

Joint recommendations of the 9th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue 2022-23

Engaging together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe

The goal of the final EU Youth Conference in Sweden was to formulate a set of recommendations based on the outcomes of the two previous conferences in France and the Czech Republic and the results of the qualitative and quantitative research conducted during the cycle. Inclusive lifelong learning, encouraging the understanding of climate change and its ramifications, as well as utilizing intergenerational and interdisciplinary approaches to empower young people by providing them with skills, tools and information on how to get involved in sustainable practices, were chosen as the key topics.

Recommendation 1 - Information and Education

Ensure equal access to user-friendly information on sustainability and climate change through inclusive and empowering non-formal and formal education fostering intergenerational dialogue and learning.

Our resolution seeks reliable, inclusive sustainability and climate change information. This accessible content, suitable for all ages, fosters a greener Europe. We propose integrating these topics into diverse educational formats, considering formal and informal settings. Learning collaboratively, we value varied viewpoints including cultural and socio-economic diversity, upholding climate justice. We reject burdening young people with consequences from policies they didn't create. All generations must engage in climate education. Youth require skills, knowledge, and platforms for impactful action. Leveraging non-formal education's potential is key, along with acknowledging its practical benefits. Our interdisciplinary strategy involves youth organizations and information services. Educators must access resources for proper training and capacity. This ongoing process demands continuous evaluation, monitoring, and enhancement.

Recommendation 2 – Action and Empowerment

Guarantee independent advisory boards on a local level (e.g., youth councils) consisting of, and selected by, young people with an intersectional emphasis on young people with fewer opportunities, taking a sustainable approach.

Repeatedly, young people are sidelined in decisions that profoundly affect their futures. To address this, we advocate enhancing bottom-up participation mechanisms at the local level, empowering youths, particularly the disadvantaged. While advisory boards exist in some countries (e.g., Finland, Estonia, Sweden), a Europe-wide framework is needed. This aims to develop more efficient models for collaborative decision-making between local youth and authorities. This approach should be sustainable and inclusive, encompassing diverse backgrounds and experiences. Embracing an intersectional perspective acknowledges compounded discrimination and marginalization. These boards should form democratically and with youth leadership, enabling young people to elect their representatives. The process can adapt to local contexts.

Board members become the youth voice in local policymaking. States must prioritize youth inclusion and representation. Through independent local advisory boards and youth empowerment, especially for the disadvantaged, a brighter collective future can be forged.

Recommendation 3 – Governance

Ensuring accountability and transparency in environmental and sustainable development policy making processes and supporting participation and evaluation mechanisms which enable this (e.g., youth bodies, youth tests) at local, regional and European level.”

The 9th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue consultations highlighted significant distrust among young people in the effectiveness of policy-making mechanisms related to economic, social, and environmental matters. Despite attempts to involve youth in these processes, their engagement is seen as unlikely to result in meaningful political change. This recommendation aims to ensure continuous youth involvement across the policy-making journey. This involves amplifying their voices, overseeing actions taken by policymakers’ post-engagement, and openly assessing achieved changes or explaining their absence within specified timeframes. Such an approach enhances transparency and accountability across all policy-making tiers. This recommendation bolsters the influence of youth entities, spanning local, regional, national, and European youth councils. It also reinforces the EU Youth Dialogue and introduces impact assessment tools like youth tests. These steps facilitate more focused policies that effectively address inequality, benefiting both current and future generations.

Recommendation 4 – Mobility and Solidarity

Create action plans, aimed at the formal education sector and labour market, in order to ensure formal recognition of experience and key competences acquired through participation in volunteering and learning mobility.”

During the European Year of Skills 2023, a pressing priority emerged: promoting reskilling and upskilling in the workforce. This contributes to sustainable growth, enhances formal education, and strengthens the labour market. In light of this, we advocate robustly involving European youth in volunteerism and learning mobility. These active learning processes foster skill enhancement. However, there's a prevailing lack of understanding about the value of these experiences and the competencies they cultivate, not only among youth but also policymakers, educational institutions, and employers. Unfortunately, mobility remains inaccessible for many due to limited information, language barriers, financial constraints, and personal responsibilities. This underscores the need for youth-friendly and easily accessible information from trusted sources. A comprehensive awareness campaign is essential. This will empower all European youth to recognize and seize these opportunities, fostering a more inclusive society in line with Youth Goal 3.

To advance this cause, the European Commission should initiate a process engaging Member States. Over a two-year period, these states should develop national action plans to enhance the accessibility of volunteerism and learning mobility, with a focus on youth with limited opportunities. Additionally, Member States should establish a framework to formally acknowledge the competences and skills gained through both short- and long-term volunteering and learning mobility experiences. This recognition should be integrated into their work and educational curricula.

Recommendation 5 – Access to Infrastructure

Provide an affordable and accessible “Youth Climate Ticket” as a universal multimodal tool for public transportation at the regional, national and international levels, and the EU commission to support Member States in advancing sustainable ways of public transportation.”

Despite current transportation discounts, regional disparities persist, posing a challenge for many young people, particularly in rural areas with outdated or insufficient transportation options. This issue impacts education, employment, and daily life. To address this, we must focus on enhancing our public transportation systems through improved availability, affordability, and universal accessibility. Encouraging youth to use public transport can help curb rural-urban migration, maintaining rural populations, and fostering sustainable housing in both settings.

The Youth Climate Ticket initiative seeks to establish an uncomplicated system for granting young individuals accessible, affordable, and widespread public transportation at regional, national, and international levels. We uphold a comprehensive approach to social and environmental sustainability. This initiative aims to encourage sustainable travel choices among the youth, encourage Member States to invest in long-term sustainable infrastructure, and promote solidarity and mobility between EU nations. The EU Youth Climate Ticket proposes a pilot program that creates a unified digital platform on three tiers: regional, national (optional, with European Commission support for willing Member States), and international (subject to EU harmonization). This platform will adjust to national pricing and serve as a hub for sharing best practices. By prioritizing sustainable public transportation, we aspire to empower youth to thrive, not just survive.