

Outcomes of the

***EU Youth Conference***  
***– 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> March***  
***2024, Ghent***

EU  
NEEDS  
YOUTH



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## Outcomes of the

# EU Youth Conference

### Introduction

The Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union began on 1st January 2024, lasting until to 30 June 2024. The Belgian Presidency is part of the trio Presidency of Spain, Belgium and Hungary. In the 10th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue, followed up by this trio presidency, the thematic focus is on the third European Youth Goal, emphasising the need to forge inclusive societies. Within this framework, the Belgian Presidency held the EU Youth Conference on 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2024 in Ghent, Belgium. The aim was to create a robust foundation for political action, using the outcomes of these discussions as powerful tools to shape policies across Europe. Over three hundred fifty attendees were invited including,

- National delegations, made up of:
  - Ministerial delegates,
  - Youth representatives,
- Representatives of European institutions/organisations,
- Experts on social inclusion,
- Policy-makers

This document outlines the recommendations formulated by the editing team, based on the input of the discussions of participants and includes the 34 possible implementing measures determined by youth representatives in their working groups.



## Recommendations – European Youth Goal #3 on Inclusive Societies

Recommendations to the European Union and its Member States to:

1. Better support young people experiencing poverty and financial exclusion to transition to financial independence and security by taking steps to promote affordable housing, increasing access to quality work and employment, addressing mobility barriers, and ensuring young people's financial literacy.
2. Ensure young people's access to affordable, youth-friendly and personalised quality health care and mental health support systems. Additionally, create safe and open environments for young people to speak freely and learn about health and mental well-being.
3. Promote and invest in education and youth work in order to: make learning environments more accessible and inclusive for young people with fewer opportunities; tailor to young people needs; increase collaborations between formal education, non-formal education and informal learning and across other sectors.
4. Increase funding, capacity building and other support for educators to be engaged in lifelong learning on: inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities; capitalising on diversity of young people; creating safe spaces for sharing and learning with and by young people from different backgrounds; and youth-centred personalised teaching and learning approaches.
5. Improve the capacity of people working with and for youth to effectively disseminate youth friendly information in order to make information accessible about rights and opportunities. Additionally, strengthen media and information literacy of youth to recognise trustworthy information and safe information navigation.
6. Put in place policies to dismantle systematic discrimination, unconscious bias, hostile attitudes and to encourage continuous learning about all kinds of diversities as well as unlearning prejudices. Such policies should be co-developed with young people with relevant lived experiences in all fields.

**Possible Implementing Measures – European Youth Goal #3 on Inclusive Societies**

**1. CHANGE THE SYSTEM: STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INCLUSION**

<p><b>1.1 Research about boosting mobility for young people in border regions</b></p> <p>The European Commission should conduct a research on cross-border transportation in rural areas and measures to be taken to facilitate the cooperation between regional transportation. A special focus should be on the effect of creating more cohesion between cross-border pricing systems that centers on young people with fewer opportunities.</p> <p>A tool-box of suitable measures is to be created.</p> <p>This should lead to decreasing prices, so the consumer has a more affordable ticketing system.</p>	<p>LEVEL</p> <p>EU, Regional</p>
<p><b>1.2 Independent Youth: Subsidies for youth housing</b></p> <p>This measure targets all youth in the age group from 16 to 30 years old, that includes students, employed youth, NEETs etc. by providing them housing subsidies based on their social economic background and status. The implementation of this measure ensures the equity in for fair subsidies.</p> <p>This should lead to independence and well-being of youth in all aspects of social participation.</p>	<p>EU</p>
<p><b>1.3 Digital empowerment for European youth in rural and outermost areas</b></p>	

<p>The European Commission should encourage the member states to ensure an equal digital access for young people across Europe. This entails establishing widespread Wi-Fi availability in rural areas and providing access to laptops for underserved communities. By prioritising digital inclusion, we empower young people with the tools they need to do remote work, develop their skills, and access digital services.</p> <p>This should lead to Increase the employability and the access to information.</p>	EU
<p><b>1.4 Free public transport for all youth</b></p> <p>Provide free public transport to all youth, improving access to schools, jobs, and social opportunities, and allowing disadvantaged areas to grow around public transport major hubs. This initiative reflects the EU's acknowledgment of youth struggles and strives to address them effectively.</p> <p>This should lead to reduced inequalities cross-sectionally and sustainably.</p>	National
<p><b>1.5 Vacancy Tax serving financial incentives for social youth housing</b></p> <p>Houses unoccupied for over two years (occupied less than one month annually) qualify for <i>Vacancy Tax</i>. Collected funds with this tax are used to incentivize landlords to make their housing stock eligible as social housing market, targeting young people with fewer opportunities.</p> <p>This should lead to engaged landlords in youth housing schemes; broaden opportunities for youth.</p>	National
<p><b>1.6 High-quality financial literacy standards for all youth in the EU</b></p> <p>Having a sound understanding of financial literacy empowers young people so that they can be confident in facing life's challenges and working toward their long-term goals. An integrated approach is needed to implement a comprehensive financial literacy program by involving a wide range of stakeholders such as schools, businesses, banks, and non-profit organizations. This should lead to empowering youth for financial literacy and lifelong project planning.</p>	National

## 2. HEALTH AND MENTAL WELLBEING

<p><b>2.1 Access to a psychologist in every school</b></p> <p>Member States and candidate countries should ensure psychologist availability throughout all stages of formal education. Embedding psychologists in schools can enhance mental health access and aid in early stigma reduction. Active engagement with the entire school community in preventive practices is vital. These psychologists, independent from teaching staff, should National have the authority to recommend further professional support for a student without requiring parental consent.</p> <p>This should lead to easier access to psychologists and the prevention of mental health problems.</p>	National
<p><b>2.2 Include diverse research groups in criteria for health research funds</b></p> <p>The European Commission should include diverse research groups in criteria for research funds in the medical field. Based on McKinsey &amp; Company research “Closing the data gaps in women’s health”, there is a gender bias in medical research. This leads to exclusion of the majority of the population in effective functioning healthcare. This problem especially affects young women, since they are less likely to be diagnosed.</p> <p>This should lead to a lower mortality rate and equal healthcare system for young people.</p>	EU
<p><b>2.3 Supporting education and initiatives for youth mental wellbeing</b></p> <p>The European Commission and member states, building on the 2023 Strategy for Mental Health, should support programmes that enhance well-being and mental health awareness of young people through non-formal education, exchange of good practices and research-based information. Sharing, promoting and popularizing the existing methodologies and programmes should be conducted through diverse platforms within the Member States. EU candidates are encouraged to implement this measure as well.</p>	EU

<p>This should lead to raising stakeholder capacities and strengthening mental resilience of youth.</p>	
<p><b>2.4 Include health as a grounds of discrimination within legislation</b></p> <p>Member states should include health in the list of grounds of discrimination; health includes mental health and physical health conditions. To protect individuals from discrimination in for example the workplace and education. The legal framework shall protect (citizens) students and employees with such conditions and provide them with necessary resources to equally thrive in their environments.</p> <p>This should lead to equal access to education and work for all people.</p>	EU
<p><b>2.5 A mental well-being training programme for educators and youth workers</b></p> <p>Educators and youth workers should receive mandatory, initial and continuing, empathy and life-skill training to effectively communicate, provide mental well-being support and inspire awareness-raising among youth, adapted to their needs. In addition, relevant authorities should maintain continuously updated materials, taking advantage of existing EU tools and programmes. This should be properly financed by the relevant authorities. EU candidate countries are also encouraged to implement this.</p> <p>This should lead to youth having access to staff trained in mental health support.</p>	EU



### 3. INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS - FORMAL EDUCATION & SCHOOLS

<p><b>3.1 Integrating non-formal education led by NGOs into formal civic education</b></p> <p>Stimulate schools to involve youth-led NGOs, in collaboration with youth workers, in implementing the civic education curriculum with non-formal methods. The initiative should be supported by the EU institutions. The course should use the national curriculum and be prepared together with youth workers and teachers. The youth-led NGOs' lessons enable young people to learn about civic society, have more opportunities to engage and increase social inclusion by providing a peer-to-peer practical learning experience.</p> <p>This should lead to providing opportunities to engage and learn practical skills through civic education.</p>	<p>National, Local, EU</p>
<p><b>3.2 Establishing legal frameworks for nationwide and inclusive regional student representative bodies</b></p> <p>Member States should implement these legal frameworks to define student self-governance, promote civic engagement, and mandate a degree of deliberative power in governance, allowing students to become significant stakeholders in decision-making processes at all levels. These structures must prioritise intersectionality in their activities and throughout their structure, ensuring the existence of inclusivity &amp; diversity officers. The legal framework must safeguard students' freedom to voice their concerns and feedback.</p> <p>This should lead to strengthening student representation, self-governance and participation, and democratic confidence.</p>	<p>Local, Regional, National</p>
<p><b>3.3 Enhancing anti-discrimination practices in vocational education and training (VET)</b></p> <p>Setting up a support system for students seeking work placements and easing the path through apprenticeship recruitment procedures by:</p>	<p>Regional, national, EU</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing legally binding anti-discrimination policies, to be included in agreements between VET-institutions and corporations offering apprenticeships;</li> <li>• Requiring employers to register apprentices for workplace liability insurance;</li> <li>• Anonymizing application procedures for apprentices seeking work placements, as to ensure their identity (gender, age, ethnic background) is not a cause for discrimination.</li> </ul> <p>This should lead to reducing the likelihood of discrimination in the recruitment procedure and within work placements of VET apprentices.</p>	
<p><b>3.4 Joint educational initiatives with school students of diverse backgrounds</b></p> <p>Young people from diverse backgrounds, including youth with fewer opportunities (e.g. cooperation between special needs schools and other schools), collaborate in non-formal settings on joint initiatives. The schools organise joint activities with one goal, focusing on peer-to-peer learning in the process. The activities remove barriers for young people to interact and enrich one another. Funding is essential for everyone to have a fair chance at participating.</p> <p>This should lead to shared experiences, better knowledge and understanding between different youth groups.</p>	<p>Local, National</p>
<p><b>3.5 Streamlined funding for young people facing fewer opportunities in education</b></p> <p>Allocate specific funding to establish support programs in educational institutions for learners experiencing various forms of disadvantage at all stages of education. This funding will be earmarked for tailored support services, including the provision of assistive technologies and the development of infrastructure to meet the diverse access needs of these learners.</p> <p>This should lead to enhanced educational access and success for marginalized learners.</p>	<p>Local, National, EU</p>

### 3.6 Lifelong teacher-teaching on inclusion

Have specific Erasmus+ ‘train the trainer’ projects on inclusion and diversity for teachers, who then share their knowledge and skills with peers in their school(s). Develop national/regional programmes for schools to exchange and evaluate inclusion and diversity practices. This should enable schools to improve their approach to inclusivity and diversity and facilitate continuous reflection on their own practices.

This should lead to teachers gaining a better understanding and skills on inclusion.

Regional,  
National,  
EU

#### 4. INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH WORK

<p><b>4.1 Promote professionalised youth work across Europe by structural investments and trainings</b></p> <p>Recognising informal learning and youth work in creating inclusive spaces. Encourage evidence-based academic research to support the impact of youth work. The fundings should be sustainable and structural, ensuring better youth services and inclusion trainings. Strengthen the recognition of youth workers' expertise through common standards.</p> <p>This should lead to safeguarding the rights of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.</p>	<p>National, EU</p>
<p><b>4.2 Ensure capacity building and continuous dialogue between youth workers and stakeholders</b></p> <p>This measure will be achieved in three phases: (1) the consultation phase, where youth workers, non-formal and informal educators will participate in a dialogue with policymakers to create a map of their needs; (2) the action plan creation, where decision-makers agree on a set of actions in goal-oriented topics defined in the previous phase; (3) implementation and evaluation phase, where the measures are executed and their impact is assessed.</p> <p>This should lead to guaranteeing that youth workers' needs are achieved and continuous dialogue implemented.</p>	<p>National</p>
<p><b>4.3 Increased access to funding opportunities at the local level</b></p> <p>Introduce a localised and simplified funding framework for non-formal education and youth empowerment. This should be funded by dedicated budgets sourced by existing programs on the European and National level.</p> <p>This funding should enable community-driven initiatives for disadvantaged youth. Information about the framework should be easily accessible through different and relevant communication channels and structures. To access the</p>	<p>Local</p>

<p>funding, there needs to be a straightforward application process through user-friendly platforms.</p> <p>This should lead to disadvantaged youth accessing and benefiting from well-funded non-formal education.</p>	
<p><b>4.4 Youth-centred participatory budgeting</b></p> <p>Through non-formal approaches, data-driven results, and participatory structures, local youth are empowered to engage with various stakeholders in participatory budgeting. This fosters social inclusion, breaks down barriers, and promotes literacy among youth. Furthermore, it will stimulate knowledge in regards to non-formal education.</p> <p>This should lead to increased youth participation; strengthened community cohesion; enhanced economic opportunities.</p>	<p>Local, Regional</p>
<p><b>4.5 Mobile youth work</b></p> <p>In order to reach young people with fewer opportunities, member states should provide resources for mobile youth work. The mobile youth work will, jointly with local stakeholders, work to provide support, information and programs to young people facing social exclusion. It will reinforce the collaboration between youth workers and local stakeholders and is aimed at providing equal access to opportunities to experience non-formal education for young people facing social exclusion.</p> <p>This should lead to equal access to opportunities to experience non-formal education.</p>	<p>Local, National</p>
<p><b>4.6 Formal recognition of volunteer youth work</b></p> <p>Assure free training for volunteer youth workers in order to continuously gain or improve the awareness and competences necessary to create inclusive, safe spaces for youth in cooperation with youth organisations. At the end of the training, the volunteers receive certificates that are linked to benefits such as university credits, transport, cultural discounts etc. These trainings will provide</p>	<p>National</p>



the necessary knowledge and awareness about discrimination, (social) exclusion and mental health.

This should lead to an increase in the amount and knowledge of volunteer youth workers.

## 5. THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

<p><b>5.1 Implementing youth information and critical thinking workshops in schools</b></p> <p>Non-formal workshops, co-designed with young people, should be delivered in schools by youth organisations, targeting students, especially those with fewer opportunities, in order to tackle disinformation. Member States are encouraged to embed these interactive workshops within formal education. The funding for the youth organisations to implement these workshops should come from initiatives of the European Commission.</p> <p>This should lead to youngsters having long-term critical thinking and media literacy skills.</p>	<p>Local, EU</p>
<p><b>5.2 Exploring reliable news, sources and verifiable information.</b></p> <p>Independent Inclusion Platform where you can check facts. The platform provides inclusive tools to educate and improve media literacy. Knowing that the platform already partially exists in some member states, we encourage a peer learning activity to share good practices, especially focusing on young people with fewer opportunities. To ensure the correct inclusive implementation we encourage youth from diverse backgrounds to be involved in the drafting of the platform.</p> <p>This should lead to avoiding prejudices and empowering young people with fewer opportunities.</p>	<p>EU</p>
<p><b>5.3 Campaign for quality information and media literacy to empower youth.</b></p> <p>The EU institutions in cooperation with the Member States establish a campaign with long-lasting effects by providing resources for societal, educational and informational initiatives and programmes targeting young people. It raises awareness on the quality of youth's informational and media consumption as a powerful factor for social inclusion. It produces stronger media exposure in Europe, with the UN Global media and information literacy week as a possible focal point.</p>	<p>EU, National</p>

<p>This should lead to youth that can identify quality information and fight disinformation.</p>	
<p><b>5.4 Establishing inclusive youth spaces working as information hubs</b></p> <p>Member states should support municipalities in establishing local youth spaces which are appealing to young people with experimental spaces for learning and well-equipped for both youth and youth workers. These spaces should be well-resourced and equipped both financially and in terms of HR. Youth workers should be well-informed &amp; well-educated, they should be able to guide young people to reliable sources of information and to create quality programmes.</p> <p>This should lead to well-informed, empowered and active young people.</p>	<p>Local, Regional</p>
<p><b>5.5 EU made simple: Information made systematically inclusive for all.</b></p> <p>EU institutions should have a systematic approach to make all public EU information such as websites, policy measures and programmes, that is relevant to youth, available on easy-to-read and accessible language through audio-visual formats, sign language and all European languages. Establishing criteria and guidance on how to formulate this information. Using focus groups to make quality check for its accessibility before publishing.</p> <p>This should lead to empowerment to benefit from opportunities and raised trust in EU.</p>	<p>EU</p>



## 6. CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES AND CULTURES

<p><b>6.1 Use inclusive language in EU policy documents</b></p> <p>The EU should review active policy documents and where needed replace discriminatory phrases/terms/words with inclusive alternatives. All new policy frameworks should be formulated in inclusive language and assessed in view of representing all human beings, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, ethnicity, origin and disability. These guidelines should be followed when translating policies into other official languages, to ensure that the inclusive aspect is adhered to.</p> <p>This should lead to all people concerned by these documents to feel represented and included.</p>	<p>National, EU</p>
<p><b>6.2 Continuous learning focusing on acceptance and awareness of diversities</b></p> <p>To tackle discriminatory attitudes and cultures, continuous learning with a focus on acceptance and awareness of diversities should be promoted at all stages of a citizen's life. The learning material should emphasise cultural exchange, inclusivity, intersectionality and mixing of societal groups. It should be accessible (online/offline) and easily transferable to different areas of society, including mandatory education for children and the employment sector.</p> <p>This should lead to awareness of diversities which will shape people's general acceptance.</p>	<p>National, EU</p>
<p><b>6.3 Adopting an intersectional and representative approach to all strategies</b></p> <p>Member states should adopt an intersectional approach in every policy domain when implementing mechanisms and strategies (e.g. making the EUYD more inclusive, creating or properly implementing national plans) to counter discriminatory attitudes and cultures. This must be reached by involving people with lived experience through engaging representative structures in a sustainable participatory process, with care for those affected, and in accordance with the UNCRC and other human rights conventions.</p>	<p>National</p>

<p>This should lead to a society that guarantees full respect for an individual's needs.</p>	
<p><b>6.4 Guaranteeing equal rights: Spreading proper <i>Youth Test</i> at all levels.</b></p> <p>Not all young people's needs are considered during policymaking processes therefore it creates difficulties in the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights for youth. A proper Youth Test considered as an impact assessment tool should have two phases: a pre-evaluation phase on the eventual impact on youth of the proposed bill and a post evaluation monitoring short and long term effects produced by the adopted law.</p> <p>This should lead to respecting the needs and difficulties of young people.</p>	<p>Local, Regional, National, EU</p>
<p><b>6.5 EU funding for intergenerational spaces within European municipalities</b></p> <p>Organised, non-organised groups/individuals and local governments can apply for funding for safe and free spaces to connect people/groups. Communities have the opportunity to come together and learn to have value for each other.</p> <p>The spaces should be: free, accessible, safe and should ensure the involvement of a diversity of groups.</p> <p>The end-users should be participating/involved in the (re)designing of unused spaces from appliance till management and operation.</p> <p>This should lead to 1500 spaces being (re)designed within the EU.</p>	<p>Local, National, EU</p>
<p><b>6.6 Preventing prejudice through acceptance minority groups and educating about self-reflection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote acceptance of minority groups through increased representation in various forms of media such as textbooks, films. Support production of movies that accurately depict minority groups and ensure visibility on national TV.</li> <li>• Promote formal education by supporting teachers to attend self-reflection teaching programs without using holiday time. Provide grants</li> </ul>	<p>Local, Regional, National, EU</p>



<p>to facilitate participation and integrate self-reflection teachings in classrooms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We seek ongoing backing for activities to educate about self-reflection, along with tailored support for dormitory initiatives.</li></ul> <p>This should lead to fostering mutual understanding, combatting prejudice, and empowering educators.</p>	
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### More Information

- [Find more information on the EU Youth Dialogue](#)
- [Discover the EU Youth Conference event in Ghent](#)
- [Read the Explanatory Note on the 10<sup>th</sup> cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue](#)
- [The EU Youth Strategy](#)
- [More information about the Belgian Presidency](#)