



OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

The EU Youth Test

The EU Youth Test
(own-initiative opinion)

SOC/728

Rapporteur: **Katrīna LEITĀNE**

www.eesc.europa.eu

EN

Plenary Assembly decision	24/02/2022
Legal basis	Rule 32(2) of the Rules of Procedure Own-initiative opinion
Section responsible	Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship
Adopted in section	06/09/2022
Adopted at plenary	21/09/2022
Plenary session No	572
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	158/0/5

1. Conclusions and recommendations

- 1.1 Political participation is the basis of every functioning democracy. The main asset of the EU for young Europeans is the respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law¹. It is crucial to ensure that young people have a say in decisions affecting their future since even an indirect effect can still have a strong impact on young people and generations to come. Policies not directly targeting young people or not considered to be part of the traditional youth policy field can still have a strong impact on young people's lives. It is important to offer efficient mechanisms which complement the existing participatory mechanisms and are aligned with democratic principles and tailored to the needs of young people. This can contribute to better and more effective policy-making.
- 1.2 The EESC believes that education is one of the most effective ways of reaching out to young people and to inform them about all the possible forms of participation and the values the European project represents. Existing programmes supporting formal and non-formal education, such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, have successfully improved the views of young people when it comes to democratic participation and the values and principles of the European Union.
- 1.3 The EESC points out that there is an explicit need to include young people in policy-making through their meaningful participation in the way most suited to young people, followed by monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment to ensure that the views of young people have been taken into account when policy decisions are made. Involvement throughout the policy-making process creates trust among young generations and beyond, enabling them to be seen as relevant and significant during that process. These processes should include visible and transparent communication of the outcomes of their involvement. This element is crucial in order to build trust between young people and policy-making². Furthermore, social inclusion and reaching out to groups with different needs is very important.
- 1.4 The EESC agrees that civil society organisations can play a critical role in engaging young people in societal challenges and therefore in their participation in policy-making and the democratic process. Such organisations can serve as bridges and support networks to help young people engage with formal public bodies and enable young people to become active citizens. The EESC supports these organisations and young citizens in taking action and calls for measures to enable them to do so.
- 1.5 The EESC encourages the EU institutions and Member States to implement measures and mechanisms that ensure that the youth perspective is taken into account in every policy field, while also creating space for young people to provide consistent and expert input on the challenges they are facing. These structures should also include transparent and visible follow-up and monitoring mechanisms, and complement existing youth participation instruments while not resulting in decreased funding. Suitable resources should be made available for meaningful youth participation in policy-making.

¹ Desk research [European Youth in 2021](#).

² [Influencing and understanding political participation patterns of young people, European Parliament, 2021](#)

- 1.6 Young people's participation in policy and decision-making processes can support better regulation and policies by mapping and understanding the current and upcoming trends that are impacting the lives of young people and future generations. This can also make the task of the author of a proposal easier, since they can receive qualitative input to complement secondary data.
- 1.7 The EESC would like to stress that while the EU Youth Test is built on the key objectives of the EU Youth Strategy³ and the European Year of Youth, both emphasise the importance of youth mainstreaming in policy-making, which requires a cross-sectoral approach. It is also one of the measures set out in the Report on the Final Outcome⁴ of the Conference on the Future of Europe which has been endorsed by all voting components in the Conference plenary and citizens. To achieve long-lasting impact and a legacy beyond the European Year of Youth, young people need to be empowered to lead the change and to build a better future.
- 1.8 The EESC acknowledges the reference to the EU Youth Test in the European Commission's Communication on the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe⁵. However, it stresses that the Commission's proposal is not in line with the goals and means of the original proposal and lacks meaningful engagement with youth organisations and experts, the mainstreaming of youth in all policies and does not consider the long-term impact of policies on future generations. The EESC believes an EU Youth Test should be part of the Better Regulation Toolbox as a separate tool, since future generations and young people deserve specific attention.
- 1.9 The EESC is calling for more cooperation between the institutions on aligning existing successful initiatives such as the EU Youth Dialogue, "Your Europe, Your Say!" and the European Youth Event, and for them to be connected to future initiatives such as the EU Youth Test, in line with the EU Youth Strategy. Furthermore, the EESC outlines a list of proposals on youth participation in the EESC and aims to introduce the EU Youth Test concept in its work.

2. **General comments**

2.1 **The role of young people in building the European project**

- 2.1.1 Young people are the engine of the European project and their creativity, energy and enthusiasm is the driving force for its sustainability. The current year 2022 has been designated the European Year of Youth, with the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, stating that "*Europe needs all of its youth*" and "*Our union needs a soul and a vision they can connect to*"⁶.

³ [European Council Resolution on The European Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#)

⁴ [Conference on the Future of Europe. Report on the final outcome, May 2022.](#)

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0404&qid=1660827033223>

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_21_4701.

- 2.1.2 The EU project cannot be effectively and properly achieved in the current democratic environment without recognising the discourse on youth political participation⁷ within democratic traditions and geopolitical contexts. The Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas, has stated that "*The European Year of Youth should bring a paradigm shift in how we include young people in policy and decision-making*". The underlying justification is to provide access to, and to empower⁸ young people to engage in meaningful youth participation.
- 2.1.3 According to *Eurobarometer* polls⁹, less than half (47%) of Europeans trust the EU and only 44% have a positive image of it. The future of the European project is highly dependent on how strong young people's association is with Europe's values and their willingness to embrace a European identity. Young people's active engagement in the political and decision making processes is crucial since their future will be determined by today's decisions. Therefore, participatory instruments should be introduced to ensure young people's voices are taken into account. Participation in civil and democratic life has to be strengthened at all levels to ensure Europe's future prosperity, acknowledging that democratic maturity influences¹⁰ patterns of political participation among young people in the EU.
- 2.1.4 The EU's initiative to convene a Conference on the Future of Europe worked as an incentive to promote participatory dialogue with citizens across the Union. Improving the effectiveness of existing youth participation mechanisms, and developing new ones, is considered to be the way forward. As suggested in the final outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe, this could include a "Youth Test"¹¹ of legislation, with an impact assessment and a consultation mechanism involving representatives of young people¹².
- 2.1.5 The Youth Test acts as a method of Strategic Foresight for policy-making. Strategic Foresight is a valuable concept that the European Commission aims to use within the policy-making process. As it builds on principles such as horizon scanning, megatrends analysis, scenario planning and visioning, it is inevitable that the youth perspective and that of future generations is considered within this framework. While the foresight process acknowledges that the future is not predetermined, it collects information on possible scenarios and aims to prepare for emerging challenges. Intergenerational dialogue can include valuable tools that ensure that the policies drafted consider these trends and future scenarios. Conducting analysis that considers the perspective of young people and future generations can and should contribute to better and more tailored policies that are capable of addressing the challenges of future generations.

⁷ Deželan, T., Moxon, D., [Influencing and understanding political participation patterns of young people: The European perspective](#), study, 2021.

⁸ Barta, O., Boldt, G., Lavizzari, A., [Meaningful youth political participation in Europe: concepts, patterns and policy implications](#), research study, 2021.

⁹ <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2553> [Eurobarometer 96 – Winter 2021-2022](#).

¹⁰ Kitanova, M., "[Youth political participation in the EU: evidence from a cross-national analysis](#)", *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 7, 2020 (paper received in 2018).

¹¹ https://www.youthforum.org/files/YFJ_EU_Youth_Test.pdf.

¹² [Report on the final outcome of the Conference on the Future of Europe](#)

2.1.6 In order to create better policies that are fit for future challenges, these need to acknowledge and safeguard the rights of young people and future generations, ensuring there are no negative impacts on any specific generational and social groups. These groups are currently often ignored or considered as part of other groups, which does not reflect the reality. As a result, policies do not properly address challenges and contribute to the decline in trust and disengagement with formal institutions.

2.2 The need for meaningful youth participation

2.2.1 Meaningful involvement is about power-sharing, an ability to make decisions, with the engagement of other stakeholders, under transparent conditions known to all actors concerned. Well-designed accountability processes establish the trust of all stakeholders in political participatory processes and the explicit responsibilities of the various actors should be communicated to all stakeholders.

2.2.2 Young people's trust in public institutions has stalled since the global financial crisis in the late 2000s¹³ and their perception of having political influence and representation in decision-making remains unchanged. Youth participation in democratic life can take diverse forms. However voting in local, national or European elections is considered to be the most effective way of making their voice heard by decision-makers (39%)¹⁴ while the proportion of young people trusting this type of democratic participation is still very low. At the same time, for those likely to stay away from politics this is due to the lack of meaningful engagement and trust and the feeling that there is no point in participating without their contribution being taken into account. One of the main barriers for young people to participate is the belief that decision-makers "don't listen to people like me"¹⁵. Promoting trust and strengthening the dialogue between young people and public institutions is thus crucial to ensuring the preparedness and resilience of societies to cope with future shocks¹⁶.

2.2.3 A majority (70%)¹⁷ of young people feel they do not have much, or any, say over important decisions, laws and policies affecting the EU as a whole. 24.8%¹⁸ of young people feel they have no influence at all over what topics enter public or political debates and a further 40.8% say they do not have much influence. Furthermore, 2/3 of the respondents consider that more awareness among politicians of young people's concerns would help young people to influence public policy more, while more than 50% of them think that a stronger role of youth organisations in politics would serve this purpose as well.

¹³ <https://www.oecd.org/gov/fit-for-generations-global-youth-report-highlights.pdf> [Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice Fit for all generations? Highlights.](#)

¹⁴ [Flash Eurobarometer on Youth and Democracy](#), conducted between 22 February and 4 March 2022.

¹⁵ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6ea3a3ab-27e3-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1> [European Parliament youth survey Report](#) (European Parliament, September 2021).

¹⁶ [Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice Fit for all generations? Highlights.](#)

¹⁷ [European Parliament youth survey Report](#) (European Parliament, September 2021).

¹⁸ [Youth Survey Report](#) (Under the Trio Presidency Germany-Portugal-Slovenia, January 2022).

- 2.2.4 Young people have changed their modes of participation, now preferring non-institutionalised, and particularly non-electoral, forms of political engagement¹⁹. Research has increasingly shown that this is linked to declining levels of trust in public bodies, and dissatisfaction with how representative democracy works. Young people's unconventional political participation has become increasingly fluid, individualised and personalised with a preference for engaging on single issues and topics as well as direct activism and protest in the sense of "individual lifestyle choices"²⁰. Overall, young people are highly motivated politically. Experts on political participation, when considering the question of youth participation, have turned their focus from whether young people wish to participate to where and how they choose to express their political views²¹. Considering the wide range of ways young people now seek to influence policy and politics, there is a clear need to take account of the unconventional nature of political participation, participatory decision-making, enhanced communication and transparency mechanisms within a democratic institutions framework. Policy-making within public bodies should be adjusted and designed accordingly to ensure outreach and engagement with all groups of young people when policy decisions are made. Participatory mechanisms should in fact be inclusive and communicated in such a way as to reach a diverse public and those who are hard to reach.
- 2.2.5 Youth-led organisations have developed expertise and knowledge of a wide range of topics related to issues young people are facing. Including them in the policy-making process will result in more coherent and adapted rules and regulations. This is also supported by the ever increasing number of young people who are joining these organisations²².
- 2.2.6 Meaningful engagement with young people is crucial. Youth participation needs to be improved, tackling in particular: lack of youth democratic representation, and lack of a youth perspective outside of the traditional youth policy domain. Young people wish to be included in shaping policies that impact their lives. Intergenerational justice²³ is how inequality between generations in ageing societies can be healed.
- 2.2.7 The existing tools for youth impact analysis, such as Tool #31 in the Better Regulation Toolbox, do not provide for youth mainstreaming and the inclusion of youth organisations and young people with relevant expertise, who are able to provide a systematic review of the issues from a youth perspective. What is more, based on the publications available, such tools are implemented less frequently than the relevancy and significance of the proposals would require.

19 [Youth Survey Report](#) (Under the Trio Presidency Germany-Portugal-Slovenia, January 2022).

20 [Youth Survey Report](#) (Under the Trio Presidency Germany-Portugal-Slovenia, January 2022).

21 Deželan, T., Moxon, D., *Influencing and understanding political participation patterns of young people: The European perspective*, study, 2021.

22 [Eurobarometer on the European Year of Youth: Young Europeans are increasingly engaged](#), European Commission, 2022

23 [Governance for Youth. Trust and Intergenerational Justice Fit for all generations? Highlights](#).

3. Specific comments

3.1 The EU Youth Test

3.1.1 The proposal is based on three pillars: consultation, impact assessment and mitigation measures²⁴. It provides a framework for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of policy, based on strengthened youth participation and youth mainstreaming in policy-making, while also taking into account vulnerable groups of young people, such as young people with disabilities, NEETs²⁵, young people living in remote areas, etc. With the different components of the EU Youth Test, it provides a coherent structure for producing high quality and better policies that address issues that future generations may face.

3.1.2 The first step of the EU Youth Test is to determine the relevance and impact of any upcoming draft policy proposals for young people and future generations. This will help determine whether a full Youth Test should be carried out on that upcoming policy. Through a checklist tool, the assessors determine whether the draft proposal is indeed relevant for young people, and the direct and indirect impact of the proposal on young people and future generations. If such a determination is made, the Youth test proceeds to the full consultation, impact assessment and mitigation measures stages. The checklist indicators would be based on the needs and ideas of young people in order to ensure it considers the relevant proposals from their perspective.

3.1.3 Under the next step, the respective assessors are expected to consult meaningfully with youth-related stakeholders in order to ensure that systematic expertise is provided for a thorough analysis. Based on this engagement, the assessors will seek to identify young people's concerns about the potential impacts of the draft policy being tested. This participatory component needs to be transparent and provide space for a wide range of youth representatives, youth-led organisations and young people with relevant expertise to provide input. This way, a systematic approach to the issues tackled by the draft policy proposals can be ensured. Including youth organisations, youth representatives and young people with relevant expertise can give a very diverse and unique background to the impact assessment. Through meaningful engagement, the assessors can receive a comprehensive overview based on the overarching knowledge and expertise that these young people have established. Using this input, the impact analysis can be detailed enough to identify the challenges and aspects where policies might cause disruption.

3.1.4 Based on the available data to be gathered throughout the process and on the outcomes of the consultations, the assessors are able to draft the impact analysis following the topics mentioned in the checklist and also provide foresight analysis for future generations.

3.1.5 If a negative impact is identified, the assessor ought to propose mitigation measures which should primarily focus on groups living in vulnerable situations and disadvantaged young people. It is advisable that, during the consultation, the assessors include questions about possible mitigation measures that could be included in the analysis. In the coming years, it is

²⁴ https://www.youthforum.org/files/Concept-Note_final.pdf and https://www.youthforum.org/files/YFJ_EU_Youth_Test.pdf

²⁵ [OJ C 152, 6.4.2022, p. 27.](#)

recommended that an evaluation be carried out to monitor the impact of the policies and how the mitigation measures have addressed the negative impacts.

- 3.1.6 The EU Youth Test should not substitute meaningful engagement with young people in general and should complement existing participatory mechanisms.
- 3.1.7 The proposal was an outcome of a series of discussions with Europe's largest youth networks, while also being specifically mentioned in several recommendations of the EU Youth Dialogue since it (and its predecessor the Structured Dialogue) was established. Young people expressed their strong wish for a transparent policy-making procedure that would allow young people to contribute to drafting and to monitor the outcomes.
- 3.1.8 The proposal is also inspired by the SME test, which is an example of a suitable EU level impact assessment tool, based on the three pillars of consultation, impact analysis and mitigation measures²⁶. Furthermore, like the SME test, the EU Youth Test is also intended to be part of the Better Regulation Toolbox as a separate tool in order to emphasise the role of young people in the future of Europe, in line with the communication of the President of the European Commission.
- 3.1.9 The proposal is based on the examples of youth impact assessment tools already existing in several Member States, such as Austria, Germany, France, Flanders in Belgium and outside of the EU as well, like in New Zealand and Canada.
- 3.1.10 The proposed impact assessment is providing a solution to ensure the impact of policies take into account the needs and expectations of young people and provides a scope outside of the traditional youth policy field. Only a small part of the proposals from the European Commission is analysed from the youth perspective. However, a significant part of these proposals directly and indirectly affects the quality of lives of young people.
- 3.1.11 It is suggested to include the EU Youth Test in the publicly available Better Regulation impact assessments and publishing it on the European Youth Portal. However, the most impactful way should be further explored. Nonetheless, the Directorate-General for Communication is encouraged to actively promote it to ensure its visibility, while the Secretariat-General should support its adoption across different DGs. The EU Youth Test could be also published by those institutions that decide to implement it, including on the website of the EESC. By publishing the assessment and the final version of the proposal the youth stakeholders involved in the consultation will be able to see how their contribution has been taken into account.
- 3.1.12 The EU Youth Test is proposed to be a structure that can be implemented at local, regional and national level, together with the institutions of the European Union.
- 3.1.13 The EU Youth Test can potentially improve policies but it also needs to be based on meaningful participatory mechanisms, because drawing on community knowledge is a way to ensure efficiency and bring about improvements.

²⁶ [Better Regulation Toolbox - SME Test](#)

3.2 Youth participation within the EESC

3.2.1 The EESC acknowledges the importance of youth engagement in shaping Europe's future²⁷, and thus runs several successful initiatives such as "Your Europe, Your Say!", the Youth Climate and Sustainability Round Tables, and the EU Youth Climate Summit jointly organised by the EESC and the European Parliament. As a follow-up to the EESC's opinion NAT/788²⁸, the EESC included a youth delegate in its official delegation to the UNFCCC COP meeting for the first time in 2021, on the occasion of COP26. Furthermore, in the context of the European Year of Youth, the EESC Civil Society Prize 2022 will reward effective, innovative and creative initiatives which aim to create a better future for and with young Europeans.

3.2.2 The EESC will endeavour to magnify the voices of young people and youth organisations through more structured, meaningful and targeted youth participatory mechanisms in order to enhance the internal engagement of young people and youth organisations in the EESC's work. Accordingly, the following steps by the EESC should be taken:

- transparent and cross-sectional coordination mechanisms should be introduced to mainstream youth perspectives in the EESC's work and legislation;
- young experts with relevant expertise on key opinions could be introduced;
- in the context of the European Year of Youth, to have youth as a common topic for the autumn round of own-initiatives opinions;
- to hold thematic debates with European youth organisations and grass-root organisations to link national and European perspectives more effectively;
- youth-related topics could be selected for EESC studies²⁹ yearly;
- all opinions drawn up by the EESC should also always take into account the intergenerational perspective (as they do for the gender perspective);
- to build vibrant relations with other EU institutions to map youth participatory mechanisms and to strengthen outreach activities with youth and youth organisations at national, regional and local level;
- to adopt the resolution on youth engagement in the EESC drafted by the Coordination Group for the European Year of Youth;
- to create a "youth engagement" tab on the EESC website to highlight the past, current and future youth-related activities including opinions, public hearings, events etc.;
- a permanent structure could be established within the EESC to ensure that the work on youth engagement within the EESC and with the other institutions will continue beyond 2022.

3.2.3 The EESC will further explore and consider possible ways to apply the EU Youth Test concept in its work to develop a consistent approach on youth involvement in the EESC.

²⁷ SOC/706 *European Year of Youth*, [OJ C 152, 6.4.2022, p. 122](#) and SOC/589 *A new EU Youth Strategy*, [OJ C 62, 15.2.2019, p. 142](#)

²⁸ [OJ C 429, 11.12.2020, p. 44.](#)

²⁹ There is an ongoing EESC study on structured youth engagement: mapping local, national, EU and international good practices to develop the necessary and appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the voices of young people will be heard.

3.2.4 The EESC invites the European Commission to respond to this own-initiative opinion and the EU Youth Test proposal and to brainstorm together on the implementation.

Brussels, 21 September 2022

Christa Schweng

The president of the European Economic and Social Committee

APPENDIX

The Concept Note *The EU Youth Test: Investing Now in the Union's Future*

Young people are not only the present, but the future as well. As a result of the pandemic and the severe financial crises in the last decade, we have seen that young people are one of the first groups within our society who are affected by the new measures, such as austerity measures or lockdowns. These policies not only impact the economic possibilities of future generations, but also create inequalities and serious consequences on mental health, among other things. In 2019, we saw a record turnout at the European elections which included a significant increase in youth participation. Young people have a strong opinion on issues that impact them, such as economic growth, digitalisation or the climate crisis. It is time to provide sufficient means to include them in policy-making since they are the ones who need to carry the burden of these decisions.

Several participatory processes exist in the European Union (EU), such as the "Have your say" portal. Young people have a number of opportunities to express their view on topics they are asked about. However, it is not enough to consult with young people, invite them on stage and just move on without taking them into consideration. There is a clear call for meaningful participation and engagement, while there is also a need for follow-up on how the voice of young people has been heard. By now, it is clear that young people are affected by policies that are outside the scope of traditional youth policies, yet they are rarely included in the policy-making process. The EU needs to step up and work on policies that consider the impact on those who will suffer the consequences: young people today and future generations.

The **EU Youth Test** is an impact assessment tool that will ensure that young people are considered during the policy-making processes within the EU. As a result, the EU will be able to create better policies that are long-lasting and impactful, actively close inequality gaps, and take into account current and future generations. Policies will address the experiences, needs and expectations of young people and they will help Europe's youngest generation maximise their potential.

- **EU Youth Test: with and for youth**

The EU Youth Test is designed to evaluate the impact that any new proposals may have on young people in the EU and identify mitigation measures necessary to avoid any negative impacts.

It is based on three pillars:

- **Meaningful engagement** with relevant youth stakeholders.
- **Impact assessments** of draft proposals.
- **Mitigation measures** to address adversities facing groups of young people, with a special focus on groups living in vulnerable situations.

It supports the mainstreaming of young people by addressing the lack of involvement in policy fields that are not usually considered youth-related, e.g. sustainability, economic or infrastructure policies.

The EU Youth Test will focus on all proposals coming from the European Commission. All EU proposals should be assessed to see the impact on the lives of young people. The assessment carried out by each Directorate-General (DGs) would include the following steps:

- application of a standardised checklist to determine how relevant the proposal is to young people and future generations (those yet to be born);
- qualitative consultation with representatives of young people from youth-led organisations and experts;
- analysis of the draft proposal based on the available data and the outcomes of the discussions;
- summary of the impact on young people with clear indication of the proposal's degree of suitability;
- in case of a low level of suitability, clear recommendations for changes to mitigate the potential negative impact;
- publication of the result of the EU Youth Test (e.g. on the Youth Portal).

The EU Youth Test should be conducted by every DG. DGs should be prepared to use the impact assessment tool and would need to be properly trained to include youth stakeholders meaningfully in the policy-making process.

- **Bringing the missing 25% to the forefront**

Young people make up 25% of the whole EU population and, while they will live the longest with the consequences and impacts of the regulations designed today, they are underrepresented in political processes and in consultations.

The EU Youth Test has already proven to be useful in several national legislative processes. For example, in Germany in the last four years, the level of relevance was checked in the case of more than 500 laws, with more than 100 impact assessments conducted. These assessments cover a wide range of topics such as the implementation of the Climate Protection Programme 2030 in tax law. While in Germany the test does not include mitigation measures, it highlights how certain legislation can impact the life of young people. The assessment pointed out several benefits for young people in terms of affordable, long-distance commuting opportunities, but also warned that the increased access to mobility is relevant only for those young people who live close to existing infrastructure.

Furthermore, we believe a youth impact assessment could have been highly beneficial for the EU in several instances in the past. One of the most recent examples would be the EU taxonomy proposal. This exact proposal is highly relevant for young people and future generations. As we are aware, climate change and the destruction of our environment is something that not only the future generations will have to live with, but is already taking the lives of millions of young people every year. It is therefore the bare minimum to include young people in the discussion about energy sources such as nuclear power or natural gas. Based on recent events, it is clear that young people would have provided stronger political momentum in opposing the clear error of including gas and nuclear as sustainable energy sources. Furthermore, young people are considered to be the drivers of the circular economy and future generations should be the main beneficiaries of sustainable investment opportunities. Policies addressing the new ways of the economy will have an impact on the

employment, health and wellbeing of future generations. This needs to be considered now, otherwise such policies will cause further disruptions, barriers and inequalities within our society.

As has been said many times, young people are not only the future, but also the present. As rightly pointed out by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, young people have been one of the groups within our society most affected by the previous financial crisis and the current health crisis and faltering economy. There is now a clear need to create policies that consider their point of view.

Mainstreaming young people into all policies: an existing objective at EU Level

An EU level Youth Test is one of the measures set out in the Conference on the Future of Europe Outcomes Report that was endorsed by all voting components in the Conference plenary and citizens. Young people are demanding proper consultation on all policies that affect them, and to have their voice taken into account in the shaping of these policies. While the Youth Test meets these expectations, it also acknowledges that young people's interests are wide-ranging and go far beyond traditional "youth" topics such as education and mobility exchanges. Mainstreaming youth into all policies is also an aim of the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027) and one of the four key objectives of the European Year of Youth 2022. Adoption of the Youth Test is therefore a way to implement this strand of the Strategy, to realise this 2022 objective, hence providing a long-lasting legacy and following up concretely on a measure coming from the Conference on the Future of Europe.

- **Numerous "Best Practices"**

The EU Youth Test exists in several Member States at national and regional levels in different forms, but always for the benefit of and involving young people. In some cases, it is conducted by a separate entity (Germany, Flanders) while in others it is carried out by the respective ministries (Austria, France). Several child and youth impact assessment tools were launched as a result of the recommendation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (New Zealand, Canada, Scotland). Even though these tools only partially address the challenges, since they are conducted after the approval of the legislation rather than beforehand, and hence without including young people in the decision-making process, they prove that there is a global trend towards assessing the impact of legislation on young people by involving them. We can also see that, thanks to NextGenerationEU, more and more countries are working on youth impact assessments (Italy), which should be something that the Commission not only expects from the Member States but should also champion, including by introducing a standardised mechanism for them.

While these best practices prove to be rather diverse in terms of methodology and scope, after the Youth Forum conducted interviews with several National Youth Councils, we found that the youth impact assessment tools are considered to be a great way to mainstream youth policy, ensure that youth inequalities are mitigated and removed, and include young people's perspective in the policy-making procedure.

Last year, the European Youth Forum collected and analysed several examples of youth impact assessment tools based on the input from five National Youth Councils and available online information. These examples cover both the national and regional level and focus on the implementation of youth impact assessments on legislative proposals. However, the spectrum and the methodology of each differ, in some cases significantly. Further research is expected to be conducted

to include the perspective of the representatives of the authorities, particularly EU Member State representatives. The table below is intended to indicate the scope and the methodology of the impact assessment tools, identify the entities conducting them, and suggest relevant aspects to be considered for the development of an EU Youth Test.

Region/ Country	Scope	Methodology	Conducted By	Transferable best practice principles to be considered in the development of the EU Youth Test
Flanders	Young people 0-25 years of age	An extensive report with 14 questions. During the assessment, data and indicators are expected to be provided by the assessor	Respective ministry	The assessment report is easily understandable and thorough
Austria	Children and youth (under 18 years of age)	Either an extensive assessment with concrete indicators or a simplified questionnaire, depending on the relevance	Federal administration, the department that is proposing the initiative or legislation	The checklist can be a good way to assess the relevance of the draft policy for young people, and as such decide on further steps in the impact assessment
France	Young people 16-25 years of age	N/A	Respective ministry	The impact assessment clause is part of the legislative framework that could make it binding and highly visible. High level political support.
Germany	Young people 12-27 years of age	Standardised assessment tool and a two-stage assessment process considering areas of life and several impact dimensions	Competence Centre Youth-Check - a separate institution from the ministry	The two-fold assessment process gives a detailed picture of the impact on youth
Italy	Young people	Under development	Several stakeholders are involved in the impact assessment, such as scholars, youth representatives and policy-makers	Related to the NextGenerationEU funds and the National Recovery and Resilience Plans
New Zealand	Children and young people	Two-step screening based on an extensive questionnaire	Public authorities but it can be freely used by anyone - enhancing transparency and widespread adoption	Publicly available and to be carried out by anyone

- **Road to the EU Youth Test**

The European Youth Forum and its more than 100 member organisations urge the Commission to adopt an EU Youth Test and make the promises of the European Year of Youth a reality for all young Europeans. It is a chance to create a long-lasting legacy that will support the future generations in living a sustainable life. Together with other relevant stakeholders, such as EU institutions,

representatives of youth-led organisations and Member States, the Youth Forum has started to map the possible scenarios for an EU Youth Test. Based on the previous discussions, we suggest that the European Commission take the following steps in the coming months of 2022:

- conduct research and analysis on existing youth impact assessment tools;
- finalise the proposal for an EU Youth test with the involvement of youth stakeholders;
- together with youth stakeholders, draft the procedure and guidelines, including the checklist and the analysis;
- expression of interest by DGs to include a youth perspective and future generations in policy-making processes;
- capacity-building of DGs to readily apply the EU Youth Test when drafting new proposals;
- monitor the implementation of the EU Youth Test on an ongoing basis.

The EU Youth Test can be a successful instrument if it is used widely by DGs and if policy-makers are able to have meaningful engagement with young people. While the EU Youth Test might seem to require additional resources from the EU institutions, it is in the utmost interest of all EU Member States that the policies do not impose threats and negative impacts on future generations.

Regional youth impact assessment:

[Flanders](#)

The Child and Youth Impact Report, or JoKER for short, assesses the effects of new proposed decrees on children and young people. Every time a minister submits a draft decree to the Flemish Parliament that directly affects the interests of persons under the age of 25, it must be accompanied by a JoKER. This consists of the impact of the proposal and alternatives, while also providing data to strengthen the assessment. JoKER mainly relies on the 2003 comments on "general measures of implementation" of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including a child impact analysis. The competent minister and administration are responsible for drawing up a JoKER when submitting a decree, and involve the contact point for youth and children's rights policy. They can also ask for help from the Department of Culture, Youth and Media. The assessment follows a questionnaire that details the objectives, the alternative policy options, the analysis of impacts, and the outline of the consultation included, among other things.

EU Member States' youth impact assessment:

[Austria](#)

In 2013, Austria introduced an overarching impact assessment on proposed legislation. This impact assessment aims to provide clarity on the priorities, effects on the budget and effectiveness of the proposals. It is carried out during the drafting phase and considers several policy areas ("impact dimensions"), such as finance, environment, consumer protection, businesses, children and youth, and gender equality. If a piece of legislation does not affect the state budget, or does not have substantial financial relevance (below EUR 1 million), it is enough to carry out a simplified assessment first to see in which policy areas the legislation has relevance. This simplified assessment is a short survey, which is now also digitalised. The impact assessment consists of a problem analysis (why government action is necessary), formulation of objectives (what impact is to be achieved in society), formulation of measures (how the respective goals are being pursued) and assessment of the effects. In case a youth

perspective is found to be relevant, the impact assessment is carried out by considering the following aspects:

- protection and promotion of the health, development and upbringing of children and young adults;
- care and support of children and eligible young adults, and compensation for child costs;
- security of the future of children and young adults in the medium term.

In case of the simplified impact assessment, no indicators are used and no assessment of the effects is carried out.

The underlying initiative will be evaluated after five years at the latest, which means that the respective departments carry out an internal evaluation, during which effects that actually occurred are compared with the assumptions made at the time of the assessment. In case of a simplified impact assessment, this step is not carried out either.

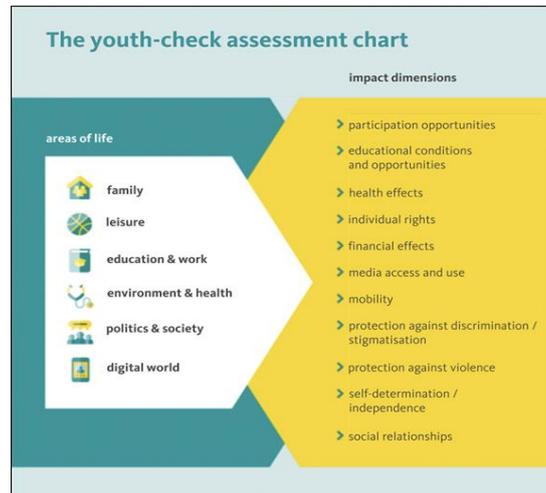
France

French Law requires all draft laws to include a preliminary evaluation of the economic, financial, social, and environmental consequences of the adoption of the law (with the exception of finance and budget laws, Organic Laws, laws modifying the Constitution, etc.). An internal note from the Prime Minister from 2016 stresses the need to systematically conduct youth impact assessments (but this is not binding). All impact evaluations are supposed to be available on the website of the SGG (*Secrétariat général du gouvernement*). In the Ministry of Education, the DJEPVA (*Direction de la jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et de la vie associative* – in charge of developing, coordinating, and evaluating policies in favour of youth, community education, and the voluntary sector) is in theory consulted and involved in the development of impact assessments of draft regulations. The drafting ministry (which also drafts the impact assessment) can ask for the support of the DJEPVA in doing this. Upon receipt of these documents, the SGG can ask the advice of the DJEPVA if it considers the impact assessment insufficient. The SGG then convenes a scoping meeting bringing together the drafting ministry, the DJEPVA and all other services concerned by the cross-cutting impact. A notice of 48 hours is required which means that observations on the impact assessment are only circulated for a period of 48 hours. In practice, most of the time, this scoping meeting is the first time the DJEPVA sees the impact evaluation. The policy pursued in favour of young people aims in particular to support them in their efforts to gain access to employment and become independent. It also aims to guarantee all young people access to public services, essential for building their life project.

Germany

The Youth-Check in Germany was introduced in 2017. So far, the Competence Centre Youth-Check (ComYC) has examined over 500 pieces of legislation. The examination of legislation can be initiated by the Minister for Youth or by the ComYC itself through its monitoring process. The ComYC conducts a preliminary examination of all laws that are accessible to the ComYC (usually all laws where the Ministry of Youth is involved or is in charge). Where there is a relevant, non-obvious impact on young people, the Youth-Check is carried out and the results published. The assessment is carried out during the drafting phase (pre-parliamentary). The ComYC has the possibility to carry out an initial assessment and, if the legislation changes after the input of other stakeholders (i.e. cabinet, local reps), the ComYC still has the chance to give final input. The Ministry forwards the Youth-Check together with the legislation to the lead ministry which proposes it as a government bill to the

Parliament. The ComYC also publishes the shorter version of the Youth-Check to support the discussion in the Parliament. The Youth-Check is based on a standardised assessment tool and a two-stage assessment process. As a first step, it is confirmed whether the legislation is relevant for young people and it is determined whether young people or specific groups of them between the ages of 12 and 27 are affected by the proposed legislation. If the legislation is relevant for young people, the next step is the main impact assessment. During the main impact assessment, the legislation is examined in terms of which individual areas of life are affected by the proposed legislation.



Source: <https://www.jugend-check.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/the-youth-check-in-germany-regulatory-impact-assessment-for-the-young-generation.pdf>

Various methodological approaches are chosen in order to obtain indications of the possible effects, and data from several sources is used as well. Secondary data is primarily used (statistics, available publications, etc.). However, in isolated cases, if there is no available data, ComYC conducts surveys and interviews with experts and youth representatives. In general, the youth-check consists of a description of the affected groups and the relevant passages of the bill as well as the resulting effects on young people. In addition, the affected areas of life are identified and, if necessary, "notes and remarks" are given. As already mentioned, a shorter version is produced and sent out to members of the Bundestag and another short version is drafted that uses a youth-friendly language that is published on the website under the corresponding section. However, these versions are not drafted in every case. The youth-friendly language makes it accessible for young people with different backgrounds and education. Finally, besides sending the Youth-Check to the respective decision-makers, all versions are published on the Youth-Check's website. Furthermore, there is the ComYC App, which provides information on the legislative process and the assessment procedure and which enables the Youth-Check to be tried out interactively.

Italy

In 2021, Italy established a Committee to monitor the impact of public policy on young people and future generations. The idea is mainly related to the NextGenerationEU (NGEU) funds and the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (PNRR in Italian). It consists of several stakeholders such as the youth ministry, the National Youth Council, the national agency, the national statistical office, the public health authorities and experts on impact assessments. The stakeholders collaborate in four groups covering different areas of work, namely:

- Group for a shared definition of measures for young people;

- Group for the assessment of generational impact and models practised in other EU countries also with reference to the Agenda 2030 SDGs;
- Group analysing good practices and reforms of youth policies at European level;
- Group to support the monitoring of the implementation of Pillar "F" of Regulation (EU) 2021/241.

As a result of this distribution of tasks, the Committee's ultimate aim is to provide data and information useful for more effective government action on the coordination and implementation of youth policies. The measures analysed initially are those with a direct impact on young people. The impact assessments are not public and are submitted to the Youth Minister every six months.

The stakeholders collaborate in groups covering four areas of work:

1. Group for a shared definition of measures for young people: the group is responsible for analysing all of the government's measures for young people in the budget law, in the PNRRs – which is the plan using NGEU funds – and in the National Investment Plan that complements the PNRR.
2. Group for the assessment of generational impact and models practised in other EU countries also with reference to the Agenda 2030 SDGs: the group deals with establishing the national (and local) taxonomy of indicators for the assessment of generational impact, with a view to ensuring intergenerational equity.
3. Group analysing good practices and reforms of youth policies at European level: the group will set indicators to determine good practices at European level and their transferability.
4. Group to support the monitoring of the implementation of Pillar "F" of Regulation (EU) 2021/241: in order to assess the ongoing consistency of the "youth priority" – a priority identified as cross-cutting in the PNRR – with the specific objective of Pillar "F" of Regulation (EU) 2021/241. Quantitative and qualitative indicators will be established in conjunction with the PNRR "Control Room" of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of the Economy.

Third country impact assessment

[New Zealand](#)

Following the 2011 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommendation, New Zealand established the Child Impact Assessment (CIA), which is a tool for public officials to assess whether policy proposals will improve the wellbeing of children and young people. It is also based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The tool is used to support the debate and decision-making surrounding a proposal and can be freely used by the conducting entity. With this tool, the first step is to check whether the proposal has any youth relevance through the screening sheet. When completing the screening sheet, note should be made of:

- positive impacts on children and young people by the proposal;
- mitigations for any negative effects or unintended consequences.

If there is a direct impact on young people, the full impact assessment is conducted. There is more scope in the full Child Impact Assessment (than in the screening sheet) to unpack the broader context of any proposal, for example, how it may impact on issues such as school engagement, socio-economic factors (such as child poverty), youth wellbeing/development or disability. During the assessment, consultation is encouraged with all relevant stakeholders, such as experts, youth representatives, policy-makers, etc.

Further examples to be discovered:

- [Netherlands](#)
- [Sweden](#)
- [Finland](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Canada](#)

Global report: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/fit-for-generations-global-youth-report-highlights.pdf>

Provisional structure of the checklist to assess the relevance of the proposal for young people

	<i>Questions</i>	<i>On a 1-3 scale</i>		Score
Which level does the proposal impact...			Direct impact	3
Basic Human Needs	approximately 5 questions related to the basic needs of young people , such as clean and safe energy, affordable housing or access to information.	each question to be scored by the assessor	Indirect impact	2
Creation of wellbeing	approximately 5 questions related to wellbeing aspects, such as health care, material footprint or transition to adulthood	each question to be scored by the assessor	No impact	1
Opportunity	approximately 5 questions related to opportunities for young people, such as participation, freedom of expression or access to infrastructure	each question to be scored by the assessor		
Average			if the average is over 1.5 the proposal is youth relevant	