

Guidelines for setting up and managing youth advisory structures in EU Delegations

OVERVIEW

What is it?

These practical guidelines are primarily conceived to help EU Delegations to decide, design, create and manage youth advisory structures (frequently also called youth sounding boards).

The creation of youth advisory structures is one of the commitments established in the [Youth Action Plan in EU external action \(2022-2027\)](#), which is the policy framework for a strategic partnership between the EU and young people around the world to build a more resilient, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable future. It aims at enhancing meaningful youth participation and empowerment in the EU's external action policies and actions.

Youth advisory structures are groups of young people that play an advisory role and help make EU action more participatory, relevant and effective for young people in EU partner countries. They can also be effective allies in terms of public diplomacy and improving our strategic communication.

What can it be used for?

- Understand why the EU is institutionally committed to youth participation and empowerment, and links with EU values and policies.
- Decide whether establishing a youth advisory structure in EU Delegation
- Define the most adequate model of youth advisory structure in your EU Delegation
- Plan the process of creation of the Youth advisory structures and define needs and operational steps.
- Help EU staff to properly manage a youth advisory structure.

When can it be used?

It can be used at any moment of the cycle of setting up a youth advisory structure. From the moment in which the EU Delegation reflects on how to engage better with youth in their actions or whether and how to set up a youth advisory structure. Once the decision is taken, the guidelines will help EU staff in the different steps of the creation (call for candidates, selection criteria and process, definition of terms of reference, structures and ways of working, etc).

Who can use it?

The guidelines address EU staff in EU Delegations and headquarters, engaged in the decision, creation or management of youth advisory structures (from youth focal points in EUD to Head of Cooperation or Delegation).

They can also be used by other stakeholders involved in the process, such as implementing partners, youth experts or external consultants, and generally by stakeholders interested on improving youth engagement in their institutions.

What are its strengths?

The guidelines:

- Inform on EU commitments in the area of youth participation and empowerment.
- Offer insights into key areas of motivation behind the advisory structures including policy and value issues, as well as essential benefits and advantages regarding impact of actions, ownership or strategic communication.
- Provide practical support as they have been elaborated by youth experts based on real experiences of EU Delegations and other successful practices.
- Present different models of youth advisory structures that allow EU Delegations to find the best approach considering their specific context.
- Tackle operational issues regarding needs, capacity or sustainability, and provide recommendations.
- Offer practical examples, tips and tricks and templates.
- Presented in a step by step way, facilitates using the document according to your needs.

What are its limitations?

- The guide offers different models and examples, but they cannot cover all the diverse context and specific situations of all EU Delegations. For further advice, please contact INTPA-YOUTH@ec.europa.eu.
- To be effective, the Guidelines should be a reference not only for the EU staff in charge of setting up youth advisory structures (usually youth focal points), but also for hierarchy (the commitment should be committed at Delegation level).
- The EU Delegation needs to take the lead in determining the level of involvement and allocation from their budgets of appropriate resources (human and financial).
- Guidelines have been built based on the experiences of DG INTPA and EU Delegations on the setup process, launch and early stages of operation. The more youth advisory structures will be functional, the more INTPA youth team will cumulate experience and knowledge, which will integrate and complement the current guidelines.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Key elements

The Guidelines tackle key strategic and operational aspects to be taken into account for the establishment of a youth advisory structure:

- Understand key concepts: youth participation and engagement.
- Know our policy framework at EU level, and more specifically in the EU external action, and existing similar initiatives.

- Understand why to set up youth advisory structures at EU Delegation level.
- Get prepared: consider key elements for setting up a youth advisory structure.
- Go for it: step by step actions for the creation and launch.
- How to make it work after the establishment.

Requirements

Data/information:

The guidelines rely on information gathered by youth experts from policy review, and experiences collected from youth focal points in EU Delegations, youth teams in headquarters, other EU Member States, and other youth stakeholders (UN, civil society organizations and other).

EU Delegations need to translate the information provided by the guidelines to their context of action. Knowing the national youth policies, mapping youth organizations, and identifying if similar structures already exist in the country will help in the process of setting up a youth advisory structure.

Time:

EU Delegations must establish youth advisory structures as soon as possible in the framework of the Youth Action Plan, with a commitment to set up youth advisory structures in most EU Delegations by 2027.

EU Delegations will decide on the most appropriate timing. This can be linked to resources (for example, available technical assistance under cooperation facility, or funding related to strategic communication), programmes (for example, the start of a new programme that can facilitate the set-up of the youth advisory structure) or a communication opportunity (for example, the visit of a Commissioner to the EUD, the celebration of the Youth Day in August, or the anniversary of the Youth Action Plan in October).

The model selected and the resources available will determine the duration of the establishment process. Planning, public call for candidates and their selection, induction and organization of the members, etc, can take between 6 and 12 months.

Working with youth advisory structures also requires time for the staff in charge, and this needs to be considered in advance. External experts, either consultants, or youth experts coming from youth organizations or other implementing partners, may have added value.

Skills:

EU staff need to clearly assess their needs and resources. Guidelines are helpful in this process.

External experts may have added value and can provide support throughout the process or during specific steps. In addition, INTPA Youth team in INTPA.G.3 is eager to provide overall guidance.

Former or current members of the Youth Sounding Board for International Partnerships (YSB) may also be a good source of information/inspiration.

Facilities and materials:

There is no dedicated facility for the setting up youth advisory structures in EU Delegations. However, delegation facilities stemming from support measures, or technical cooperation facilities may enable you to receive technical assistance. Alternatively, the Knowledge Hub for Expertise on Youth managed by INTPA.G.3 may be mobilised to provide some technical support and guidance.

Financial costs and sources:

As there is not a single model of youth advisory structure, it is not possible to provide a figure. Annex F of the guidelines give insights of possible costs and expenses that will help EU Delegations to prepare their budget.

There is not a dedicated budget at global level for youth advisory structures, and EU Delegations will need to find the best source (example: cooperation facility, strategic communication budget, civil society thematic programme, etc).

Tips and tricks:

- Look at the guidelines as soon as possible. They will help to understand better what youth advisory structures are, why they can be important in your EUD, and how to plan when to create it.
- If your EU Delegation already established a youth advisory structure (or youth sounding board), guidelines will be useful for you in terms of its management.
- If you discover that you could do better regarding youth engagement, it is not too late, to make changes and contribute to the EU institutional youth engagement (leading by example).
- If you see that there are similar structures in your partner country, and you are reluctant to create a new similar structure, contact INTPA-YOUTH@ec.europa.eu and we will assess together the specific situation.
- Youth advisory structures are not limited to EU Delegations with extensive bilateral cooperation. Youth engagement can be done at the level of programmes, and also policy development, or political dialogue. In fact, supporting youth engagement and participation can be interesting for those EU Delegations with limited cooperation.
- Don't think that creating and managing a youth advisory structure can be simply done by the youth focal point. It requires time, resources and buy-in from the hierarchy.
- In INTPA youth team, we are interested in your experience and needs: share them with us. This will help to improve our support and guidelines.

RESOURCES

Where to find it

The European Commission, DG INTPA, 2023. [Guidelines for setting up and managing youth advisory structures in EU delegations](#)

Complementary guides, methodologies and tools

INTPA Youth Team (INTPA-YOUTH@ec.europa.eu) can provide you with templates of useful documents such as terms of reference, communication guidelines, call for candidates, in different languages and for different situations.

The European Commission, 2022. Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council - [Youth Action Plan in EU external action \(2022-2027\)](#)

The European Commission. Youth in International Partnerships: [Youth Sounding Board for EU International Partnerships](#)

The European Commission. Youth in International Partnership - [Youth advisory structures in EU Delegation](#)

The European Union: [European youth portal](#)