Link research to policy: How to formulate evidence-based policy suggestions

1. Introduction to Evidence-Based Policy

Evidence-Based Policy (EBP): Definition (Slide 4)

Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) is the process of using rigorous research and empirical evidence to inform and guide policy decisions. It emphasises the importance of basing policies on data-driven insights rather than solely on intuition or ideology.

Importance of Evidence: Why is Evidence Essential? (Slide 5)

Here is a real-life example:

In a bustling city, a mayor faced a growing challenge: rising crime rates. The streets, once teeming with life and laughter, now echoed with unease. Citizens demanded action, and the mayor knew that any policy implemented had to be more than just a knee-jerk reaction. This is where the importance of evidence in policymaking came to the forefront.

The mayor convened a meeting with her advisors, experts in various fields, and community leaders. The first order of business was to understand the root causes of the problem. They delved into data from numerous sources—police reports, social services, economic statistics—and conducted surveys within the community. The evidence painted a complex picture: unemployment was high, educational opportunities were scarce, and social services were stretched thin. Crime wasn't just a consequence of individual choices; it was deeply intertwined with systemic issues.

Armed with this understanding, the mayor's team moved on to evaluating potential solutions. They reviewed case studies from other cities that had faced similar issues, scrutinizing which strategies had yielded positive results and which had failed. Evidence from these studies highlighted the efficacy of various interventions: increasing funding for education, creating job training programs, enhancing community policing efforts, and providing better mental health services. Each potential solution was weighed against the specific needs and circumstances of their city, ensuring that their approach was tailored and precise.

Finally, the mayor knew that implementing a policy was not the end of the journey—it was just the beginning. To assess the effectiveness of their interventions, they established a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. They set clear, measurable goals and collected data continuously to track progress. Regular reports were generated, showing the impact of their policies on crime rates, economic indicators, and public sentiment. This evidence allowed them to make necessary adjustments in real time, ensuring that their efforts were truly making a difference.

As months passed, the streets began to feel safer. Job training programs saw high enrollment, schools reported better attendance, and the community felt a renewed sense of hope. The mayor's evidence-based approach to policymaking had transformed the city's response to crime, addressing not just the symptoms but the underlying causes.

In the end, evidence proved to be the cornerstone of effective policymaking. It guided the mayor and her team in understanding the problem, choosing the right solutions, and continuously improving their efforts.

So, to reiterate: Why is Evidence Essential?

- Evidence helps policymakers identify the underlying causes of societal problems, enabling more targeted and effective interventions.
- Evidence allows policymakers to assess potential policy solutions, determining which approaches are most likely to achieve desired outcomes.
- Evidence enables policymakers to evaluate the impact of policy interventions, ensuring resources are allocated efficiently and achieving desired results.

Decision-Making Framework (Slides 6, 7)

A decision-making framework provides a structured approach for making choices or decisions, particularly in complex situations where multiple factors need to be considered. It outlines a systematic process that individuals or groups can follow to gather information, evaluate alternatives, and arrive at a well-informed decision. Here's an explanation of the components typically included in a decision-making framework:

1) **Identifying the Decision.** The first step involves clearly defining the decision to be made. This includes identifying the problem or opportunity that requires a decision and establishing the goals or objectives to be achieved through the decision-making process.

2) **Gathering Information.** Decision-makers collect relevant information and data to understand the context of the decision, assess available options, and predict potential outcomes. Information may come from various sources, including research, expert opinions, stakeholder input, and past experiences.

3) **Analysing Alternatives**. Decision-makers generate and evaluate alternative courses of action or solutions to address the identified problem or opportunity. This may involve assessing the pros and cons of each option, considering their feasibility, risks, costs, and benefits, and predicting their potential impact on achieving the desired goals.

4) **Making the Decision**. Based on the analysis of alternatives, decision-makers select the option that best aligns with the established goals, criteria, and constraints. This decision may be made individually or collaboratively, depending on the nature of the decision and the stakeholders involved.

5) **Implementing the Decision**. Once a decision is made, it must be implemented effectively. This involves developing an action plan, allocating resources, assigning responsibilities, and setting timelines to execute the chosen course of action.

6) **Monitoring and Evaluating**. Decision-makers monitor the implementation of the decision and evaluate its outcomes against the established goals and criteria. This may involve tracking progress, collecting feedback, and adjusting the decision or implementation plan as needed to achieve the desired results.

7) **Learning and Iterating**. Finally, decision-makers reflect on the decision-making process, identify lessons learned, and incorporate feedback to improve future decision-making efforts. This may involve documenting successes and failures, identifying areas for improvement, and adapting the decision-making framework based on experience.

Overall, a decision-making framework provides a systematic and structured approach to navigate complex decision-making processes, helping individuals or groups make informed choices that align with their goals and objectives. It promotes transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in decision-making, ultimately leading to better outcomes and improved decision quality.

2. Understanding the Policy Context

Slide 8

Now we will move on to explore the multifaceted landscape of policymaking and understand the contextual factors that influence decision-making processes.

Key Concepts: Stakeholders in Policymaking (Slide 9 -12)

Stakeholders in policymaking are individuals, groups, organizations, or entities with an interest or stake in the outcome of a particular policy decision or issue. They can have varying degrees of influence and involvement in the policymaking process, depending on factors such as their resources, expertise, and level of advocacy. Understanding and engaging with stakeholders is essential for policymakers to develop effective policies that address the diverse needs and interests of relevant parties. Here's an explanation of different types of stakeholders in policymaking:

1) **Government Agencies**. Government agencies are key stakeholders in policymaking processes, as they are responsible for implementing and enforcing policies within their respective jurisdictions. This includes agencies at the local, state/provincial, national, and international levels. Government agencies provide expertise, data, and resources to inform policymaking decisions and play a central role in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

2) **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).** Civil society organisations, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), advocacy groups, and community-based organizations, are stakeholders that represent the interests of specific communities, causes, or issues. CSOs often engage in advocacy, research, and public education to influence policymaking processes and promote policy changes aligned with their goals and values.

3) **Businesses and Industry Groups**. Businesses and industry groups are stakeholders with a vested interest in policymaking decisions that affect their operations, profitability, and regulatory environment. They often participate in policymaking processes to advocate for policies that support their business interests, such as regulations, tax incentives, or trade agreements.

4) **Academic and Research Institutions**. Academic and research institutions contribute to policymaking processes by conducting studies, producing research findings, and providing expertise on a wide range of issues. They serve as valuable sources of evidence-based information and analysis, helping policymakers make informed decisions grounded in scientific research and scholarship.

5) **Media and Public Opinion**. The media and public opinion play a significant role in shaping policymaking processes by influencing public discourse, raising awareness about issues, and holding policymakers accountable. Media outlets, journalists, and opinion leaders can shape public perceptions, mobilize support for certain policies, and put pressure on decision-makers to take action.

6) **International Organisations and Donors**. International organisations, such as the United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund, as well as donor agencies and foreign governments, are stakeholders in policymaking processes, particularly in countries receiving international aid or assistance. They may provide financial support, technical expertise, and policy advice to help countries address global challenges and achieve development goals.

7) **Individual Citizens and Communities**. Individual citizens and communities are stakeholders whose lives and livelihoods are directly affected by policymaking decisions. They have a stake in the outcomes of policies related to issues such as healthcare, education, housing, transportation, and the environment. Citizen engagement, participation, and advocacy are essential for ensuring that policies reflect the needs and priorities of diverse populations.

Effective stakeholder engagement in policymaking involves identifying relevant stakeholders, understanding their interests and perspectives, and involving them in meaningful ways throughout the policymaking process. Engaging stakeholders fosters transparency, legitimacy, and accountability in decision-making, ultimately leading to policies that better address the needs and interests of society as a whole.

Key Concepts: Political, Social, and Economic Factors (Slide 13 – 15)

Political, social, and economic factors are critical components of the broader context within which policymaking occurs. These factors shape the landscape in which policymakers operate and significantly influence the development, implementation, and impact of policies. Here's an elaboration on how these factors influence policymaking:

1) Political Dynamics

Political dynamics encompass the interactions and power struggles among political actors, parties, and institutions within a political system. Political factors such as elections, party ideologies, government structures, and the balance of power between branches of government shape policy agendas and priorities. Policymakers must navigate political constraints and opportunities, including partisan politics, interest group influence, and public opinion, when formulating and implementing policies.

2) Societal Values

Societal values reflect the beliefs, norms, and principles that guide the behavior and attitudes of individuals and communities within a society. Values such as equity, justice, freedom, and solidarity influence public attitudes towards specific policy issues and shape policy preferences. Policymakers must consider societal values when crafting policies to ensure alignment with the values and expectations of the population they serve.

3) Economic Conditions

Economic conditions, including factors such as economic growth, unemployment, inflation, and income inequality, have significant implications for policymaking. Economic factors influence policy priorities, as policymakers often prioritize issues related to economic stability, job creation, poverty reduction, and economic development. Economic constraints and opportunities, such as budgetary limitations and funding availability, impact the feasibility and implementation of policy initiatives.

4) Cultural Norms

Cultural norms encompass the shared beliefs, customs, traditions, and practices that define a society's identity and collective behavior. Cultural factors influence policy preferences and implementation strategies, as policies that align with cultural norms are more likely to gain public

acceptance and support. Policymakers must consider cultural sensitivities and diversity when designing policies to ensure they are inclusive and respectful of different cultural perspectives.

These political, social, and economic factors interact in complex ways to shape policy agendas, priorities, and implementation strategies. Policymakers must navigate these dynamics and consider the interplay of multiple factors when formulating policies to address societal challenges and promote the public good. By understanding how these factors influence policymaking, policymakers can develop more effective and responsive policies that address the needs and aspirations of society while navigating the complexities of the political and socio-economic landscape.

Key Concepts: Policy Challenges and Opportunities (Slides 16 – 19)

Policymakers face a myriad of challenges when crafting and implementing policies, ranging from competing interests and resource constraints to institutional barriers. However, within these challenges lie opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and policy experimentation. Let's explore these aspects in detail.

1) **Challenges**

✔ **Competing Interests**: Policymaking often involves navigating competing interests from various stakeholders, including government agencies, advocacy groups, businesses, and the general public. Competing interests can lead to disagreements, conflicts, and gridlock, making it challenging for policymakers to reach consensus and enact effective policies. However, addressing competing interests presents an opportunity for policymakers to engage in dialogue, negotiation, and compromise to find common ground and develop policies that balance diverse perspectives and priorities.

✔ **Resource Constraints:** Policymakers frequently encounter resource constraints, including budgetary limitations, staffing shortages, and infrastructure deficits, which may limit their ability to implement ambitious policy initiatives. Resource constraints require policymakers to prioritise and allocate resources strategically, focusing on interventions with the greatest impact and cost-effectiveness. Nonetheless, resource constraints can spur innovation and creativity, prompting policymakers to explore alternative funding mechanisms, leverage partnerships with the private sector and civil society, and adopt innovative solutions to address policy challenges more efficiently.

✔ **Institutional Barriers:** Institutional barriers, such as bureaucratic inertia, regulatory red tape, and intergovernmental coordination challenges, can hinder the formulation and implementation of policies. These barriers may create inefficiencies, delays, and obstacles that impede progress and undermine policy effectiveness. However, overcoming institutional barriers presents an opportunity for policymakers to streamline processes, improve coordination between government agencies, and enhance the capacity of institutions to adapt to changing circumstances.

2) **Opportunities**

✔ **Opportunities for Innovation**: Policy challenges stimulate innovation by encouraging policymakers to think creatively, experiment with new approaches, and embrace evidence-based practices. Innovation in policymaking can involve piloting new programs, adopting emerging technologies, and applying data analytics to inform decision-making. Embracing innovation enables policymakers to develop more responsive, adaptable, and effective policies that address complex societal problems and meet evolving needs.

✔ **Collaboration and Partnership**: Collaboration and partnership among stakeholders offer opportunities to pool resources, share expertise, and leverage collective efforts to address shared challenges. Collaborative approaches, such as multi-stakeholder partnerships, intergovernmental cooperation, and public-private collaborations, can enhance the impact and sustainability of policies. By fostering collaboration, policymakers can tap into diverse perspectives, build trust among stakeholders, and mobilize collective action to achieve common goals.

In conclusion, while policymakers confront numerous challenges in the policymaking process, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and transformative change. By embracing these opportunities and adopting a proactive and adaptive approach, policymakers can navigate complex policy landscapes, overcome obstacles, and develop solutions that drive positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes.

3. Identifying Relevant Research

Slide 20

Policymakers rely on a wide array of research data and evidence to inform their policy decisions, drawing insights from academic studies, government reports, think tank publications, and more. In this section, we will explore the diverse sources of research data available and discuss the criteria for assessing the quality and reliability of research. Furthermore, we will delve into specific examples to illustrate how different types of research can play a pivotal role in shaping policy decisions across various domains. By understanding how to identify and evaluate relevant research, policymakers can effectively leverage evidence-based insights to address complex challenges and achieve desired policy outcomes.

Sources of Research Data and Evidence (Slide 21, 22)

1) **Academic Journals**

Academic journals publish peer-reviewed research articles across various disciplines. Platforms like PubMed (for medical and life sciences), JSTOR (for humanities and social sciences), and IEEE Xplore (for engineering and technology) provide access to a wide range of scholarly articles.

2) **Government Agencies**

Government agencies often publish reports, statistics, and research findings related to public policy, social issues, and economic trends. Examples include the U.S. Census Bureau, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Bank, and European Union Open Data Portal.

3) **Think Tanks and Research Institutions**

Think tanks conduct research and analysis on a wide range of policy issues. Examples include the Brookings Institution, RAND Corporation, Pew Research Center, and the Urban Institute. Many think tanks publish reports, white papers, and policy briefs on their websites.

4) **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)**

NGOs often conduct research and collect data related to their areas of focus, such as human rights, environmental conservation, and public health. Examples include Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Oxfam.

5) **Academic Conferences and Proceedings**

Conference proceedings provide access to cutting-edge research presented at academic conferences. Platforms like IEEE Conference Proceedings, ACM Digital Library, and Scopus index conference papers across various disciplines.

6) Databases and Repositories

Online databases and repositories aggregate research data, datasets, and publications from multiple sources. Examples include Google Scholar, ResearchGate, SSRN (Social Science Research Network), and Dryad (for data underlying scientific publications).

7) Library Catalogs

University and public libraries maintain catalogs that allow users to search for books, journals, and other resources available in their collections. Online library catalogs, such as WorldCat, allow users to search across multiple libraries simultaneously.

8) Professional Associations

Professional associations often publish research findings, industry reports, and best practices related to their respective fields. Examples include the American Psychological Association (APA), American Medical Association (AMA), and the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM).

Criteria for Assessing Quality and Reliability (Slides 23 - 25)

In the "sea" of sources, it is crucial to discern credible and relevant evidence for informed decision-making in the policymaking process. Therefore, we will delve into the essential criteria for assessing the quality and reliability of research, encompassing factors such as methodology, sample size, peer review, publication reputation, and potential biases.

- **Publication Source and Reputation**: Consider the reputation and credibility of the publication source where the research is published.
- **Peer Review**: Determine whether the research has undergone peer review by experts in the field.
- **Conflict of Interest**: Consider potential conflicts of interest that may bias the research findings.
- **Methodology**: If possible, evaluate the research design and methodology used in the study. Consider whether the methods employed are appropriate for addressing the research questions and objectives.

- **Sample Size and Sampling Methods**: Consider the sample size of the study population and whether it is sufficient to draw meaningful conclusions.
- **Data Collection and Measurement**: If possible, assess the validity and reliability of data collection instruments and measurement tools used in the study.

Types of Research and Their Utility (Slides 26 – 29)

Understanding the different types of research methodologies is crucial for policymakers when evaluating evidence and making informed decisions. The different types of research methodologies include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Each type of research methodology has its strengths and limitations, and the choice of methodology depends on the research question, objectives, and context.

1) Quantitative Research

Quantitative Research involves collecting numerical data and analysing it using statistical methods. It aims to measure phenomena and establish relationships between variables.

Examples of Utility:

- Surveys collect data from a sample population using standardised questionnaires, enabling policymakers to quantify attitudes, behaviors, and opinions on various issues.
- Controlled experiments manipulate variables to determine causality and measure the effects of interventions or policy changes. They provide rigorous evidence for evaluating the effectiveness of policies.
- Statistical techniques such as regression analysis, hypothesis testing, and trend analysis help policymakers identify patterns, correlations, and trends in data, informing decision-making processes.

2) Qualitative Research

Qualitative Research focuses on understanding complex phenomena through in-depth exploration and interpretation of non-numerical data. It provides insights into the meanings, perspectives, and contexts surrounding social phenomena.

Examples of Utility:

- In-depth interviews with stakeholders, experts, or affected individuals provide rich qualitative data on their experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards policies.

- Focus groups bring together a diverse group of participants to discuss specific topics or issues, generating insights into shared beliefs, values, and concerns.
- Case studies examine specific cases or instances in detail, offering contextually rich insights into the complexities of real-world situations and policy challenges.

3) **Mixed Methods Research**

Mixed Methods Research combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of research questions. It integrates the strengths of both methodologies, enhancing the validity and depth of findings.

Examples of Utility:

- Sequential Explanatory Design involves collecting quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to further explore or explain quantitative findings. It helps policymakers understand the "why" behind statistical relationships.
- In Convergent Design quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently and analysed separately, then integrated to provide complementary insights. It offers a holistic understanding of complex issues from multiple perspectives.

4. Translating Research into Policy Recommendations

Slides (30 - 33)

Translating research into policy recommendations is a crucial step in the policymaking process. It involves synthesising evidence from research studies and transforming it into actionable strategies and guidelines that policymakers can use to address societal challenges. Now we will explore the key steps involved in translating research into policy recommendations and discuss strategies for ensuring the relevance, feasibility, and impact of policy recommendations.

1) Reviewing Research Findings

First, we begin by thoroughly reviewing research findings. This step is crucial as it involves identifying key insights, trends, and implications relevant to the policy area under consideration. We must evaluate the strength of the evidence and assess the credibility and reliability of the

research studies. By doing this, we ensure that our foundation is solid and that we are basing our decisions on the best available information.

2) Identifying Policy Objectives

Next, we move on to identifying policy objectives. It is essential to clarify the specific goals that our recommendations aim to achieve. These objectives should be directly aligned with the research findings, ensuring that our recommendations are evidence-based and focused on addressing specific policy challenges. This alignment is key to developing targeted and effective policies.

3) Formulating Policy Recommendations

Once we have our objectives, we can start formulating policy recommendations. Based on the research findings and our defined objectives, we develop clear and actionable recommendations. These recommendations must be feasible and realistic, considering factors such as available resources, political feasibility, and stakeholder interests. It's important that our recommendations are contextually appropriate, meaning they fit within the specific circumstances and constraints of our policy environment.

4) Tailoring Recommendations to the Audience

After formulating the recommendations, we must tailor them to our audience. This means customising the language and format to suit the needs and preferences of our target audience, whether they are policymakers, government officials, advocacy groups, or community stakeholders. Our presentation should be clear, concise, and compelling, using evidence and examples to support the proposed strategies. Effective communication is vital to ensuring our recommendations are understood and accepted.

5) Engaging Stakeholders

Engaging stakeholders is another crucial step. Throughout the process, we must seek input and feedback from relevant stakeholders. This includes policymakers, experts, community leaders, and those directly affected by the policies. Engaging with these groups helps ensure our recommendations reflect diverse perspectives and address the needs of the target population. Collaboration and consultation lead to more comprehensive and accepted policy recommendations.

6) Advocating for Implementation

Advocating for implementation follows. We must actively promote the adoption and implementation of our policy recommendations through targeted communication and advocacy efforts. This involves building coalitions, mobilising support, and leveraging partnerships to advance our policy agenda. Advocacy is about overcoming potential barriers and ensuring that our recommendations are put into practice effectively.

7) Monitoring and Evaluation

Finally, monitoring and evaluation are essential components of the policy process. We need to establish mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of our recommendations and assessing their impact over time. Continuous evaluation helps us determine the effectiveness of our policies in achieving the desired outcomes. Based on feedback and evaluation findings, we can make necessary adjustments and refinements to improve the policies.

In conclusion, developing evidence-based policy recommendations is a systematic and dynamic process. By reviewing research findings, identifying clear objectives, formulating actionable recommendations, tailoring our approach to the audience, engaging stakeholders, advocating for implementation, and continuously monitoring and evaluating, we can create policies that are effective, practical, and responsive to the needs of our communities.

Quiz Questions

True or False: Evidence-based policymaking involves integrating research findings and empirical evidence into the policymaking process to inform decision-making.

True

True or False: Stakeholder consultation is not necessary when formulating evidence-based policy suggestions, as research evidence alone is sufficient to inform policymaking decisions.

False

True or False: Developing evidence-based policy suggestions involves translating research findings into actionable recommendations that address specific policy issues or challenges.

True

True or False: Critical appraisal skills are essential for evaluating the quality, relevance, and reliability of research evidence used in policymaking.

True

True or False: Engaging stakeholders in the policymaking process helps ensure that evidence-based policy suggestions are responsive to the needs and interests of key stakeholders.

True

True or False: Evidence-based policy suggestions should be based solely on quantitative research methods, as qualitative research findings are not considered robust enough for policymaking.

False

True or False: Developing evidence-based policy suggestions requires policymakers to consider the broader policy context, including legal frameworks, resource constraints, and stakeholder dynamics.

True

References

- Cairney, P. (2016). *The Politics of Evidence-Based Policy Making.* Palgrave Macmillan.
- Davies, P. T. (1999). *What is Evidence-Based Education?* British Journal of Educational Studies, 47(2), 108-121.
- Nutley, S., Powell, A., & Davies, H. (2013). *What Counts as Good Evidence?* Provocation Paper for the Alliance for Useful Evidence.
- Sanderson, I. (2002). *Evaluation, Policy Learning and Evidence-Based Policy Making.* Public Administration, 80(1), 1-22.
- Shaxson, L. (2005). *Is Your Evidence Robust Enough? Questions for Policy Makers and Practitioners.* Evidence & Policy, 1(1), 101-111.
- Head, B. W. (2010). *Reconsidering Evidence-Based Policy: Key Issues and Challenges.* Policy and Society, 29(2), 77-94.
- Weiss, C. H. (1979). *The Many Meanings of Research Utilization.* Public Administration Review, 39(5), 426-431.
- European Commission. (2017). *Better Regulation Guidelines.* Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/better-regulation-guidelines.pdf.
- Nutley, S. M., Walter, I., & Davies, H. T. O. (2007). *Using Evidence: How Research Can Inform Public Services.* Policy Press.
- Pawson, R. (2006). *Evidence-Based Policy: A Realist Perspective.* SAGE Publications.
- European Court of Auditors. (2018). *Special Report: Landscape Review: Putting EU Law into Practice.* Available at: https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=46659.
- OECD. (2015). *OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook 2015.* OECD Publishing.

TITLE OF THIS REPORT (ARIAL 32 BOLD)

Subtitle (Arial 26)
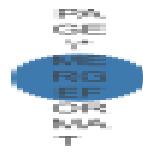
Policy Concepts and Definitions of Youth Rights at EU and International Level

1. Introduction to Youth Rights

What is it? (Slide 4)

Although human rights apply to everyone, certain groups of people face particular barriers in accessing and enjoying their rights. To address such barriers, countries have developed international instruments dedicated to the rights of certain groups including women, children and persons with disabilities, for example.

Youth rights refer to the fundamental freedoms, entitlements, and protections that are specifically afforded to young people based on their age, identity, and status as members of society. These rights encompass a broad range of civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights, aimed at ensuring the well-being, development, and participation of young individuals in society. .

Importance of Youth Rights (Slide 5)

The importance of youth rights lies in recognising and safeguarding the unique needs, perspectives, and potential of young people as valuable members of society. Here are several key reasons why youth rights are essential:

- **Empowerment and Participation**. Youth rights empower young people to participate actively in society, shaping decisions that affect their lives and contributing to social, economic, and political development. By ensuring their right to express their views, participate in decision-making processes, and engage in civic activities, youth rights foster
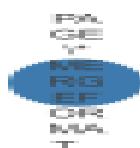
a sense of agency and ownership among young individuals, enabling them to become agents of positive change in their communities.

- **Promotion of Human Dignity.** Upholding youth rights is essential for promoting and protecting the inherent dignity and worth of every young person. By recognizing their entitlement to fundamental freedoms, equality, and non-discrimination, youth rights affirm the value and respect owed to young individuals, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances.

- **Investment in Future Generations**. Prioritising youth rights is an investment in the future, as young people represent the next generation of leaders, innovators, and citizens. By providing them with access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and other essential services, youth rights contribute to their personal development, well-being, and future success, ultimately benefiting society as a whole.

- **Social Justice and Equity**. Youth rights are integral to promoting social justice and equity, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable young populations. By addressing structural inequalities, discrimination, and barriers to participation, youth rights strive to ensure that all young people have equal opportunities to thrive and reach their full potential, regardless of their socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, or other factors.

- **Prevention of Exploitation and Abuse.** Protecting youth rights is essential for preventing exploitation, abuse, and violence against young individuals. By safeguarding their right to safety, protection from harm, and access to legal recourse, youth rights help create environments where young people can grow and develop free from exploitation, coercion, or discrimination.

- **Promotion of Social Cohesion.** Upholding youth rights contributes to building inclusive and cohesive societies where all members feel valued, respected, and included. By fostering dialogue, understanding, and solidarity across generations, youth rights promote social cohesion and intergenerational harmony, laying the foundation for peaceful and sustainable communities.

Can you think of other reasons?

Intersectionality of Youth Rights (Slide 6)

The intersectionality of youth rights acknowledges that young people's experiences and identities are shaped by multiple intersecting factors, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability,

socio-economic status, and geographic location. Understanding and addressing these intersecting dimensions is crucial for promoting inclusive and equitable youth rights. There are several key aspects of the intersectionality of youth rights:

1) **Multiple Forms of Discrimination.** Intersectionality highlights that young people may face discrimination and marginalisation based on multiple aspects of their identity. For example, a young person who belongs to a marginalised racial or ethnic group may experience compounded discrimination due to their race, age, and socio-economic status. Recognising and addressing these intersecting forms of discrimination is essential for ensuring that youth rights are inclusive and accessible to all young people.

2) **Unique Challenges and Experiences.** Intersectionality recognises that young people's experiences and challenges are shaped by the intersection of various identities and social structures. For example, a young woman from a low-income background may face distinct barriers to education, employment, and healthcare compared to her male peers from more privileged backgrounds. Understanding the unique experiences and needs of diverse groups of young people is essential for developing targeted policies and interventions that address their specific challenges.

3) **Differential Access to Opportunities**. Intersectionality highlights disparities in access to opportunities and resources among young people based on intersecting identities. For example, young people from marginalised communities may face barriers to accessing quality education, healthcare, housing, and employment due to systemic inequalities and discrimination. Addressing these disparities requires targeted efforts to dismantle structural barriers and create inclusive environments that promote equal opportunities for all young people, regardless of their background or identity.

4) **Intersectional Advocacy and Representation.** Intersectionality calls for inclusive and intersectional approaches to advocacy and representation that recognize the diversity of young people's experiences and identities. This includes amplifying the voices of marginalised and underrepresented youth groups, engaging with diverse stakeholders, and advocating for policies and initiatives that address the intersecting needs of young people from diverse backgrounds.

5) **Policy Implications.** Intersectionality has significant implications for policy development and implementation in areas such as education, healthcare, employment, and social services. Policymakers must consider the intersecting dimensions of youth identity and

experience when designing and implementing youth-related policies and programs to ensure they are responsive to the needs of all young people and do not perpetuate existing inequalities.

Role of Youth in Advocating for Their Rights (Slide 7)

The role of youth in advocating for their rights is instrumental in advancing social justice, promoting human rights, and building inclusive societies. By asserting their voices, mobilising communities, and driving policy change, young people are powerful agents of change who play a vital role in shaping a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for all.

- Young people possess unique perspectives, experiences, and insights that are essential for informing decision-making processes and driving social change. By speaking out and advocating for their rights, young people amplify their voices, assert their agency, and demand recognition and respect for their concerns and aspirations.

- Youth play a central role in mobilising communities, organising grassroots movements, and leading advocacy campaigns to address pressing social issues and promote positive change. Through collective action and solidarity, young people harness the power of collective voice and action to influence policy agendas, challenge systemic injustices, and advocate for meaningful reforms.

- Young people are often at the forefront of innovation, leveraging new technologies, communication platforms, and creative strategies to advocate for their rights and amplify their messages. From social media campaigns to artivism and youth-led initiatives, young activists harness innovative approaches to raise awareness, mobilise support, and effect change in their communities and beyond.

- Young people recognise the interconnectedness of social justice issues and advocate for rights across intersecting identities and experiences. Intersectional advocacy acknowledges the diversity of youth experiences and identities, centering the voices and concerns of marginalized and underrepresented groups and advocating for policies and initiatives that address the intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality they face.

- Youth activism transcends borders and fosters global solidarity, with young people uniting across geographical, cultural, and political divides to advocate for shared values and common causes. Through international networks, youth-led organizations, and global

campaigns, young activists collaborate, exchange ideas, and mobilize collective action to address global challenges, promote human rights, and advance social justice on a global scale.

- Youth advocacy is not just about momentary protests or rallies but about building sustainable movements for lasting change. Young activists engage in long-term advocacy efforts, organising community forums, conducting grassroots organising, and collaborating with allies to create enduring networks and platforms for advocacy and social mobilisation.

- Youth advocacy has the power to drive policy change and influence decision-making processes at local, national, and international levels. By engaging with policymakers, participating in legislative processes, and advocating for policy reforms, young people shape policy agendas, influence public discourse, and hold governments and institutions accountable for upholding their rights and fulfilling their obligations.

Distinction between youth rights and other (policy) concepts (Slide 8)

The concepts of youth rights, youth development, youth participation, and youth empowerment are all interconnected but encompass different aspects of the rights, growth, engagement, and agency of young people in society.

- **Youth Rights.** Youth rights refer to the fundamental entitlements and freedoms that young people possess as individuals, based on principles of equality, autonomy, and dignity. These rights are often enshrined in national laws, international conventions (such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), and institutional policies. Youth rights encompass a range of areas including education, healthcare, employment, expression, and participation in decision-making processes. The emphasis is on recognising young people as autonomous individuals with the right to have a say in matters that affect their lives.

- **Youth Development**. Youth development focuses on the holistic growth and well-being of young people, encompassing physical, cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. It involves providing opportunities, resources, and support systems that enable young people to reach their full potential. Youth development programs often aim to foster positive

relationships, build life skills, promote resilience, and facilitate healthy transitions to adulthood. The focus is on nurturing young people's capacities and strengths to help them thrive in various aspects of their lives.

- **Youth Participation.** Youth participation refers to the active engagement of young people in social, political, economic, and community processes. It involves giving young people opportunities to voice their opinions, contribute to decision-making, and take action on issues that affect them and their communities. Youth participation can occur at various levels, from local community initiatives to national and global platforms. It is essential for promoting democratic values, fostering inclusivity, and addressing the needs and concerns of diverse youth populations.

- **Youth empowerment.** Youth empowerment involves equipping young people with the knowledge, skills, resources, and support necessary to assert their rights, make informed choices, and take control of their lives. It emphasizes fostering a sense of agency, self-confidence, and leadership among young people, enabling them to influence their environments and create positive change. Youth empowerment initiatives often focus on building capacity, providing mentorship, facilitating networking opportunities, and promoting civic engagement. The goal is to empower young people to become active agents of social transformation and sustainable development.

While these concepts overlap and complement each other, each has its own distinct focus and objectives. Youth rights provide the foundation for ensuring that young people are treated fairly and have access to opportunities and resources. Youth development emphasises nurturing the growth and well-being of young people. Youth participation promotes their active engagement in decision-making processes. Youth empowerment aims to enable young people to exercise their rights, fulfill their potential, and contribute meaningfully to society. Together, these concepts form a comprehensive framework for supporting and promoting the rights, agency, and well-being of young people.

2. International Instruments on Youth Rights

What human rights do young people have? (Slides 9, 10)

The existing human rights frameworks apply to young people just as they apply to everyone else. Additionally, young people who fall into any of the categories for which there are dedicated international instruments, such as young people with disabilities and young women are also protected by these instruments. States bear the primary responsibility to ensure young people have full access to all their rights without any barriers; as such they are 'duty-bearers', and can be held accountable when they fail to fulfill their obligations.

There is a discrepancy between the rights young people have according to the law and the extent to which they are able to enjoy those rights in practice.

The next slide list some of the human rights of young people. They can be groups generally in 4 categories:

1) **Civil and Political Rights**

Right to Life and Development. Every young person has the inherent right to life, and governments must ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the youth.

Right to Identity. Every young person has the right to a name, nationality, and family ties.

Freedom of Expression. Young people have the right to express their views, receive information, and participate in matters affecting them.

Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion. Young people have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, with appropriate guidance from their parents.

Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly. Young people have the right to meet with others and to join or form associations.

2) **Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights**

Right to Education. Every young person has the right to education.

Right to Health. Young people have the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and access to health services.

Right to an Adequate Standard of Living. Every young person has the right to a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development.

Right to Play and Leisure. Young people have the right to rest, leisure, play, and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

3) Protection Rights

Protection from Abuse and Neglect. Young people have the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation. This includes protection from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the education, or to be harmful to the person's health or development.

In addition, children have the right to be protected from work that threatens their health, education, or development. Children also must be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.

4) Participation Rights

Right to be Heard: Young people have the right to have their opinions taken into account in matters affecting them.

Right to Participate in Cultural and Artistic Activities: Young people have the right to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

The work of the United Nations (UN) on youth (Slides 11, 12)

There is a long list of international instruments human rights instruments that address the rights of young people and we will look at the most important of them.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has been adopted in 1989. The UNCRC is a comprehensive treaty that sets out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children under the age of 18. It covers a wide range of rights, including the right to education, health, protection from abuse and exploitation, and participation in decisions that affect them.

In 1996 the UN General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action on Youth (WPAY). The WPAY outlines 15 priority areas of action and every two years the General Assembly negotiates a resolution on youth as a follow-up to the WPAY. While the WPAY can be used as an advocacy tool, monitoring and implementation is significantly lacking and given its non-binding nature it has had little effect in practice.

The Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth was envisioned by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon and was established the same year. On January 17, 2013, Ahmad Alhendawi became the first Youth Envoy to be appointed by the Secretary-General. The mandate of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth is to highlight issues specifically relevant to young people, enhance the UN response to the needs of young people, and advocate for the promotion and protection of their needs and rights, as well as to bring the UN's work on youth closer to young people.

It serves as a global advocate for addressing the needs and rights of young people for bringing the United Nations closer to them. The Envoy's Office is part of the United Nations Secretariat and supports multi-stakeholder partnerships related to the United Nations system-wide action plan on youth to volunteer initiatives. The office also promotes the empowerment and foster the leadership of youth at the national, regional, and global levels, including through exploring and encourages mechanisms for young people's participation in the work of the United Nations and in political and economic processes with a special focus on the most marginalised and vulnerable youth.

Information on the UNCRC bodies and procedures can be found on the following document:

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/TB/TB_booklet_en.pdf

The Council of Europe and Youth Rights (slides 13, 14)

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law form the three key focus areas of the Council of Europe (CoE). The CoE was founded in 1949 following the atrocities of the early 20th century and today brings together 47 Member States with a combined population of over 800 million citizens.

The two main human rights instruments of the Council of Europe are the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter.

Youth is also a prominent part of the Council of Europe's decision-making and working structure, through the Joint Council on Youth and the Youth Department.

The Joint Council on Youth brings together representatives of governments and young people in a co-decision mechanism that deals with topics and policies directly affecting young people. The youth representatives form the Advisory Council on Youth, to promote the interests of young people through a participatory decision-making structure. The Advisory Council has prioritised

youth rights and access to rights over the past few years, co-drafting and strongly advocating in favour of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on Young People's Access to Rights.

The Council of Europe's Youth Department is responsible for developing guidelines, programmes and legal instruments for better youth policies, while it also supports international youth activities that promote citizenship, mobility, human rights, democracy and cultural pluralism among young people.

Currently the promotion of the implementation in member states (**not the EU Member States!**) of the most recent recommendations on *Protecting youth civil society and young people* (2022), *young refugees* (2019), on *youth work* (2017), on *access to rights* (2016) and on *access to social rights* (2015) is on a high agenda.

3. Policy Implications and Advocacy Strategies

Slide 15

Recognising and upholding youth rights at the European Union (EU) and international levels carries significant policy implications, requiring legislative reforms, effective policy implementation, and robust monitoring mechanisms. Now we will look into this aspect in more details:

Policy Implementation (Slide 16)

Youth rights should be mainstreamed into various policy areas such as education, employment, social inclusion, and health to ensure that they are adequately addressed in decision-making processes.

Adequate resources must be allocated to support the implementation of youth rights policies and programs, including funding for youth-led initiatives, support services, and capacity-building activities.

Governments, civil society organisations, youth representatives, and other stakeholders should collaborate closely in the design, implementation, and evaluation of youth rights policies to ensure their effectiveness and relevance.

Legislative Reforms (Slide 17)

EU countries should align their national legislation with international standards on youth rights to ensure consistency and coherence across member states.

Development of Specific Legislation: In some cases, there may be a need to develop or amend specific laws to address emerging issues or gaps related to youth rights, such as laws concerning education, employment, health, and participation.

Monitoring Mechanisms (Slide 18)

Independent monitoring bodies or mechanisms should be established at the EU and national levels to assess compliance with youth rights standards, receive complaints, and provide remedies in cases of violations.

Robust data collection systems and research initiatives are essential for tracking progress, identifying challenges, and informing evidence-based policymaking in the field of youth rights.

Governments should regularly report on their efforts to promote and protect youth rights, including progress made, challenges encountered, and measures taken to address shortcomings. These reports should be subject to review by international bodies and scrutiny by civil society organizations and youth representatives.

Capacity Building and Awareness-Raising (Slide 19)

Training programs should be provided to policymakers, public officials, and relevant stakeholders to enhance their understanding of youth rights principles and their ability to integrate these principles into their work.

Public awareness campaigns should be conducted to inform young people about their rights, how to exercise them, and where to seek assistance in case of violations. These campaigns should also aim to challenge stereotypes and prejudices about young people and promote positive attitudes towards youth empowerment and participation.

Advocacy Strategies (Slide 20)

Advocating for the rights of young people involves a multi-faceted approach that includes various strategies to raise awareness, mobilize support, and influence policymakers and stakeholders. Now we will discuss some effective strategies.

Grassroots Mobilisation (Slide 21)

1) Community Organising

To truly empower young people, start at the grassroots level. Reach out to youth in schools, community centers, and local hangouts, engaging them in conversations about the issues that matter most to them, such as education, employment, healthcare, and civic participation.

Hold workshops in community halls where experienced organizers can share the basics of mobilisation. Teach young people how to identify issues, set goals, and develop strategies for change. Show them how to rally their friends and neighbors, using social media and traditional methods to spread their message. Foster a sense of community so these young individuals realise their voices matter and that they can drive change.

2) Youth-Led Initiatives

Encourage young leaders to take the reins, organising campaigns and events that directly address their concerns. For instance, inspire a group of high school students to launch a campaign to improve the quality of education in their district. Support them as they hold rallies, create petitions, and meet with school board members to present their demands. Help them draw attention from local media and garner widespread support from parents and teachers.

Inspire young advocates to organise health fairs focused on adolescent health issues. Collaborate with local healthcare providers to offer free check-ups, mental health resources, and informational sessions on nutrition and exercise. These events should aim to attract hundreds of young people and their families.

By fostering these youth-led initiatives, young people will learn to navigate complex social and political landscapes, gain valuable skills in leadership, communication, and collaboration. They will prove to themselves and to the broader community that young people can be powerful agents of change.

As young activists continue to mobilise, ensure their voices resonate beyond their immediate community. Connect them with youth movements in other parts of the city, the country, and even

globally. Encourage them to share their stories, learn from others, and build networks of solidarity and support.

Coalition Building (Slide 22)

1) Coalition Building

To amplify advocacy efforts and build collective power, it is crucial to forge alliances with NGOs, youth organisations, advocacy groups, and other civil society actors working on related issues. By coming together, these groups can share resources, knowledge, and strategies, making their collective voice louder and more influential.

Start by identifying organisations and groups that share a common interest in the issues affecting young people. Reach out to these potential allies, initiating dialogues about shared goals and how you can support each other's efforts. Establish regular communication channels, such as joint meetings, online forums, and collaborative events, to ensure continuous coordination and exchange of ideas.

In one community, a youth organisation partnered with a local NGO focused on education reform. Together, they organised a series of workshops aimed at improving educational outcomes for young people. By pooling their resources and expertise, they were able to attract more participants, secure better funding, and gain greater media attention than they could have alone. This collaboration not only advanced their shared goal but also strengthened their organisational capacities.

2) Collaborating with Diverse Sectors

Addressing the intersecting challenges faced by young people requires a holistic approach. It implies collaborating with stakeholders from diverse sectors such as education, health, labor, and human rights to develop comprehensive solutions. These sectors often intersect, and a collaborative approach ensures that solutions are well-rounded and address multiple facets of young people's lives.

Engage with educators, healthcare providers, labor unions, and human rights advocates to create a network of support around youth issues. For example, a coalition might work on a project that combines educational support with healthcare access and labor rights education. This could

involve setting up health clinics in schools, providing job training programs, and advocating for policies that protect young workers' rights.

In one initiative, a coalition brought together a health NGO, a teachers' union, and a youth labor rights group. They collaborated on a campaign to provide comprehensive sex education in schools, ensure that students had access to healthcare services, and protect young workers from exploitation. This holistic approach not only addressed immediate needs but also created a supportive environment where young people could thrive.

By building coalitions, these groups can amplify their advocacy efforts. A united front is more likely to attract attention from policymakers, media, and the general public. Organise joint campaigns, rallies, and media events to highlight the collective power of your coalition. Share success stories and impactful data to demonstrate the effectiveness of your collaborative efforts.

Transform your community by building strong coalitions and forging alliances with diverse stakeholders. By working together, sharing resources, and addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by young people, you can amplify your advocacy efforts and drive substantial change. Coalition building is not just about collaboration; it is about creating a powerful, united front that can achieve what individual organisations cannot accomplish alone. With a strong coalition, young leaders can make their voices heard, advocate for holistic solutions, and actively create a better world.

Media Campaigns (Slide 23)

1) Social Media Activism

To effectively raise awareness and engage with a wider audience on youth rights issues, it is essential to utilise social media platforms. By developing compelling content, hashtags, and online campaigns, advocates can spark conversations, share stories, and inspire action.

Start by identifying the social media platforms most frequented by your target audience. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook can be powerful tools for reaching and engaging with young people. Create visually appealing graphics, videos, and infographics that highlight key issues and call to action. Develop a consistent posting schedule to keep your audience engaged and informed.

One example of effective social media activism is the use of hashtags. Create a unique and memorable hashtag for your campaign, encouraging supporters to use it when sharing related content. This not only helps to track the campaign's reach but also builds a sense of community among supporters. Additionally, collaborate with social media influencers who can help amplify your message to a broader audience.

In one campaign, a youth organisation used Instagram and Twitter to launch a series of posts and stories highlighting personal stories from young people affected by inadequate healthcare. They created the hashtag #YouthHealthMatters, which quickly gained traction and was used by thousands of supporters. The campaign not only raised awareness but also prompted discussions among policymakers about improving healthcare services for young people.

2) Traditional Media Engagement

While social media is crucial, traditional media engagement remains an essential component of a successful advocacy campaign. Working with journalists, media outlets, and influencers can generate media coverage and public attention around youth rights issues through press releases, op-eds, interviews, and feature stories.

Begin by building relationships with local and national journalists who cover youth and social justice issues. Provide them with well-crafted press releases that clearly outline your campaign's goals, key messages, and any upcoming events. Offer to provide expert interviews or personal stories that can add a human element to their reporting.

Writing op-eds and opinion pieces for newspapers and online publications can also be a powerful way to influence public opinion and policy. Use these platforms to articulate the importance of youth rights issues, share compelling data and stories, and call for specific actions from policymakers and the community.

For instance, a youth advocacy group collaborated with a local newspaper to publish a series of feature stories about the challenges faced by young workers in precarious jobs. They provided data, personal testimonials, and expert analysis, which not only educated the public but also led to a series of interviews on local radio and television stations. This widespread media coverage helped to pressure local businesses and policymakers to improve working conditions for young people.

By combining social media activism with traditional media engagement, advocates can create a comprehensive media campaign that reaches a diverse audience. The synergy between these platforms allows for real-time engagement and deeper, more nuanced storytelling that can inspire widespread action and support.

Organise online events, webinars, and live streams to engage directly with your audience and answer their questions. Use social media analytics to track the performance of your campaigns and adjust your strategies based on what resonates most with your audience.

Engagement with Policymakers and Stakeholders (Slide 24)

1) Advocating for Legislative Reforms

To uphold and advance youth rights, it is essential to advocate for legislative reforms and policy changes at all levels of government. This involves lobbying policymakers, lawmakers, and government officials through various means such as meetings, petitions, letters, and public hearings.

Begin by identifying key issues that need legislative attention, such as education, healthcare, employment, or human rights. Organise campaigns that highlight these issues and mobilise community support. Draft petitions and gather signatures to demonstrate widespread support. Arrange meetings with local representatives and government officials to present your case and provide them with data and personal stories that illustrate the impact of current policies.

For example, a youth advocacy group could launch a campaign to secure more funding for mental health services in schools. They could start by gathering data on the mental health challenges faced by students, then use this information to draft a petition and organise a series of public hearings. By engaging with policymakers and presenting a compelling case, they can push for budget allocations that prioritise youth mental health.

2) Ensuring Youth Participation in Decision-Making

Advocating for meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes is crucial. Ensure that young people have a seat at the table in policy discussions, advisory bodies, and governance structures.

Work to establish youth councils or advisory boards that are integrated into local government or school administration. These bodies should be given real influence over decisions that affect young people. Encourage young people to participate in these forums by providing them with the necessary training and support to effectively advocate for their interests.

In one initiative, a city council established a youth advisory board that met regularly with elected officials to discuss issues ranging from education to public safety. The board members, all young people from diverse backgrounds, were given the opportunity to present their ideas and feedback directly to policymakers. This not only empowered the youth but also ensured that policies were more reflective of their needs and perspectives.

3) Fostering Dialogue Between Young People and Stakeholders

Open and constructive dialogue between young people, policymakers, and stakeholders is essential for identifying priorities, addressing concerns, and co-creating solutions that reflect the needs and perspectives of young people.

Organise forums, town hall meetings, and workshops that bring together youth and policymakers. Create safe spaces where young people can openly share their experiences and ideas. Facilitate discussions that are focused on finding common ground and developing actionable solutions.

For instance, a community organisation could host a series of town hall meetings where young people discuss the challenges they face in their neighborhoods. Policymakers and stakeholders would be invited to listen, ask questions, and engage in a dialogue aimed at finding collaborative solutions. By fostering this type of interaction, young people feel heard and respected, and policymakers gain valuable insights that can inform their decisions.

Capacity Building and Training (Slide 25)

1) Organising Workshops and Trainings

To effectively advocate for their rights, young people need to be equipped with the right knowledge and skills. Organise workshops, training sessions, and capacity-building programs that focus on essential areas such as communication, leadership, and advocacy.

Start by identifying the specific needs and interests of the youth in your community. Develop a curriculum that covers a range of topics, including public speaking, media literacy, campaign

planning, and negotiation skills. Invite experienced trainers and speakers who can share practical insights and real-world examples.

For instance, a community center might host a series of workshops on effective communication strategies. These sessions could include activities such as role-playing exercises, where participants practice delivering speeches or conducting interviews. Additionally, offer leadership training that empowers young people to take initiative, inspire others, and manage advocacy projects.

By the end of these programs, participants should feel more confident in their ability to articulate their concerns, mobilise support, and engage with policymakers. This foundation of skills will enable them to become influential advocates for their rights.

2) Producing Evidence-Based Policy Briefs and Reports

Informing advocacy efforts with solid evidence is crucial for raising awareness and influencing decision-making processes. Produce evidence-based policy briefs, reports, and research studies that highlight key youth rights issues and provide actionable recommendations.

Begin by conducting thorough research to gather data on the issues affecting young people in your community. Collaborate with academic institutions, think tanks, and other research organisations to ensure the accuracy and reliability of your findings. Compile this data into comprehensive reports that outline the scope of the problem, its impact on young people, and potential solutions.

For example, a youth organisation could produce a report on the state of mental health services for adolescents. This report might include statistics on mental health outcomes, testimonials from affected individuals, and an analysis of existing policies. Use this information to create concise policy briefs that can be easily shared with policymakers, media, and the public.

Distribute these materials through various channels, including social media, press releases, and direct outreach to stakeholders. By providing well-researched, evidence-based information, you can elevate the discourse around youth rights and drive informed advocacy efforts.

3) Building a Knowledgeable and Skilled Youth Advocacy Network

A strong network of knowledgeable and skilled youth advocates can create a ripple effect, amplifying the impact of your efforts. Encourage participants from your workshops and trainings to stay connected, share resources, and collaborate on advocacy projects.

Establish a platform for ongoing communication, such as an online forum or regular meetups, where young advocates can exchange ideas, seek advice, and support each other. Create mentorship programs that pair experienced advocates with newcomers, fostering a culture of learning and growth.

In one community, a youth network formed after a series of leadership trainings decided to tackle the issue of youth unemployment. They collaborated on a campaign that included job fairs, skills workshops, and advocacy for better employment policies. By working together, they were able to achieve far more than they could have individually.

Facilitate a question-and-answer session to address any clarifications or concerns raised by participants.

Encourage participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and ideas for advancing youth rights in their respective contexts.

Summarise key takeaways from the lesson and reinforce the importance of youth rights in promoting social justice, equality, and sustainable development.

Quiz Questions

True or False: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the only international treaty that specifically addresses youth rights.

False. While the UNCRC is a significant international instrument, there are other treaties and agreements, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which also contain provisions relevant to youth rights.

True or False: Youth empowerment refers to the process of giving young people authority over others in decision-making processes.

False. Youth empowerment involves equipping young people with the knowledge, skills, and resources to assert their rights, make informed choices, and take control of their lives. It's about fostering agency and self-confidence, not necessarily authority over others.

True or False: Non-discrimination is a fundamental principle of youth rights that ensures equal treatment of young people regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, or other characteristics.

True. Non-discrimination is a core principle of youth rights, emphasizing the importance of treating all young people fairly and equally, without prejudice or bias based on any personal characteristics.

True or False: Youth participation refers only to young people's involvement in formal political processes, such as voting and running for office.

False. Youth participation encompasses a broader range of activities, including engagement in decision-making processes at various levels (e.g., community projects, youth councils), volunteering, advocacy, and activism.

True or False: Youth rights are limited to civil and political rights, such as freedom of expression and assembly, and do not include economic, social, and cultural rights.

False. Youth rights encompass a wide range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, as recognized in various international instruments and legal frameworks.

True or False: Youth rights policies are primarily focused on protecting young people from risks and vulnerabilities, rather than promoting their active participation and empowerment.

False. While protecting young people from risks and vulnerabilities is important, youth rights policies also aim to promote young people's active participation, empowerment, and agency in society. These policies recognize young people as rights holders who should be actively engaged in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

References

Books

- "Youth Policy: Comparative and Critical Perspectives" edited by J. Batsleer, H. Wyn, and M. Hoskins.
- "Global Perspectives on Youth Gang Behavior, Violence, and Weapons Use" edited by R. P. Adler and D. L. Hirschfield.
- "Youth: Choices and Change - Promoting Healthy Behaviors in Adolescents" by Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, National Research Council.
- "The Rights of the Child: Law and Practice" by A. Harding and S. Nolan.
- "Youth and Inequality in Education: Global Actions in Youth Work" edited by S. Carpentier, M. T. Segura, and N. Kahyani.

Articles

- Osler, A., & Vincent, K. (2003). "Educating citizens for human rights: A research report on schools in England." Educational Review, 55(1), 53-68.
- Chawla, L. J. (2002). "Growing up in an urbanizing world." Earthscan.
- Hart, R. A. (1992). "Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship." UNICEF Innocenti Essays No. 4.
- Kirby, P. (2004). "A guide to actively involving young people in research: For researchers, research commissioners, and managers." INVOLVE.
- Wyn, J., Cahill, H., Holdsworth, R., Rowling, L., & Carson, S. (2000). "Disengagement from education and training: Experiences of young people from Victoria." Centre for Youth Research and Development.
- United Nations Human Rights Council. (2021). "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants on the situation of migrants in transit."

Reports

- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2019). "World Youth Report: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda."
- International Labour Organization. (2019). "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2019: BRIEF: Succeeding in the KLEMS Age."
- UNESCO. (2020). "Global Education Monitoring Report: Inclusion and education: All means all."
- UNICEF. (2019). "The State of the World's Children 2019: Children, food and nutrition - Growing well in a changing world."
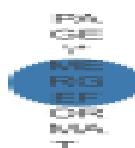
Websites

- United Nations Youth - the official UN website dedicated to youth-related matters, including resources, reports, and initiatives aimed at promoting youth rights and participation: https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth
- World Bank Youth - the World Bank's portal focusing on youth development, offering research, reports, and data on youth issues worldwide: https://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2023/02/24/youth-summit-2023-from-the-ground-up-local-solutions-to-drive-global-impact
- UNICEF Voices of Youth - UNICEF's online platform designed for young people to share their perspectives on various issues, including human rights and social justice: https://www.voicesofyouth.org/
- International Labour Organization (ILO) Youth Employment - ILO's dedicated section on youth employment, providing research, publications, and policy insights on youth employment challenges and solutions: https://www.ilo.org/topics/youth-employment
- Global Youth Empowerment Fun - a funding and support initiative for youth-led projects worldwide, aiming to empower young people to address pressing global issues and promote youth rights: https://oyaop.com/opportunity/competitions-and-awards/global-youth-empowerment-fund/
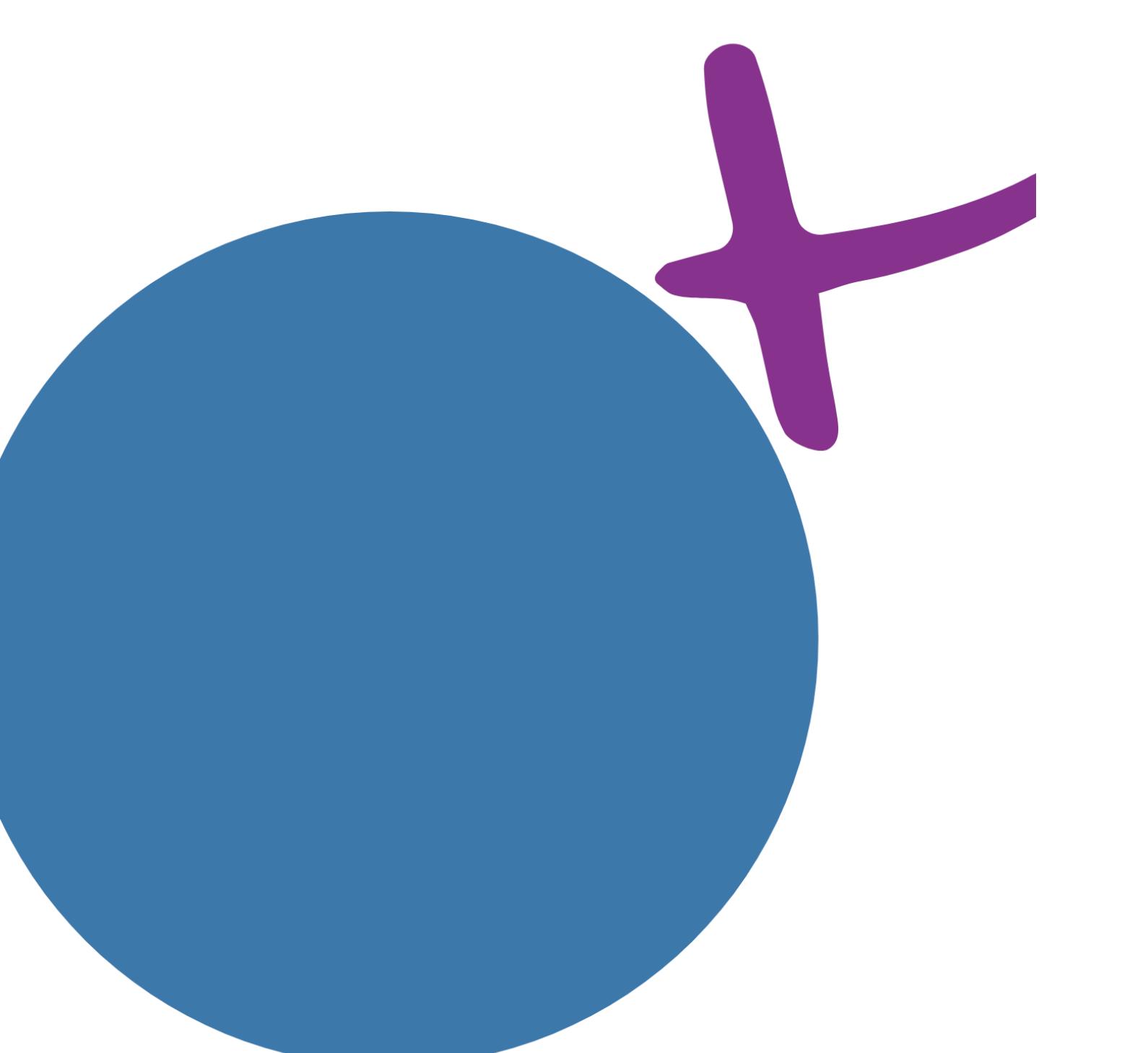
Policy scopes and goals at national and EU level relevant for youth

1. The role of the EU in Youth Policy

Slide 4

Youth policy is primarily a responsibility of European Union (EU) Member States. Under Article 165(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), EU action in this field aims at 'encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe'. Article 166 TFEU entrusts the EU with the task of facilitating access to vocational training and encouraging the mobility of instructors and trainees, particularly young people.

Member States have cooperated in the youth field since 2002.

EU youth strategy (2019-2027) (slides 5, 6)

The EU Youth Strategy is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018. EU youth cooperation shall make the most of youth policy's potential. It fosters youth participation in democratic life; it also supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society.

The EU Youth Strategy focuses on three core areas of action, around the three words: **Engage, Connect, Empower**, while working on joined-up implementation across sectors. During a 2017-2018 dialogue process, which involved young people from all over Europe, **11 European**

Youth Goals were developed. These goals identify cross-sectoral areas that affect young people's lives and point out challenges. The EU Youth Strategy should contribute to realising this vision of young people.

With "**Engage**" the EU Youth Strategy aims towards a meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation of young people. Member States and the European Commission are invited to:

- Encourage and promote inclusive democratic participation of all young people in society and democratic processes;
- Actively engage young people, youth organisations and other organisers of youth work in policies affecting the lives of young people on all levels;
- Support youth representations at local, regional and national level, recognising young people's right to participate and self-organise;
- Support and convey the EU Youth Dialogue in order to include diverse voices of young people in decision-making processes on all levels;
- Foster the development of citizenship competencies, through citizenship education and learning strategies;
- Support and develop opportunities for 'learning to participate', raising interest in participatory actions and helping young people to prepare for participation;
- Explore and promote the use of innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation e.g. digital democracy tools.

"Connect": Young people in Europe are getting more and more connected. Connections, relations and exchange of experience are a pivotal asset for solidarity and the future development of the European Union. This connection is best fostered through different forms of mobility.

Member States and the European Commission are invited to:

8) Enable access for all young people and youth workers to cross-border mobility opportunities, including volunteering, by eliminating obstacles and implementing support measures with special attention to young people with fewer opportunities;

9) Encourage young people's engagement in solidarity, promoting support schemes and seek complementarity and synergies between EU funding instruments and national, regional and local schemes;

10) Actively engage young people and youth organisations in the design, implementation and evaluation of relevant EU funding programmes;

11) Share best practices and further work on effective systems for validation and recognition of skills and competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning, including solidarity and volunteering activities, continuing the implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

"Empower": Empowerment of young people means encouraging them to take charge of their own lives. Today, young people across Europe are facing diverse challenges and youth work in all its forms can serve as a catalyst for empowerment.

Member States and the European Commission are invited to:

8) Develop and implement a European Youth Work Agenda for quality, innovation and recognition of youth work;

9) Support quality youth work development on all levels, including policy development in the field, training for youth workers, the establishment of legal frameworks and sufficient allocation of resources;

10) Support youth work activities, including grassroots, and recognise youth organisations as providers of competences development and social inclusion through youth work and non-formal education activities;

11) Create and further develop easily accessible youth contact points that deliver a wide range of services and/or provide youth information.

European Youth Goals:

The aim of the 6th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue – *Youth in Europe: What's next?* which took place in 2017/2018 – was to collect voices of young people and contribute together to creating the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. As a result, eleven European Youth Goals were developed. These goals reflect the views of European youth and represent the vision of those active in the EU Youth Dialogue:

5) Connecting EU with Youth
6) Equality of All Genders
7) Inclusive Societies
8) Information & Constructive Dialogue
9) Mental Health & Wellbeing

10)   Moving Rural Youth Forward

11)   Quality Employment for All

12)   Quality Learning

13)   Space and Participation for All

14)   Sustainable Green Europe

15)   Youth Organisations & European Programmes

Slide 7

The EU Youth Strategy should contribute to realising this vision of young people by mobilising EU level policy instruments as well as actions at national, regional and local level by all stakeholders.

The EU funds a series of programmes offering opportunities to young people, such as Erasmus+ (including DiscoverEU), the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ virtual exchange. These help young people expand their horizons and build bridges across Europe and beyond.

Further information is available from the European Youth Portal, which shares EU and national information and opportunities that are of interest to young people.

https://youth.europa.eu/home_en

What else? (Slide 8)

3)   **European Pact for Youth:**

The European Commission and business leaders launched the 'European Pact for Youth' to improve partnerships between business and education to boost the chances of young people getting jobs. The Pact, initiated by The European Business Network for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR Europe), is an appeal to all business, social partners, education and training providers other stakeholders to develop or consolidate partnerships in support of youth employability and inclusion.

4)   **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI):**

The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is one of the main EU financial resources to support the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes until 2023. The EU launched it in 2013 to provide support to young people living in regions where youth unemployment was higher than 25%. For the period 2021-2027, for simplification, the EU institutions integrated the Youth Employment Initiative into the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), while preserving the focus on youth employment.

2. EU Legal and Policy Framework on Youth Rights

Slides 9, 10

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU both explicitly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of age. The Charter is legally binding on EU institutions as well as Member States when they are implementing European law at the national level. The Charter can be used to ensure compliance of European law with certain aspects of youth rights.

The EU also has a range of anti-discrimination legislation in the form of Directives, which are fully applicable to the youth and legally binding on Member States, namely:

✔ **Employment Equality Directive** (2000/78/EC), which promotes equal treatment on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in employment and occupation. Broadly, the EU Framework Employment Directive applies to discrimination in the area of employment, self-employment, and "occupation". It covers discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Both direct and indirect discrimination are covered. It includes a requirement to make reasonable accommodation for disabled people. (*What is a directive? A directive is legislation by the European Union which is not intended to apply directly in member states (though it may have direct effect (below) if not properly implemented). Member states are supposed to pass national laws to put the directive into effect*.)

✔ **Race Equality Directive** (2000/43/EC) bans discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin in the labour market, education, social protection (including social security and healthcare), social advantages, access to and supply of goods and services (including housing), and membership of and involvement in an organisation of workers or employers. With the Employment Equality Directive, the European Union has set up a general framework for

equal treatment in employment and occupation. This directive is based on the principle of equal treatment between persons. It forbids both direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, instructions to discriminate and victimisation. The directive applies to all persons and to all sectors of activity, regarding: access to employment; working conditions, including promotion, pay and dismissals; access to vocational training; involvement in workers' or employers' organisations, and in any professional organisation; access to social protection and to healthcare; education; social advantages; access to and supply of goods and services, including housing. The directive does not cover difference of treatment based on nationality, or the conditions of entry and residence for citizens from non-EU countries.

Remedies and enforcement: anyone who believes themselves to be a victim of discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin must have access to legal and/or administrative proceedings. Associations or other interested legal persons may also undertake proceedings either on behalf of, or in support of the complainant. The victim of discrimination only needs to establish a presumption of discrimination after which it is for the respondent to prove that there has been no discrimination.

Each EU country established at least one body dedicated to combating discrimination, which is, in particular, responsible for helping victims and conducting independent studies.

✔ **Directives 2004/113/EC and 2006/54/EC.** The EU is based on a set of values that include non-discrimination, equality and respect for human dignity and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities (Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union — TEU). The EU has the competence to combat social exclusion and discrimination, and to promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child. Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) empowers the EU to introduce measures eliminating inequalities and urges it to promote equality between men and women through all its policies. Article 153 TFEU underpins EU action in the area of equal opportunities and equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation and Article 157 TFEU recognises the principle that men and women should get equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. Article 19 TFEU grants the EU the competence to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The EU has adopted several directives implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women and between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, age and disability in different areas of life. Here is the complete list:

✔ Directive 79/7/EEC on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security.

✔ Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

✔ Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

✔ Directive 2004/113/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services;

✔ Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation.

✔ Directive 2010/41/EU on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which is annexed to the Lisbon Treaty, includes a chapter entitled 'Equality'. This sets out the principles of non-discrimination (Article 21), cultural, religious and linguistic diversity (Article 22) and equality between men and women (Article 23). It also covers the rights of the child (Article 24), the elderly (Article 25) and persons with disabilities (Article 26).

EU strategy on the rights of the child (2021-24) (slide 11)

The EU strategy on the rights of the child is a major EU policy initiative to better protect all children, to help them fulfil their rights and to place them right at the centre of EU policy making. It pools all existing and future initiatives on children's rights under one coherent policy framework.

Every child in Europe and across the world should enjoy the same rights and live free from discrimination and intimidation of any kind. In the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, the Commission addresses persisting and emerging challenges and proposes concrete actions to protect, promote and fulfil children's rights in today's ever-changing world.

No policy regarding children should be designed without their voices. Thanks to the efforts of leading child rights agencies and organisations, both the Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee benefitted from the input of more than 10,000 children. Their views were collected through an online questionnaire and other forms of consultations.

Thematic areas (slides 12, 13)

Thematic area 1: *Child participation in political and democratic life*. Thematic area 1 of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child EU actions to empower children to be active citizens and members of democratic societies.

1 in 5 persons in the EU is a child. Worldwide, 1 in 3. And yet, only a small number of policy and legal documents is written in a child friendly language and is accessible for children with disabilities. Even when the legislation or policy directly affects their lives. Understanding what such documents are about is the first step to be able to talk about them and participate in decision-making processes.

Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that: "Children (…) may express their views freely. Such views shall be taken into consideration on matters which concern them in accordance with their age and maturity."

The right of all children to be heard and have their views taken seriously in accordance with their age and maturity is also laid down in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC).

Thematic area 1 promotes and protects the child's right to be heard in the legislation and policies that concerns them. Children are agents of change and must be supported in contributing to changes.

Thematic area 2: *Socio-economic inclusion, health and education* of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child EU actions to fight poverty, promote inclusive and child-friendly societies, health and education systems. All children have a right to a good standard of living, to equal opportunities and support when needed. Still, too many children live at the risk of poverty and social exclusion, struggle with accessing medical services or can not go to school.

Thematic area 3: *Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection*. Thematic area 3 promotes actions that help children grow free from violence. Children can be victims, witnesses, as well as perpetrators of violence, starting from their own homes, in school, in leisure and recreational activities, in the justice system, offline as well as online. Experiencing violence in childhood may have long-life consequences.

Promoting a culture of zero-tolerance for violence against children requires to close the gap between international standards, political commitments, and action and to mobilise all relevant actors across the society. This should concern any form of violence, meaning all forms of physical

or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, physically, online, or in virtual worlds. Such violence includes for instance domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual abuse, gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and child marriage, as well as all forms of bullying and corporal punishment.

National child protection systems are put in place to protect children from violence.

The EU has now very strong legislation to protect children from violence, such as on victim's rights, child sexual abuse, trafficking in human beings and violence against women and domestic violence (provisionally politically agreed), among other policy and funding actions.

Specific EU actions, such as the European strategy for a better internet for kids or the Digital Services Act, ensure that children can safely navigate the digital environment and harness its opportunities.

Furthermore, the Commission has developed measures to improve mental health and well-being of children, notably with the Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health. Meaningful child participation and consultation, including through the EU Children's Participation Platform has been a hallmark of the EU Strategy, and it is becoming a recognised practice in the EU and beyond.

Recommendation on integrated child protection systems: on 23 April 2024 the European Commission has adopted a Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated children protection systems in the best interests of the child. With this Recommendation, the EU aims to bring together all its actions to protect children from violence.

Thematic area 4: *Child-friendly justice*. Thematic area 4 promotes actions to support justice systems that uphold the rights and needs of children. Children can be involved in judicial proceedings, either directly, as a defendant, victim, witness or indirectly when decisions have a considerable impact on their lives. This can be the case in divorce or custody proceedings or in migration and status determination procedures.

In all cases, children should feel comfortable and safe to participate effectively in the proceedings and judicial systems in Europe need to be adapted to the specific needs of children and must respect their rights.

Thematic area 5: *Digital and Information Society*. This area promotes actions to ensure that children can safely navigate the digital environment and harness its opportunities. Children are digital natives. If given the opportunity and access to resources, they navigate the internet, social media and other digital tools with ease. Online world offers many opportunities for learning, social interactions, developing skills, playing, arranging everyday life. Assistive devices and programmes help children with disabilities to, among other things, connect with their peers and participate in lessons. Several challenges remain. Not all children have equal access to internet, electronic tools and devices. The digital world can bring some threats as well such as abuse, cyberbullying, hate speech, harmful content, and misinformation. Over-exposure to screen time may lead to health problems.

Thematic area 6: *The Global dimension*. This area promotes actions supporting, protecting and empowering children globally, including during crisis and conflict. The EU plays a leading role in supporting children globally, by strengthening access to quality, safe and inclusive education, basic services, health, humanitarian aid and in protecting them in violent conflict.

More information on the rights of the child:

- ✔ 1 in 4 children consider that their rights are respected by the whole society ("Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future")
- ✔ 29% of children aged between 10 and 18 years old reported the online use of personal data in a way they did not like, for example, misuse of personal passwords or the use of personal information with hurtful consequences. More than 1 out of ten children reported an increase of this experience during the first lockdown in spring 2020 ('How children (10-18) experienced online risks during the Covid-19 lockdown - Spring 2020', JRC, 2021, pp. 13-14, 42)
- ✔ Amongst LGBTIQ respondents aged between 15 and 17, 15% said they had experienced cyber harassment due to their sexual orientation (A long way to go for LGBTI equality, FRA, 2020)
- ✔ Nearly 3 in 4 children between the ages of 2 and 4 regularly suffer physical punishment and/or psychological violence at the hands of parents and caregivers (Global status report on preventing violence against children, UNICEF/WHO, 2020.)

✔ 3% of children aged between 10 and 18 years old say they do not feel safe at home; 9% do not feel safe at school; and 8% do not feel safe online. ('How children (10-18) experienced online risks during the Covid-19 lockdown - Spring 2020', JRC, 2021, pp. 13-14, 42)

✔ In 2019, 12% of global international migrants (33 million people) were children (Data on Child migration, UNICEF, April 2020).

✔ Over a third of children say they rarely or never feeling sad or unhappy. A fifth of children say they feel sad most of the time ("Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future")

✔ Between 1.3 and 1.5 million children per year are annually deprived of their liberty based on a judicial or administrative decision. There are more than 7 million children per year deprived of liberty. (UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (2019)

Monitoring (slides 14, 15)

The Commission monitors how Member States address child poverty or social exclusion in the European Semester process and, where necessary, propose relevant country specific recommendations.

What is the European Semester? - An annual process resulting in the European Commission's publishing of "Country-Specific Recommendations" to the Member States on how to improve pressing socio-economic issues they are facing. Member States are obliged to report to the Commission on how they are addressing the recommendations, and it is supposed to give guidance to how they use their EU funding.

EU Child Guarantee (slide 16)

Disadvantage and exclusion at an early age have an impact on children's ability to succeed later. It means they are more likely to drop out of school and have fewer chances to find decent jobs later. This often creates a cycle of disadvantage across generations.
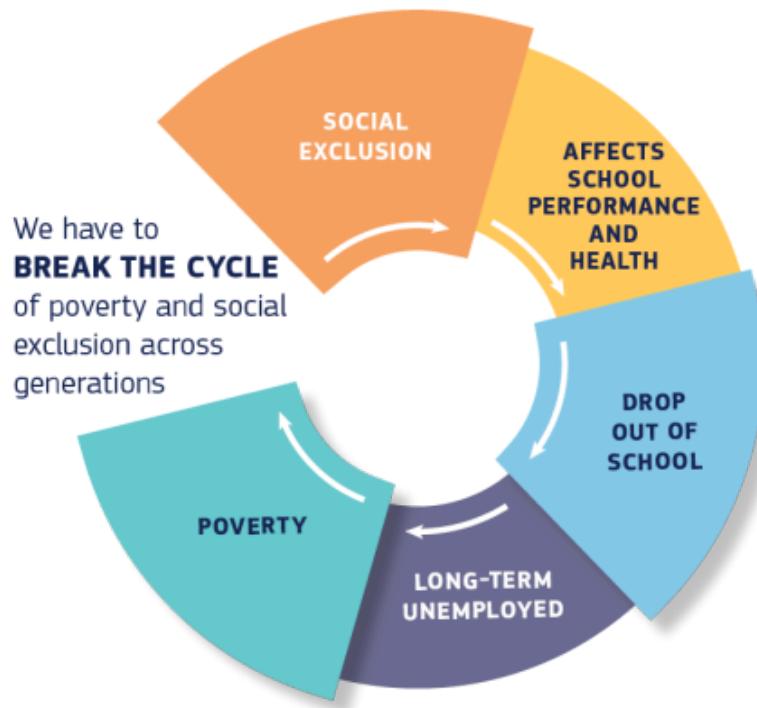
The European Child Guarantee aims at breaking this cycle. It provides guidance and means for Member States to support children in need, i.e. persons under the age of 18 at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Member States should guarantee:

- Free and effective access for children in need to:
✔ early childhood education and care
✔ education and school-based activities
✔ at least one healthy meal each school day
✔ healthcare
- Effective access for children in need to:
9) healthy nutrition
10)   adequate housing

Member States can draw on EU funding to support their actions under the Child Guarantee, in particular from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and Next Generation EU.

EU Child Guarantee (slide 17, 18)

The European Child Guarantee complements the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and in particular its second thematic area: Socio-economic inclusion, health and education. As it puts Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights on "Childcare and support to children" into action, the Guarantee is therefore a key deliverable of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan which sets out concrete initiatives to turn the European Pillar of Social Rights into reality.

It was preceded by a feasibility study focused on 4 specific groups of socially vulnerable children: 1) children in residential care, 2) children with disabilities, 3) children with a migrant background (including refugee children) and 4) children living in a precarious family situation.

Legal instrument – a Council recommendation – offers guidance on how to implement the European Child Guarantee, while also allowing Member States the flexibility to design and implement measures, according to their national practices. Adopted on 14 June 2021.

Where are the Young Carers?

In Vulnerable Group 4) Children living in a precarious family situation.

Precariousness related to household composition: children living in single-adult households; 'left-behind' children of EU-mobile citizens; teenage mothers; children living in households consisting of two adults and three or more children; children who are caring for sick or disabled household member(s) (young carers); children with imprisoned parents; etc.

EU Child Guarantee (slide 19, 20 and 21)

To implement the legal instrument – the Council recommendation – Member States have appointed their Child Guarantee Coordinators and have prepared National Action Plans, covering the period until 2030.

Article 11(c) of the Council Recommendation asks the Member States to submit action plans on how they will to implement the child guarantee. The action plans should cover the period until 2030 and take into account national, regional and local circumstances as well as existing policy actions and measures to support children in need.

The main purpose of the national action plans is to describe the existing and planned national and subnational policy measures, which aim to improve access of children in need to the set of key services covered by the European Child Guarantee.

In addition, the Recommendation invites Member States to report every two years on progress achieved in implementing the child guarantee. The first reports were submitted in Spring 2024.

EU Child Guarantee (slide 22)

The European Commission:

- Monitors progress in implementing the Recommendation, including its outcomes and the impact on children in need, in the context of the European Semester, and propose, where appropriate, country-specific recommendations to Member States.
- Works jointly with Member States, the national Child Guarantee Coordinators and the Social Protection Committee to facilitate mutual learning, share experiences, exchange good practices and follow up on the actions taken in response to this Recommendation as set out in the relevant national action plans.

EU Youth Guarantee (slide 23)

Youth Guarantee was established in 2013 by a Council Recommendation. Member States committed to ensuring that young people under the age of 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

The Youth Guarantee has created opportunities for young people and acted as a powerful driver for structural reforms and innovation. As a result, the majority of public employment services (PES) have improved and expanded their services for young people.

In about seven years' time, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were approximately 1.7 million fewer young people neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) across the EU. Youth unemployment had dropped to a record low of 14.9% by February 2020, mere weeks before pandemic-related lockdowns were put in place across the EU.

Though an improving macroeconomic context certainly played a role, evidence suggests that the Youth Guarantee had a major transformative effect. Over 24 million young people who were once

registered in Youth Guarantee schemes started an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeships and traineeships.

EU Youth Guarantee (slide 24)

As the unprecedented crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect young people disproportionally, there is overwhelming agreement on the fact that we need to act fast. The Youth Guarantee was reinforced by a Council Recommendation of October 2020. The reinforced Youth Guarantee stepped up the comprehensive job support available to young people across the EU, now reaching out to a broader target group of 15 to 29 year-olds.

The reinforced Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good quality offer of

4) employment
5) continued education
6) apprenticeship
7) traineeship

within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

It caters for the millions of youth at risk of unemployment unable to enter today's labour market, without losing sight of activating the hardest-to-reach who may have been facing multiple obstacles for years. The reinforced Youth Guarantee does all this through tailored, individualised approaches; providing young people with the appropriate levels of guidance and helping them find crash courses or boot camps if upskilling proves to be necessary.

Such approaches take into account local labour market intelligence shaped by COVID-19 ramifications, acknowledging also the opportunities provided by the accelerating digital and green transitions.

The Recommendation is backed up by significant EU financing under NextGenerationEU and the long-term EU budget.

The EU provides policy support and mutual learning activities to help Member States strengthen the infrastructure and measures for the reinforced Youth Guarantee. The EU also monitors progress across Member States.

Equality bodies (slide 25)

Under EU law, Member States are obliged to set up Equality Bodies that monitor and report on issues of discrimination, assist victims of discrimination, and promote equality.

The EU Fundamental Rights Agency exists since 2007 and has the mandate to collect and analyse data on fundamental rights. The Agency does not provide direct support to individuals. However, it is developing an interactive tool that will direct EU citizens towards the relevant national bodies in case they feel their fundamental rights have been violated.

3. National Policies for Youth

National Human Rights Institutions (slide 26)

In addition to Equality Bodies that exist in all EU and some non-EU countries, UN Member States are encouraged to have National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). NHRIs are State-mandated bodies that are independent of government and are responsible for protecting and promoting human rights at the national level. NHRIs serve various functions including monitoring the human rights situation on the ground and reporting to international monitoring bodies. Furthermore, NHRIs provide support to individuals and ensure compliance of national laws with international human rights standards.

NHRIs provide a useful link between civil society organisations and the State, as well as between the national and international arena.

A list of NHRIs by country is available here: https://ennhri.org/

National Policies for Youth (slide 27)

As members of the European Union, all EU Member States participate in EU youth policies and initiatives aimed at promoting mobility, education, employment, and social inclusion among young people.

The following slides include examples from the countries, participating in this project.

Greece (slides 28, 29)

Constitutional Protections: The Greek Constitution guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms for all citizens, including young people. Article 21 of the Constitution emphasises the state's obligation to protect the rights of children and youth, ensuring their physical, mental, and moral development.

Legislation: Greece has enacted laws and regulations that address specific aspects of youth rights, including education, employment, health care, social welfare, and participation in decision-making processes. These laws aim to ensure equal opportunities and protections for young people.

National Youth Strategy: Greece has developed a National Youth Strategy to guide policies and actions related to youth issues. The strategy focuses on areas such as education, employment, entrepreneurship, health, social inclusion, and youth participation. It aims to address the needs and aspirations of young people and promote their active engagement in society.

Youth Participation: Greece recognises the importance of youth participation in decision-making processes at all levels. The government, along with youth organisations and civil society, promotes mechanisms for young people to voice their opinions, contribute to policy development, and participate in democratic processes.

Youth Organisations: Greece has a vibrant civil society with numerous youth organisations and associations working on various issues affecting young people. These organisations play a vital role in advocating for youth rights, providing support and services, and empowering young people to become active citizens and leaders in their communities.

Ireland (slide 30)

Constitutional Protections: The Irish Constitution guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms for all citizens, including young people. While there is no specific provision addressing youth rights, several constitutional provisions safeguard individual rights and liberties, which apply to young people as well.

Legislation: Ireland has enacted laws and regulations that directly or indirectly address youth rights. These laws cover areas such as education, employment, health care, social welfare, and participation in decision-making processes. Examples include the Education Act, the Employment Equality Act, and the Children Act.

National Youth Strategy: In 2023 Ireland has launched 'Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People', setting out the policy direction and key priorities for cross government action in respect of children and young people to the end of 2028.

Link: Young Ireland

Italy (slide 31)

Constitutional Protections: the Italian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms for all citizens, including young people. Article 3 of the Constitution emphasises equality before the law and prohibits discrimination based on various factors, including age. Additionally, Article 34 recognises the right to education and mandates the state to ensure access to education for all citizens.

Legislation: Italy has enacted laws and regulations that directly address youth rights and issues. These laws cover various areas such as education, employment, health care, social welfare, and participation in decision-making processes. Examples include the Youth Guarantee scheme, which aims to reduce youth unemployment, and laws promoting access to education and training opportunities for young people.

National Youth Strategy: Italy has developed national youth policies to address the specific needs and challenges facing young people. These policies outline objectives and measures in areas such as education, employment, health, social inclusion, and civic participation. They aim to support the development and empowerment of young people and promote their active engagement in society.

Quiz Questions

1.   What is the primary objective of the EU's youth policy?

- a) Promote cultural diversity
- b) Enhance youth employment and participation
- c) Improve healthcare for the elderly
- d) Strengthen military cooperation

2.   True or False: Youth policy is primarily the responsibility of European Union (EU) Member States

3.   Which of the following is a key initiative under the EU Youth Strategy?

- a) EU Youth Guarantee
- b) Horizon 2020
- c) Common Agricultural Policy
- d) Digital Single Market

4. True or False: The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU both explicitly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of age

5. Which document outlines the EU's commitment to youth rights and development for 2019-2027?

- a) Europe 2020 Strategy
- b) EU Youth Strategy
- c) European Green Deal
- d) Digital Education Action Plan

6. What is the purpose of the Youth Guarantee initiative?

- a) Ensure all young people have access to free education
- b) Guarantee every young person a job or training opportunity within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education
- c) Provide housing for homeless youth
- d) Promote youth sports and recreational activities

7. True or False: Under the reinforced EU Youth Guarantee young people under the age of 30 are entitled to receive a job or training

8. True or False: EU strategy on the rights of the child ensures that children will be kept safe from violence and children who are harmed will get the help they need.

9. Under which instrument Member States appoint National Child Guarantee Coordinators?
- a) EU Child Guarantee
- b) EU Youth Guarantee

10. Which of the following is a common feature of national youth policies in EU member states?
- a) Focus on healthcare for elderly
- b) Emphasis on youth employment and training
- c) Promotion of tourism
- d) Development of military strategies

Answers Key:

1. b) Enhance youth employment and participation
2. True
3. a) EU Youth Guarantee
4. True
5. b) EU Youth Strategy
6. b) Guarantee every young person a job or training opportunity within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education
7. True
8. True
9. a) EU Child Guarantee
10. b) Emphasis on youth employment and training
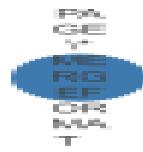
References

Books and Reports

- **European Commission**. (2021). *Youth Strategy 2019-2027*. Available at: <u>European Youth Strategy</u>
- **Council of the European Union**. (2018). *Resolution on the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027*. Available at: <u>Council Resolution</u>
- **European Youth Forum**. (2020). *Policy Paper on Youth Rights*. Available at: Youth Rights
- **European Commission**. (2022). *Youth Employment Support: A Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation*. Available at: <u>Youth Employment Support</u>
- **European Parliament**. (2021). *EU Youth Policy Framework and Priorities*. Available at: <u>Youth Policy Framework</u>

Journal Articles

- Del Felice, M., & Solheim, L. (2011). Youth organisations as learning organisations: Exploring specialisation, organisational learning and agency. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 30*(4), 537-552.
- Pantea, M. C. (2016). Understanding youth participation across Europe: From surveys to ethnographies and back. *Journal of Youth Studies, 19*(1), 146-156.
- Walther, A., Stauber, B., & Pohl, A. (2005). Informal networks in youth transitions in West Germany: Biographical resource or reproducing disadvantage? *Journal of Youth Studies, 8*(2), 221-232.

Online Resources

- **European Youth Portal**. (n.d.). Available at: <u>European Youth Portal</u>
- **SALTO-YOUTH**. (n.d.). *Training and Cooperation Resource Centre*. Available at: <u>SALTO-YOUTH</u>
- **Youth Goals**. (n.d.). Available at: <u>Youth Goals</u>
- **Policy Documents and Legislation**
- **European Union**. (2013). *Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport*. Available at: <u>Erasmus+ Regulation</u>
- **European Commission**. (2020). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025*. Available at: <u>European Education Area</u>

Websites and Blogs

- **Youth for Europe**. (n.d.). Available at: <u>Youth for Europe</u>
- **Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth**. (n.d.). Available at: EU-CoE Youth Partnership

TITLE OF THIS REPORT (ARIAL 32 BOLD)

Subtitle (Arial 26)

G.A. Nr: 2022-2-IE01-KA220-YOU-883F8363
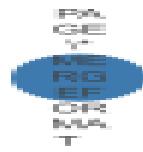
Actors of European policy on youth

1. EU actors (slides 4 – 8)

The support systems in place to aid YCs varies significantly across EU MSs but it is a matter of fact that public policies impacting on YCs intersect with several different policy domains, such as health care, social care, economic support, education, child protection, digital environment, etc.

Therefore, different actors play a role in European policy on youth, depending on their competence and expertise in various policy domains. Let's explore the competence of different EU actors in different policy domains.

The European Union's institutional set-up is unique and its decision-making system is constantly evolving. The 7 European institutions, 7 EU bodies and over 30 decentralised agencies are spread across the EU. They work together to address the common interests of the EU and European people.

In terms of administration, there are a further 20 EU agencies and organisations which carry out specific legal functions and 4 interinstitutional services which support the institutions.

All of these establishments have specific roles – from developing EU laws and policy-making to implementing policies and working on specialist areas, such as health, medicine, social care, economic support, education, child protection, digital environment, etc.

There are 4 main decision-making institutions which lead the EU's administration. These institutions collectively provide the EU with policy direction and play different roles in the law-making process:

- the European Parliament (Brussels/Strasbourg/Luxembourg)
- the European Council (Brussels)

- the Council of the European Union (Brussels/Luxembourg)
- the European Commission (Brussels/Luxembourg/Representations across the EU)

Their work is complemented by other institutions and bodies, which include:

8) the Court of Justice of the European Union (Luxembourg)
9) the European Central Bank (Frankfurt)
10)   the European Court of Auditors (Luxembourg)

The EU institutions and bodies cooperate extensively with the network of EU agencies and organisations across the European Union. The primary function of these bodies and agencies is to translate policies into realities on the ground.

Around 60,000 EU civil servants and other staff serve the 450 million Europeans (and countless others around the world). This is actually a relatively small number – the French Finance Ministry has around 140,000 staff for a population of only 67 million.

The powers, responsibilities and procedures of the EU's institutions are laid down in the founding treaties of the EU: the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (1957) and the Treaty on European Union (1992). More recently, the Lisbon Treaty (2007) introduced certain amendments and additions to their competencies.

The 4 main EU institutions, with their distinct functions, work together closely to set the EU's agenda and initiate and coordinate EU law-making. The 4 main institutions are:

- the European Parliament (Brussels/Strasbourg/Luxembourg)
- the European Council (Brussels)
- the Council of the European Union (Brussels/Luxembourg)
- the European Commission (Brussels/Luxembourg/Representations across the EU)

Let's look at these main institutions individually.

2. European Commission

The European Commission represents the common interests of the EU and is the EU's main executive body. It uses its 'right of initiative' to put forward proposals for new laws, which are scrutinised and adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. It also manages EU policies (except for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which is

conducted by the High Representative for CFSP, Vice-President of the European Commission), and the EU's budget and ensures that countries apply EU law correctly.

Representation offices act as the Commission's voice across the EU. They monitor and analyse public opinion in their host country, provide information about EU policies and the way the EU works, and facilitate the Commission's cooperation with the host member country.

What does it do? (slides 10 - 13)

1) Proposes new laws

The European Commission is responsible for planning, preparing and proposing new European laws. It has the right to do this on its own initiative. The laws it proposes must defend the interests of the Union and its citizens as a whole. The Commission submits a legislative proposal to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, who must agree on the text for it to become EU law.

Areas where the EU can pass laws: Every action taken by the EU is founded on the treaties that have been approved democratically by its member states. The treaties are binding agreements between EU countries and set out EU objectives, rules for EU institutions, how decisions are made and the relationship between the EU and its members. Treaties are the starting point for EU law.

The EU can only act in those areas where its member countries have authorised it to do so, via the EU treaties. The treaties specify who can pass laws in what areas: the EU, national governments or both.

Proposing laws: The European Commission is responsible for planning, preparing and proposing new European laws. It has the right to do this on its own initiative. It can also respond to invitations to do so from:

8) the European Council (heads of state or government of each EU country)
9) the Council of the European Union (government ministers from each EU country)
10) the European Parliament (directly elected by EU citizens)
11) Citizens themselves, following a successful European Citizens' Initiative

The laws it proposes must defend the interests of the Union and its citizens as a whole. The Commission submits a legislative proposal to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, who must agree on the text for it to become EU law.

The Commission prepares laws and policies transparently, based on evidence and backed up by the views of citizens and stakeholders. This is referred to as Better Regulation.

How they are planned: In its annual work programme, the Commission makes a political commitment to deliver on a certain number of priorities during a given calendar year.

How their impact is assessed: When the expected impacts of an EU law or policy are likely to be significant, the Commission conducts an impact assessment before making its proposal.

The aim of this assessment is to analyse in more detail the issue to be addressed, whether action should be taken at EU level and the potential economic, social and environmental effects of the different solutions outlined. The results of the impact assessment help inform the Commission's decision.

Who can contribute: Anyone who is interested or might be affected by an existing or proposed law or policy can share their views, sending comments or position papers or reply to public consultations . This includes: public national, local and regional authorities, businesses, civil society organisations, and individual citizens.

How to contribute: There are various opportunities to contribute to EU law-making as it evolves – from the preparation phase through to proposals for new laws and evaluations of how existing EU laws are performing. You can share your views and ideas in all 24 EU languages on Commission initiatives across all policy areas on the Have Your Say portal. It is possible to sign up for notifications regarding new developments as initiatives take shape, including after the adoption of legislation.

The Commission takes account of feedback when further developing the law or policy, or when evaluating several related laws or policies in a single policy area.

You can contribute to law-making on the Have your say portal.

Other forms of consultation: The Commission may also seek expertise in a given area and target specific stakeholder groups through, for example:

- targeted consultations
- meetings
- workshops
- seminars

- small-business panels
- online discussion forums

The Commission's proposals are scrutinised in detail by the European Parliament and the Council. These two institutions take the final decision on all EU laws. They can amend proposals or reject them altogether. The European Commission also manages EU policies and the budget, and ensures that EU countries apply EU law correctly.

2) Manages EU policies & allocates EU funding

The European Commission plays an active role in developing the EU's overall strategy and in designing and implementing EU policies. It evaluates and reports on its policies on a regular basis.

Setting strategic priorities: Along with the other main EU institutions, the European Commission develops the overall strategy and political direction of the EU.

Every five years, at the beginning of a new Commission term, the president of the Commission also determines the political priorities for its upcoming term of office. The Commission turns these priorities into concrete actions on a yearly basis through an annual work programme, which sets out a plan of action for the next twelve months.

Developing and implementing policies: the European Commission develops and implements EU policies by proposing laws to the European Parliament and Council of the European Union helping EU countries implement EU legislation managing the EU's budget and allocating funding ensuring that EU law is complied with together with the Court of Justice representing the EU outside Europe together with the EU's diplomatic service, the European External Action Service EU policies are designed to bring benefits to citizens, businesses and other stakeholders in the EU. Commission initiatives for new policies have to be agreed on internally according to a set procedure.

Better regulation tools ensure that each new policy is based on evidence and best available practice.

Evaluation: The Commission continuously evaluates whether EU policies have met the needs of European business and citizens. Evaluations assess a policy for effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value. Evaluations are communicated to the public via evaluation roadmaps.

<u>Principal roles in budget and funding</u>: the European Commission is responsible for preparing and proposing a draft budget for the European Union as a whole. It bases this on budget guidelines for the coming year and in line with the multiannual financial framework regulation in force.

The multiannual financial framework lays down the maximum annual amounts ('ceilings') which the EU may spend in different political fields over a period of at least 5 years. The present MFF covers seven years: from 2021 to 2027.

The Commission submits the draft budget to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament for approval on September 1. In keeping with the annual budgetary procedure, agreement on the budget must be reached by December 31.

The European Commission is ultimately responsible for managing the EU budget. In practice, up to 80 percent of the budget expenditure is managed by EU countries under so-called shared management, particularly in the areas of agriculture, growth and employment aid to EU regions.

A set of checks and balances is in place to ensure that shared management expenditure is managed properly and in accordance with the rules.

Budget implementation may be direct (Commission, Union delegations, executive agencies), indirect (via third countries or bodies and international organisations), and shared (EU countries).

Where the European Commission directly manages funding, it does so by awarding grants and launching tendering procedures. It manages the budget of projects carried out by its departments, at its headquarters, in the EU delegations or through EU executive agencies.

Some funding programmes are implemented by national authorities either inside or outside the EU, international organisations, or development agencies of EU countries.

However, the funding is managed, transparent procedures ensure that everyone is treated equally and has the same access to information on EU funding processes.

3) Enforces EU law

According to the EU treaties, the Commission may take legal action – an infringement procedure – against an EU country that fails to implement EU law. The Commission may refer the issue to the Court of Justice, which can impose financial sanctions.

4) Represents the EU internationally

The European Commission plays a key role in the design of development policy and delivering aid worldwide. Internationally, it helps to negotiate development cooperation agreements and is represented on the ground by EU delegations around the world.

The European Commission is responsible for designing European development policy and delivering aid throughout the world as effectively as possible.

It also ensures that the EU is represented internationally in development policy matters and in negotiating agreements on international development issues. To this end, it works closely with or within international organisations such as the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and in informal groupings such as the Group of Seven (G7) and the Group of Twenty (G20).

The European Union is represented by EU delegations and offices around the world. Delegations are diplomatic missions and are usually responsible for one country, although some are representatives to several countries. Through EU delegations and offices the European Commission maintains contact with local authorities and populations around the globe.

Countries from around the world are represented in the EU through diplomatic missions accredited to the European Union.

Composition (slide 14)

The European Commission is made up of 27 Commissioners – one per EU country. Together with the President of the European Commission, the Commissioners are the EU's executive branch, responsible for the daily running of the EU. Their mandate lasts 5 years.

The European Commission president is nominated by the Member States via the European Council and is formally appointed by the European Parliament. The other Commissioners are proposed by their country's government and approved by the European Parliament. Commissioners do not represent the views of their country of origin but rather the common interest of the EU. Each member of the Commission is assigned responsibility for a specific policy area by the president, such as energy, the economy or the environment.

The day-to-day work of the Commission is carried out by its administrative staff, experts, translators, interpreters and assistants. Commission officials – like the staff of other EU institutions – are recruited via the European Personnel Selection Office (epso.europa.eu).

These officials are citizens of the EU countries, selected by recruitment competitions. Around 32000 people work for the Commission. That may sound like a lot, but it is in fact fewer than the number of staff employed by most large city councils in the EU.

If this sounds like a career you might be interested in, you can apply for an EU traineeship with any of the EU institutions.

How does it work? (slides 15 -17)

The President defines the policy direction for the Commission, which enables the Commissioners together to decide strategic objectives, and produce the annual work programme.

The Vice-Presidents act on behalf of the President and coordinate work in their area of responsibility, together with several Commissioners. Priority projects are defined to help ensure that the College works together in a close and flexible manner. Commissioners support Vice-Presidents in submitting proposals to the College.

In general, decisions are made by consensus, but votes can also take place. In this case, decisions are taken by simple majority, where every Commissioner has one vote.

The relevant Directorate-General (headed by a Director-General, answerable to the relevant Commissioner) then takes up the subject. This is usually done in the form of draft legislative proposals.

These are then resubmitted to the Commissioners for adoption at their weekly meeting, after which they become official, and are sent to the Council and the Parliament for the next stage in the EU legislative process.

3. European Parliament

As the EU's only directly elected institution, the European Parliament is the collective voice of ordinary people. Members are directly elected by European citizens every 5 years. Anyone with EU citizenship is eligible to vote in these elections. In some EU countries where non-citizens can sometimes vote in sub-national elections, people who fulfil other residency conditions (such as non-citizens legally living in the country) can also vote in European Parliamentary elections.

The last European elections were held in June 2024. You have the right to vote from the age of 18 in all EU countries except Austria and Malta, where you can vote at 16, and Greece, where you can vote when you are 17.

What does it do? (slides 21 – 23)

The European treaties have given Parliament a broad range of powers as the EU's directly-elected body. Learn more in the following sections and find out how the procedures work.

1) Legislative powers

Together with the representatives of EU governments in the Council, Parliament is responsible for adopting EU legislation. Under the ordinary legislative procedure, both institutions act as equal co-legislators. In some special cases, other procedures may apply.

The legislative powers of the Parliament include:

- Passing EU laws, together with the Council of the EU, based on European Commission proposals
- Deciding on international agreements
- Deciding on enlargements
- Reviewing the Commission's work programme and asking it to propose legislation

How does the legislative process work? A Member of the European Parliament, working in one of the parliamentary committees, draws up a report on a proposal for a 'legislative text' presented by the European Commission, the only institution empowered to initiate legislation. The parliamentary committee votes on this report and, possibly, amends it. When the text has been revised and adopted in plenary, Parliament has adopted its position. This process is repeated one or more times, depending on the type of procedure and whether or not agreement is reached with the Council.

In the adoption of legislative acts, a distinction is made between the ordinary legislative procedure (codecision), which puts Parliament on an equal footing with the Council, and the special legislative procedures, which apply only in specific cases where Parliament has only a consultative role.

On certain questions (e.g. taxation) the European Parliament gives only an advisory opinion (the 'consultation procedure'). In some cases the Treaty provides that consultation is obligatory, being required by the legal base, and the proposal cannot acquire the force of law unless Parliament has

delivered an opinion. In this case the Council is not empowered to take a decision alone. The ordinary legislative procedure gives the same weight to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on a wide range of areas (for example, economic governance, immigration, energy, transport, the environment and consumer protection). The vast majority of European laws are adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council.

The codecision procedure was introduced by the Maastricht Treaty on European Union (1992), and extended and made more effective by the Amsterdam Treaty (1999). With the Lisbon Treaty that took effect on 1 December 2009, the renamed ordinary legislative procedure became the main legislative procedure of the EU´s decision-making system.

Other legislative procedures

Consultation: the European Parliament may approve or reject a legislative proposal, or propose amendments to it. The Council is not legally obliged to take account of Parliament's opinion but in line with the case-law of the Court of Justice, it must not take a decision without having received it. This procedure is now applicable in a limited number of legislative areas, such as internal market exemptions and competition law.

Consent: formerly know as the assent procedure, it was introduced by the 1986 Single European Act in two areas: association agreements and agreements governing accession to the European Union. The scope for the application of the procedure was extended by all subsequent modifications of the Treaties. As a non-legislative procedure, it usually applies to the ratification of certain agreements negotiated by the European Union, or is applicable most notably in the cases of serious breach of fundamental rights under Article 7 Treaty on European Union (TEU) or for the accession of new EU members or arrangements for the withdrawal from the EU. As a legislative procedure, it is to be used also when new legislation on combating discrimination is being adopted and it now gives the European Parliament a veto also when the subsidiary general legal basis is applied in line with Article 352 TFEU.

2) Supervisory powers

The European Parliament has a range of supervisory and control powers. These allow it to exercise oversight over other institutions, to monitor the proper use of the EU budget and to ensure the correct implementation of EU law. Here is how the Parliament exercises supervisory powers over some of the institutions:

European Council: the President of the European Parliament has the right to speak at the start of each European Council, setting out Parliament's position on the subjects to be addressed by the heads of state and government. After each summit, the President of the European Council presents a report to the European Parliament on the outcome.

The Council of the EU: at the beginning and end of each six-month presidency the President of the Council of the European Union discusses their programme with MEPs in plenary.

MEPs can table written and oral questions to the Council and can ask it to initiate new policies.

The Foreign Affairs Council is permanently chaired by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. They, or a representative, attend plenary debates on foreign, security or defence policy. Twice a year, the High Representative reports to the European Parliament about these policies and their financial implications.

European Commission: the European Parliament has the right to approve and dismiss the European Commission. Since 1994, commissioners-designate have been required to appear before an EP hearing. Under the Lisbon Treaty, EU heads of state propose a candidate for Commission President, taking into account the results of European elections. The candidate is elected by the EP.

The EP can censure the Commission and ultimately dismiss it. So far, none of the eight motions of censure brought before Parliament has been adopted. In 1999, the Santer Commission stepped down before Parliament forced its resignation. The EP ensures democratic control over the Commission, which regularly submits reports to Parliament including an annual report on EU activities and on the implementation of the budget. Once a year, the Commission President gives a State of the Union address to plenary. Parliament regularly invites the Commission to initiate new policies and the Commission is required to reply to oral and written questions from MEPs.

European Central Bank: Parliament must be consulted before the President, Vice-President and Executive Board of the European Central Bank (ECB) are appointed by the European Council.

The ECB President presents the bank's annual report in plenary and takes part in a regular monetary dialogue with Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs.

3) Budgetary powers
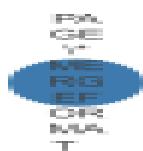
Following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament now shares the power to decide on the entire annual budget of the EU with the Council of the European Union and it has the final say.

Roughly, the budgetary procedure proceeds as follows: the European Commission prepares a draft budget. The European Parliament (EP) and the Council of Ministers (Council) will either approve or amend the proposal. If EP and Council cannot reach an agreement on the proposed budget, they enter into negotiations. If they still cannot reach an agreement, the budget is rejected and the Commission has to prepare a new draft budget. The procedure then starts anew.

After an agreement is reached, the Parliament, more so than the Council, has the final word in adopting the joint text.
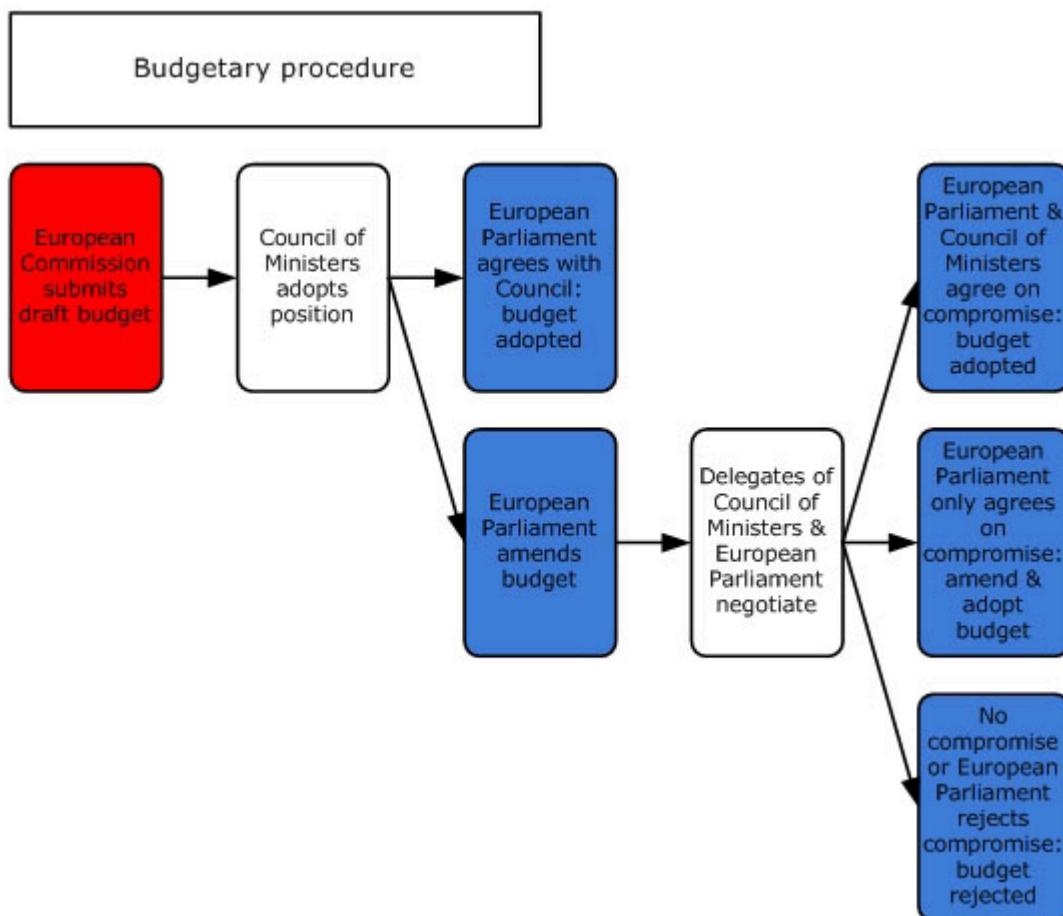
Composition (slide 24)

The general rules for the composition of the European Parliament are laid down in Article 14(2) TEU, which stipulates that the European Council shall adopt by unanimity, on the initiative of Parliament and with its consent, a decision establishing composition. It also states that Parliament is to be composed of no more than 751 representatives of the EU's citizens (750 Members plus the President). In addition, the representation of citizens is 'degressively proportional', with a minimum threshold of six members per Member State. No Member State can have more than 96 seats.

The concept of degressive proportionality means that although the total number of seats is allocated on the basis of Member State population size, more populous Member States agree to be under-represented in order to favour a greater representation of less populous Member States: the larger the country, the smaller the number of seats relative to its population. This concept has been further defined in the successive European Council decisions taken under Article 14(2) TEU since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.

The next elections of the European Parliament will be held from 6 to 9 June 2024. On 22 September 2023, following Parliament's legislative resolution of 15 June 2023 on the composition of the European Parliament, the European Council adopted a decision establishing the composition of Parliament, increasing the total number of seats in Parliament from 705 to 720.

How does it work? (slide 25)

Under the Treaties, Parliament organises its work independently. It adopts its Rules of Procedure, acting by a majority of its component Members (Article 232 TFEU). Except where the Treaties provide otherwise, Parliament acts by a majority of votes cast (Article 231 TFEU). It decides the agenda for its part-sessions, which primarily cover the adoption of reports prepared by its committees, questions to the Commission and the Council of the European Union, topical and urgent debates, and statements by the Presidency.

Parliament's work comprises two main stages:

- Committees - to prepare legislation.

The Parliament numbers 20 committees and three subcommittees, each handling a particular policy area. The committees examine proposals for legislation, and MEPs and political groups can put forward amendments or propose to reject a bill. These issues are also debated within the political groups.

- Plenary sessions – to pass legislation.

This is when all the MEPs gather in the chamber to give a final vote on the proposed legislation and the proposed amendments. Normally held in Strasbourg for four days a month, but sometimes there are additional sessions in Brussels.

Committee meetings and plenary sittings are held in public and are webstreamed.

The main meetings of the European Parliament, (the 'plenary sessions'), take place 12 times a year in Strasbourg, France, and up to 6 times a year in Brussels, Belgium.

The European Parliament has 705 members, also called MEPs, from all EU countries. The number of members per country varies: more populous countries have more members than smaller, less populous ones. Members from across the EU with similar political views work together in political groups just as in national parliaments, instead of forming groups according to their nationality.

4. European Council (slide 28)

The European Council brings together the elected leaders of EU countries, i.e. the heads of state or heads of government. These leaders meet at least four times per year. Their meetings are often referred to as 'European summits'. The European Council sets the EU's main political priorities and overall policy direction. It is chaired by a president who is elected every 2½ years.

What does it do? (slide 29)

The European Council defines the EU's overall political direction and priorities, traditionally by adopting conclusions. It does not negotiate or adopt EU laws. The European Council does not pass EU laws. That is the job of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union – don't mix them up!

The European Council:

- Decides on the EU's overall direction and political priorities
- Deals with complex or sensitive issues that cannot be resolved at lower levels of intergovernmental cooperation
- Sets the EU's common foreign & security policy, taking into account EU strategic interests and defence implications

- Nominates and appoints candidates to certain high profile EU level roles, such as the ECB and the Commission

On each issue, the European Council can:

- ask the European Commission to make a proposal to address it
- pass it on to the Council of the EU to deal with

Composition (slide 30)

The European Council is made up of leaders from the 27 EU member states, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission.

How does it work? (slide 31)

In line with the EU treaty, EU leaders meet at least four times a year, usually in March, June, October and December. These meetings, ('EU summits') are held in Brussels, in the Europa building. They usually take place over two days, on a Thursday and a Friday.

The meetings are chaired by the President of the European Council. At the start of each formal meeting, the President of the European Parliament is invited to outline the Parliament's views.

The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy takes part in the work of the European Council but is not a member. The President of the European Central Bank can be invited to attend discussions on economic and financial affairs.

Other possible guests include the Secretary-General of NATO and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

In addition to the 4 formal meetings, the President of the European Council can convene informal and special European Council meetings as necessary.

Informal meetings: European Council members may also meet informally to allow timely exchanges of views between leaders on pressing topics without taking formal decisions. Informal meetings can be hosted in Brussels or other places, such as the country holding the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU.

Special meetings: If exceptional circumstances require urgent decisions by the leaders, the President may convene special meetings of the European Council in Brussels in addition to the usual four meetings per year. Formal decisions can be taken at special meetings.

The European Council usually decides by consensus (i.e. no member opposes the adoption). This is also how the European Council usually adopts conclusions.

However, in certain specific cases provided for in the EU treaties (such as for the adoption of legal acts), the European Council decides by vote.

A vote on a given agenda item may be initiated by the president. It may also take place on the initiative of any other member, provided that a majority of members are in favour.

There are three voting methods:

- unanimity
- qualified majority
- simple majority

Unanimity is required, for example, when the European Council takes a decision regarding the number of members of the European Commission. When the European Council acts by unanimity, abstentions do not prevent the adoption.

The European Council decides by qualified majority, for example, when establishing the list of Council configurations, or when proposing to the European Parliament a candidate for President of the Commission.

The European Council acts by a simple majority to adopt procedural decisions by virtue of its rules of procedure.

5. Council of the European Union (slides 33, 34)

Not to be confused with:

- European Council - quarterly summits, where EU leaders meet to set the broad direction of EU policy making
- Council of Europe - not an EU body at all

What does it do? (slide 35)

The Council of the European Union – also known as 'the Council' for short – represents the governments of the EU countries. In the Council, ministers from all EU countries meet to discuss and take decisions on EU policies and laws. Which ministers attend depends on the topic under discussion. For example, if the meeting is about air pollution, then the environment ministers will meet. If the focus is on unemployment, then ministers responsible for employment and social affairs will attend.

The Council:

- Negotiates and adopts EU laws, together with the European Parliament, based on proposals from the European Commission
- Coordinates EU countries' policies
- Develops the EU's foreign & security policy, based on European Council guidelines
- Concludes agreements between the EU and other countries or international organisations
- Adopts the annual EU budget - jointly with the European Parliament

Composition (slide 36)

There are no fixed members of the EU Council. Instead, the Council meets in 10 different configurations, each corresponding to the policy area being discussed. Depending on the configuration, each country sends their minister responsible for that policy area.

The presidency of the Council is held by a different EU country every 6 months.

Rotating presidencies:
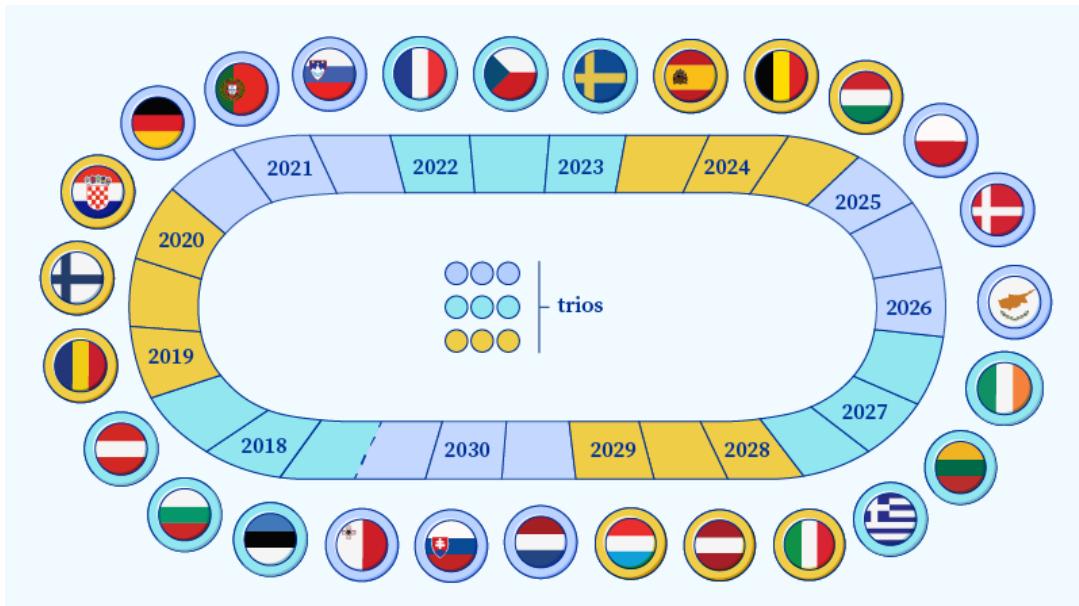
What does holding the presidency of the Council of the EU mean? The system of rotating presidencies goes back to the very beginning of the European integration. Every six months, a member state becomes the president of the Council of the EU and helps ensure the smooth running of the EU legislative process.

The presidency is responsible for driving forward the Council's work on EU legislation, ensuring the continuity of the EU agenda, orderly legislative processes and cooperation among member states. To do this, the presidency must act as an honest and neutral broker.

The presidency has two main tasks:

- Planning and chairing meetings in the Council and its preparatory bodies
- Representing the Council in relations with the other EU institutions

How does it work? (slides 37, 38)

The rules of voting in the Council are decided by the EU countries. The Council takes most of its decisions by a majority vote, and in some cases unanimously. For the areas where the EU countries have agreed that decisions must be taken by unanimity – for instance for taxation or security issues – this means that all ministers must be in agreement for a decision to be taken.

In many other areas, ministers take decisions by majority vote, for example when passing an EU law on consumer rights, on issues such as the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic or on environmental issues such as how to treat urban waste.

To block a decision, at least 4 countries are needed (representing at least 35% of total EU population). Exception – sensitive topics like foreign policy and taxation – require a unanimous vote (all countries in favour). Simple majority is required for procedural and administrative issues.

EU ministers meet in public when they discuss or vote on draft legislative acts.

To be passed, decisions usually require a qualified majority:

- 55% of countries (with 27 current members, this means 15 countries)
- representing at least 65 % of total EU population

You can watch the Council's public sessions live in all EU languages. When a Council meeting is public, so are its minutes and votes.

Quiz Questions

Who …?	European Parliament	European Council	Council of the European Union	European Commission
1. makes proposals for EU laws				
2. approves EU laws				
3. is directly elected				
4. meets in 'European summits'				
5. represents the interests of the people				
6. represents the interests of EU countries/their governments				

Workshop: Drafting a Petition for Recognition of Study Credits for Young Carers

Materials Needed

- Flipchart paper and markers
- Post-it notes
- Pens and paper
- Printed templates for petitions

Workshop Structure

1. Understanding the Issue (10 minutes)

Group Discussion

- As a group, discuss the challenges faced by young carers and why recognising study credits would help.
- Encourage everyone to share key points from the discussion.

2. Drafting the Petition (30 minutes)

Show a simple template of a petition. Explain the basic parts.

Simplified Template for Petition

1. *Introduction: Briefly describe the issue and its importance.*
2. *Main Points: Clearly state what you are asking for (recognition of study credits for young carers).*
3. *Supporting Arguments: Provide reasons and benefits for the change (e.g., helps balance caregiving and education, supports mental health).*
4. *Call to Action: Clearly state what you want policymakers to do (implement recognition of study credits).*

Work together to draft each section of the petition.

3. Review and Finalise (10 minutes)

Review the draft together, make any necessary adjustments, and finalize the petition.

4. Debrief and Reflection (10 minutes)

Discuss what went well, what was challenging, and what could be improved.

References

- European Commission. (2020). EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en
- European Parliament. (2020). European Youth Strategy https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/agenda/briefing/2019-06-06/8/european-youth-strategy
- European Youth Forum. (n.d.) https://www.youthforum.org/about-us
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). (2018). EU youth policy under review. Retrieved from https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2018/eu-youth-policy-under-review
- European Union Council. (2020). EU Youth Conference. Retrieved from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/education-youth-culture/2020/11/eu-youth-conference/
- Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (European Commission). (2020). Youth. https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/education-youth-sport-and-culture_en#youth
- Williamson, H., & Williamson, A. (Eds.). (2011). "Youth Policy in the European Union: A Critical Introduction". Palgrave Macmillan