strategy	EU Commissioner Micallef, responsible for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport has been asked tasked with designing a Strategy to strengthen communication across generations. This should ensure that the interests of both citizens of today and tomorrow are woven into EU policy and law-making. It is a challenging task because it concerns both the present and the future as well as all EU policies.

Programme name	Brief Description
InvestEU	The InvestEU programme aims to give an additional boost to sustainable investment, innovation, social inclusion and job creation in Europe. The programme consists of three building blocks: the InvestEU Fund, the InvestEU Advisory Hub and the InvestEU Portal.
Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training	This Lab promotes education policy evaluation practices in the EU. It helps improve evidence and identify ways to invest in education policies. These policies in turn will lead to better learning outcomes and equity. The Lab can support policymakers, encourage an evidence-informed approach and promote evaluation of education policies.
MeetEU digital events	MeetEU is an initiative encouraging active engagement with European topics, launched around the 2019 European elections. It focuses on inclusive participation in European events and welcomes people from all backgrounds. The events feature informal discussions in English and opportunities for direct interaction with speakers. By using platforms such as Instagram and Discord, MeetEU reaches a wide audience, sustaining a core community while continuously attracting new participants.
Multiannual Financial Framework	On 16 July 2025, the EC proposed the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of nearly €2 000 billion (1.26 % of EU GNI on average for 2028–2034) to support Europe's long-term prosperity, security, and competitiveness. Key features include greater flexibility to respond to changing priorities, simpler and more accessible funding programmes, tailored National and Regional Partnership Plans for targeted impact, investments to boost competitiveness and innovation, and a balanced package of new own resources. On 3 September 2025, the EC adopted a second package of sectoral proposals, completing the framework for 2028–2034.
Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III)	IPA III supports EU candidate countries in adopting the political, legal, administrative, social, and economic reforms needed to align with EU values, rules, and standards, facilitating future EU membership and contributing to regional stability, security, and prosperity. Its objectives include strengthening the rule of law, democracy, human rights, and good governance; promoting non-discrimination, tolerance, gender equality, and effective migration management; and fostering economic and social development, particularly for youth, SMEs, agriculture, and rural areas. IPA III also supports environmental protection, climate resilience, the digital transition, sustainable connectivity, and regional cooperation, including cross-border, transnational, and interregional initiatives. Overall, it aims to help beneficiaries converge with EU standards while reinforcing stability, cohesion, and people-to-people relations.
Rural Pact	Launched in 2021 as part of the EU's Long-Term Vision for rural areas, the Rural Pact provides a framework for cooperation among public authorities, civil society, businesses, academia, and citizens at all levels. It facilitates dialogue on rural matters, fosters mutual inspiration across governance levels, and mobilizes stakeholders to address the needs and aspirations of rural residents.
Skills Portability Initiative	The Union of Skills initiative and emphasises the importance of the skills portability initiative to support worker mobility across the EU. This includes improving transparency, simplifying, and speeding up the recognition of qualifications, both within the EU and from third countries. For non-regulated professions, a trust-based recognition approach is preferred, while for regulated professions, the EU should explore voluntary common training principles. These efforts, combined with up-skilling, re-skilling, and promotion of STEM skills, will

Programme name	Brief Description
	help address skills gaps, enhance competitiveness, and make European labour markets more flexible and inclusive.
Youth Guarantee	The reinforced Youth Guarantee is an EU commitment ensuring that all young people under 30 receive a quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship, or traineeship within four months of leaving education or becoming unemployed. Strengthened in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis, it now targets 15–29-year-olds, focusing on tailored support, guidance, upskilling, and opportunities arising from the digital and green transitions. The programme has significantly reduced youth unemployment and NEETs, created opportunities for almost 57 million young people since 2013, and driven improvements in public employment services, though further efforts are needed to reach all those in need. Member States implement it through national Youth Guarantee plans.
Youthpass	Youthpass is a European recognition tool that documents and validates learning outcomes from Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps projects. It encourages individual reflection, makes learning visible to learners and others, enhances the quality and recognition of youth work and solidarity activities, supports the ongoing development of young people and youth workers, and raises the visibility of European engagement.
Youth Sounding Board	The Youth Sounding Board is a group of 25 young people, aged 19–29, from the EU and partner regions (Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean), who advise the EC and DG INTPA on youth participation and empowerment in EU external action. The group also helps make EU international partnerships more participatory, relevant, and effective for young people, addressing priorities such as climate, digital infrastructure, gender equality, human development, migration, peace, governance, and sustainable growth.
Youth Test	The initiative of the EESC launched in 2023, ensures that new legislation considers the impact on young people, who are directly affected by decisions on issues like economic growth, digitalisation, and climate change. It works through five pillars: assessing the relevance of proposals to youth, engaging meaningfully with young people and youth organisations, conducting impact assessments, implementing mitigation measures for vulnerable groups, and ensuring transparency by publishing results in a youth-friendly way.
Member States' projects, programmes and initiatives	
Bulgaria	
The Youth Democracy: Together for the Future Academy	A six-month programme, running from June to December 2024, consisting of 14 sessions that developed the civic skills of 20 young people. Participants engaged in workshops led by experts and lecturers on topics, such as contemporary democracy, media literacy, the role of AI in democracy, and public speaking. The academy provided practical training on implementing civic initiatives, understanding democratic principles, and actively participating in public life. Upon completion, graduates were equipped to serve as ambassadors of democratic values and had the opportunity to join the Euro-Atlantic Youth Society, participating in numerous civic projects and campaigns.
National Programme for Active Labour Market Policies	Through the National Programme for Active Labour Market Policies during EYY2022, youth and Roma mediators appointed in municipalities played a key role in reaching NEET groups. In 2022, mediators motivated 4 626 inactive young

Programme name	Brief Description
	people to register with the Employment Agency, encouraging their reintegration into education, training, or employment.
Student Games	The Ministry of Youth and Sports organised the Student Games for students with disabilities during the 2021/2022 school year. As a result, students with hearing, visual, physical, or central nervous system impairments to participate in national-level competitions.
Croatia	
Youth for Youth	The panel at the Centre for a Safer Internet involved young people directly in producing digital manuals and promoting safer internet usage. They played an active role in designing materials and initiatives aimed at improving online safety for their peers. This experience allowed them to contribute meaningfully to a national effort in digital education and advocacy.
Germany	
Jugend im Parlament (Youth in Parliament)	Several times a year, three school classes in Hamburg participate in a two-day youth parliament where they learn how political processes work and what citizens' responsibilities are. Students form parliamentary groups, create proposals, and debate them in committees with support from local representatives. Their ideas are then presented and defended in a plenary session. Some participants also document the event by producing a magazine, social media content, and a short film.
Juleica Card	The Card is the nationwide standardised ID for volunteer workers in youth work. It serves as proof of authorisation and qualification for the cardholders. In addition, the Juleica is intended to express public recognition for voluntary engagement. After completing this training, participants can apply for the Card as proof of qualification. This certification is highly regarded and provides skills valuable not only in youth work but also in many other fields of voluntary service—and is appreciated by employers as an additional qualification. As a small token of appreciation, the Juleica comes with various discounts and forms of recognition, which differ greatly by region. In some federal states, the Juleica also serves as an honorary service card, or it can be used to apply for one more easily.
Junge Täler (Young Valleys)	Junge Täler is a year-long youth initiative designed to help young people actively explore, understand, and shape their local environment. It combines creative, reflective, and practical learning to strengthen skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and civic engagement. Through phases like the summer Awareness Camp, hands-on Future Workshops with digital fabrication tools, and ongoing monthly activities, participants learn to critically examine their region, develop concrete ideas for improvement, and turn those ideas into real projects. The initiative ultimately aims to empower young people to take responsibility for their community, build sustainable connections, and potentially contribute to the establishment of a youth community council.
Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning	The framework classifies qualifications within the German education system to improve transparency, orientation, and comparability in Europe. It aligns its eight levels with those of the European Qualifications Framework, which serves as a translation tool for understanding national qualifications across Europe. As Germany's implementation of the European Qualifications Framework, the German framework reflects the specific features of the German system while

Programme name	Brief Description
	clarifying similarities and differences between qualifications and supporting educational mobility and progression.
Jugend Check (Youth Check)	The youth-check at federal level is carried out during the draft bill stage to evaluate how proposed legislation might affect young people aged 12 to 27. It follows a two-step process consisting of a preliminary assessment and, when relevant, a detailed main assessment. The preliminary stage determines whether a bill requires further examination, and if young people are specifically impacted, the main assessment analyses the extent of this impact. In this detailed review, the draft bill is evaluated across various impact dimensions and areas of life to identify its specific effects on youth.
Italy	
Cooperation projects in rural areas by Giovanisì	The Tuscany Region's Giovanisì project has launched a €3.5 million programme to boost employment, social inclusion, and local development in rural areas. It funds cooperative projects that enhance local production, promote social tourism, and support environmental sustainability, while addressing depopulation and strengthening rural–urban connections. Eligible partnerships of public and private actors can receive up to €150 000 each, and projects may include social agriculture initiatives, such as supporting people with disabilities, complementary therapeutic services, and environmental or food education activities.
Peer-education labs and co-design workshops	The peer-education labs and co-design workshops promoted by Generazioni Connesse focus on empowering young people through collaborative learning and digital awareness.
Universal Civic Service	The Universal Civil Service provides young people with better training and increased human resources, expands the availability of public services, and enhances their employability and employment opportunities. Backed by a total investment of €650 million, it also helps participants develop knowledge, skills, and a sense of active citizenship while promoting social cohesion, ecological awareness, and digital competencies.
Lithuania	
Jaunimo Savanoriška Tarnyba (Youth Voluntary Service)	The Youth Voluntary Service is an intensive 6-month programme for young people aged 14–29, where participants volunteer an average of 40 hours per month in an accredited hosting organisation. Participants meet monthly with a mentor to reflect on their experiences, develop skills, and set personal growth goals. Completing at least 3 months earns a certificate, while completing the full 6 months with all programme requirements can grant 0.25 extra points for higher education admissions. Hosting organisations provide meaningful volunteer opportunities and support, while coordinating organisations oversee quality, mentor volunteers, and facilitate their development.
JUDAM (LET'S MOVE)	The 'JUDAM' project (2019–2023) aimed to help 15–29-year-olds in Lithuania who were not in employment, education, or training. With a budget of €2.54 million, it supported 1 535 young people, particularly those facing social, legal, economic, or personal challenges. The project offered guidance, skills development, motivation, referrals to specialists, participation in community activities, support with volunteering, and assistance in finding employment or returning to education.

Programme name	Brief Description
JUNGTYS (CONNECTIONS)	The project, implemented by the Agency of Youth Affairs together with 34 partners from 6 March 2024 to 29 February 2028, aims to reduce the number of NEETs by supporting youth with fewer opportunities and those already in the NEET group. The project provides targeted interventions to help young people return to education or enter the labour market, while also developing their personal, social, and professional skills. Services include individual and group support, self-awareness activities, social and life skills training, motivation and information services, employment and education mediation, mentorship, and access to specialised professionals such as psychologists, legal advisors, and health specialists. The aim is to reach a participation of up to 8 000 young people, with around 30 % expected to begin studying, seeking employment, or starting work independently. The total project budget is €13 365 750.21.
Man de dzin (I do care)	The campaign is a youth civic engagement initiative that encourages young people to participate actively in public life, express their opinions, and understand their societal influence. It provides information on democratic processes, decision-making, and allows youth to engage directly with policymakers without promoting any political party or candidate. It has helped increase youth voter turnout from 18 % in 2012 to 37.8 % in 2016, and 46 % in the 2019 elections and referendums.
VOTE16	Vote16 is an advocacy campaign aimed at allowing residents of specific countries to vote in elections from the age of 16. Lithuanian National Youth Council's goal is to legalise voting from 16 years old in municipal council and mayoral elections, in order to foster young people's civic responsibility, increase voter turnout, and provide opportunities to engage in political decision-making.
Portugal	
Cartão Jovem (Youth Card)	For young people aged 18–29 living in Portugal who are volunteers or association members, the Youth Card offers national and European benefits, including discounts, exemptions, and services from public and private partners. The Youth Card, for those engaged in volunteering and solidarity actions, provides all Youth Card benefits plus access to exclusive experiences, special events, premium products, and additional discounts with partner organisations.
CO-CREATE European Project	The project highlights the transformative potential of Youth-led Participatory Action Research. In the Portuguese Youth Alliances, adolescents were empowered to identify challenges and propose policy solutions—such as integrating nutrition and cooking education into the school curriculum. This approach not only fostered civic engagement but also demonstrated how youth can be active agents in shaping public policy, especially in areas like health and education.
Programa Escolhas (Choices Programme)	The Portuguese Government initiative (2023–2026) supports children and youth aged 6–25 from vulnerable backgrounds. The programme funds 118 local projects across 75 municipalities, reaching around 27 500 young people annually. Projects focus on education, training, employment, community engagement, and citizenship, and are implemented by consortia of at least four public or private organisations. Total funding for three years is €26.12 million, largely from state and EU funds, with consortia contributing at least 15 %.

Source: Visionary Analytics based on the information provided in the *European Youth Portal*, *hyperlinked programme pages, conducted interviews and European Commission, Kantar Public, Ramboll Management Consulting, Technopolis Groyp, Ulicna D. et al, 2024*[258].

[258] European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Kantar Public, Ramboll Management Consulting, and Technopolis Group, *Support study for the interim evaluation of the EU youth strategy 2019-2027 – Final report*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

Annex 8. Examples of youth mainstreaming actions across different policy areas

Table 11 – Examples of youth mainstreaming among different policy areas

Policy area	Examples (EU-level)
Digital policy	The Youth Policy Dialogue with Roxana Mînzatu (Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness) on 6 March 2025 on Artificial Intelligence. The proposals were taken into account in the Union of Skills and the Digital Education Action Plan Review, and also informed the Roadmap on the Future of Digital Education and Training.
Education and training	A presentation and discussion on the Union of Skills and the Action Plan on Basic skills by DG EAC was organised during the first meeting of the EU Youth Stakeholders Group; focus on learning mobility as a legacy of the EYY2022; various initiatives under EEA, for example, European Universities initiative, Pathways to School Success, European Degree.
Employment	Consultations on the new Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights were carried out by DG EMPL; Flagship events engaging youth during the European Year of Skills (100 events in 28 countries targeting youth specifically; 530 events in 37 countries on VET); Continued implementation of Youth Guarantee; Development of the quality framework of traineeships; ALMA initiative with a focus on NEET youth.
Health and well-being	The 2023 Council Conclusions on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people called the EC to continue a proactive approach towards actions on youth mental health, such as implementation of the 20 flagship initiatives and other actions of the Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health.
Environment and sustainability	Youth Policy dialogues with respective Commissioners M. Šefčovič on 3 February 2025, C. Kadis on 3 March 2025, W. Hoekstra on 6 February 2025, V. Dombrovskis on 4 March 2025, and D. Jørgensen on 18 February 2025, resulted in tangible ideas on clean energy transition, regulatory simplification, and cross-sector collaboration.
Finance	The Dialogue with Commissioner P. Serafin on 18 February 2025 resulted in discussions regarding the feasibility of financing defence initiatives at the EU level. Consultations regarding the EU's long-term budget, multiannual financial framework (MFF), were organised.
Agriculture and fisheries	The outcomes from the Youth Policy Dialogue with Costas Kadis (Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans) on 3 March 2025 were shared with the DG MARE units drafting the European Ocean Pact to ensure that young people's recommendations were duly considered.
Justice and democracy	From the Youth Policy Dialogue with Michael McGrath (Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection) on 10 March 2025 on Democratic Empowerment, participants' contributions fed directly into the preparation of the European Democracy Shield. A public consultation on the Democracy shield was organised. A consultation on the EU Civil Society Strategy was carried out by DG JUST.
Security and defence	Youth Policy Dialogues with Commissioners A. Kubilius on 4 March 2025, G. Micallef on 28 January 2025, M. Brunner on 6 December 2024, Executive vice-president S. Séjourné on 7 March 2025, underlined the need for a multifaceted approach to security and defence, stressing youth's perspectives needed into Europe's preparedness strategies, forward-looking policies, reflecting societal needs.

Policy area	Examples (EU-level)
Transport	DG MOVE and the Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism Apostolos Tzitzikostas used insights from the Youth Policy Dialogue on 6 March 2025 on public transport to inform its work on young people and transport jobs.
International development, foreign affairs	Youth Sounding Board and Overseas Territories Youth Sounding Board for non-EU countries were established by DG INTPA. The former's cohort 2021-2023 co-created the 'Youth Action Plan in EU external action 2022-2027' and continued long-term projects on diversity and inclusion, intergenerational dialogue, leadership and community-building. At the time of writing, DG INTPA is carrying out a mid-term evaluation of the mentioned Youth Action Plan in EU external action.

Sources: Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people in the European Union (2023/C/1337); European Commission, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *The Youth Policy Dialogues during the first 100 days of the new mandate of the European Commission*, 2025; European Commission, EU's next long-term budget (MFF) – EU funding for cross-border education, training and solidarity, young people, media, culture, and creative sectors, values, and civil society, website; European Commission, European Democracy Shield Consultation, website; European Commission, Youth Sounding Board, website; European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Second meeting of the EU Youth Stakeholders Group*, Meeting report, 2025; Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022-2024) COM(2025) 117, 2025; Youth Sounding Board, *Meaningful Inclusion of Youth: A Promising Future*, 2022; European Commission, EU's next long-term budget (MFF) – EU funding for cross-border education, training and solidarity, young people, media, culture, and creative sectors, values, and civil society, website.

Annex 9. Inclusivity rates of the EUYD

Table 12 – Inclusivity of the 9th, 10th and 11th Cycles of the EUYD

	9th Cycle (1 January 2022 – 30 June 2023)	10th Cycle (1 July 2023 – 31 December 2024)	11th Cycle January 2022 – 30 June 2023)	Benchmark target*
Gender	F = 63.7 % M= 34.3 % Other gender = 1.9 %	F = 56.0 % M= 42.2 % Other gender = 1.8 %	F=54.1 % M=45.1 % Other gender = 0.8 %	Equal Male:Female Ratio
% of participants identifying as having a disability	19.2 %	6.6 %	4.2 %	1.95 %
% of participants identifying as being part of a religious minority group	20.8 %	23.1 %	9.2 %	4.58 %
% of participants identifying as being part of an ethnic minority group	20.3 %	14.5 %	9.6 %	4.21 %
% of participants identifying as LGBTQ+ or sexuality other than heterosexual	28.0 %	14.7 %	14.6 %	3.15 %
% of participants who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET)	9.6 %	14.5 %	27.2 %	11.0** % (applies to EUYD11 only)
% of participants who are living in rural areas	26.3 %	30.1 %	24.0 %	32.25 %
% of participants with no parent holding a university degree	–	48.6 %	56.6 %	–

Source: Moxon D. and Bárta O., *EUYD11 Results of the Consultation Phase: Connecting the EU with Youth*, 2025.

Note: (*) The benchmark target illustrates the proportion of young people expected from that background, had they been randomly selected from European youth. (**) Based on the EUROSTAT NEET rate for EU-27 2024.

Annex 10. Prioritised and deprioritised EYGs at EU and Member State Levels

Different EYGs were identified as having been prioritised and deprioritised in the six Member States analysed for this study, based on the literature review and on the interviews with national stakeholders. As the list of EYGs prioritised varied per stakeholder type and/or research method, the table below is for illustrative purposes rather than an explicit list of EYGs that emerged as core.

Table 13 – Prioritised and deprioritised EYGs at the Member State level

EYG	Member State where EYG is receiving focus	Member State where EYG is receiving insufficient focus
EYG1: Connecting the EU with Youth	Bulgaria	
EYG2: Equality of All Genders		Bulgaria, Lithuania
EYG3: Inclusive Societies	Bulgaria, Lithuania	Croatia
EYG4: Information & Constructive Dialogue	Lithuania	Bulgaria, Portugal
EYG5: Mental Health & Wellbeing	Lithuania	Bulgaria, Croatia, Portugal
EYG6: Moving Rural Youth Forward	Croatia	Bulgaria, Lithuania, Portugal
EYG7: Quality Employment for All	Lithuania	Bulgaria, Portugal
EYG8: Quality Learning	Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Portugal	-
EYG9: Space and Participation for All	Bulgaria, Lithuania, Portugal	-
EYG10: Sustainable Green Europe	Bulgaria	Croatia, Lithuania, Portugal
EYG11: Youth Organisations & European Programmes	Croatia, Portugal	-

Source: Member State level stakeholder interviews and survey

At the EU level, the priorities for each 3-year work cycle of the EUYS are set by the Council together with the EC in EUYS Work Plans. Based on the working methods/instruments planned, the Work Plans indicate EYGs that correspond to these plans; thus, different EYGs have been chosen as priorities in each cycle. Initially, the priorities of the 2019-2021 Work Plan were:

- **EYG9 (Space and Participation for All),** mentioned 16 times in the work plan
- **EYG4 (Information and Constructive Dialogue),** mentioned eight times in the work plan
- **EYG11 (Youth Organisations and European Programmes),** mentioned six times in the work plan.[259]
- The 2022-2024 Work Plan focused on:
    - **EYG3 (Inclusive Societies),** mentioned 17 times in the work plan

[259] Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 18 December 2018 on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C456/01).

  - **EYG9 (Space and Participation for All),** mentioned ten times in the work plan
  - **EYG10 (Sustainable Green Europe),** mentioned seven times in the work plan
  - Two of the methods/instruments addressed 'All goals'.[260]

- Finally, the priorities of the current 2025–2027 Work Plan are:
  - **EYG1 (Connecting EU with youth),** mentioned 11 times in the work plan
  - **EYG9 (Space and Participation for All),** mentioned 12 times in the work plan
  - **EYG4 (Information and Constructive Dialogue),** mentioned six times in the work plan.[261]

[260] Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the revision of the EU Youth Strategy Work Plan 2022–2024 (2023/C 185/05).

[261] Resolution of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the EU Youth Strategy Work Plan 2025–2027 (2024/C/7438).

This European implementation assessment supports the European Parliament's implementation report on the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) 2019-2027 prepared by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT). Part I of this study examines recent European Commission developments on the EUYS, Parliament's oversight of the EUYS, and the results of consultations. Part II of the study examines EUYS implementation at the EU level and in six selected Member States, drawing on the most recent evidence from a literature review, stakeholder interviews, and a survey. It analyses the 11 European Youth Goals and their implementation and relevance, before assessing the extent to which the EUYS has promoted youth mainstreaming across policy areas. It further explores youth participation, focusing on social inclusion, equality and young people with fewer opportunities (case study 1), and examines the EUYS's role in improving access to quality education and training (case study 2). It concludes with recommendations to enhance the EUYS, thereby informing its update and future implementation beyond 2027.

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