

Proposals for the President of the European Commission's Youth Advisory Board

Preface:

- The new [Political Guidelines](#) note that a **President's Youth Advisory Board with young people from all Member States will be set up to advise the President on issues that matter to their peers in their community and to act as a sounding board for ideas developed by the Commission.**
- The European Youth Forum has drafted the following paper covering the essential principles the Advisory Board should follow - a suggested composition and structure of the advisory board and a series of options relating to the remit of the board for consideration.
- This paper is designed **to guide the principles and process of developing this board** ahead of its announcement at the end of the year, and complements the letter that the Forum sent to the President elect of the European Commission on 19th July outlining our first thoughts on this proposal.
- We are looking forward to continuing to work with the Commission to develop a meaningful and exciting process that brings in the expertise of youth representatives across Europe to help shape the EU agenda and future proof all policy making.

About the Author: The European Youth Forum

- The [European Youth Forum](#) is the representative voice of young Europeans that convenes the highest level of youth-led decision making globally.
- Our network brings together 6000 youth organisations representing millions of young people across Europe. Our membership includes National Youth Councils in every European country, which are widely recognised as the elected voice of young people for their communities and International NGOs that operate in numerous countries with national or local branches that are the voice of young people on a wide range of expert topics.
- Together with our members, we drive a focus on youth rights, youth-focused policy development and youth participation at EU, Council of Europe and UN level.

Part 1: Essential principles for the Advisory Board to follow

1. Meaningful participation
2. Centrality of Youth Representatives
3. Connection to the EU Youth Dialogue
4. Advising and Agenda Setting in equal measure

Meaningful participation:

- Any advisory structure that is set up must follow the principles of meaningful youth participation and allow for youth representatives to engage in a candid, genuine exchange on an equal level with the President and her team.
- It must therefore be clear to the youth representatives composing the youth advisory board what their inputs will influence and how these inputs will be collected.
- Any terms of reference developed for the board should therefore make it clear where the input that young people will give and ideas that they will bring will fit into the broader picture of Commission consultation and legislative decision making (including any visibility given to the discussions at College meetings), with moments included in the board's design to make it clear how input has been taken into account.

Centrality of Youth Representatives

- National Youth Councils in every European country are the elected voice of young people for their communities, while International NGOs that operate in numerous countries with national or local branches are the voice of young people on a wide range of expert topics.
- **We therefore believe that the proposed Youth Advisory Board should be made up of these expert, democratically elected national and international representatives from youth civil society organisations**
- These young people have significant expertise in the realities of young people in their countries and organisational membership - and are poised to bring their challenges and ideas to the President's attention and advise on how proposed EU level interventions would be received.
- One core element of the governance of all these youth organisations is their democratic nature - meaning that representatives of these organisations have been **democratically elected by their peers to represent them** and provide a voice to their concerns in decision making spaces. This mandate could and should extend to this new high-level structure - bringing incontestable legitimacy to their participation.

Connection to the EU Youth Dialogue

- [EU Youth Dialogue](#) is a pre-existing **EU process** led by youth organisations that gathers **tens of thousands** of diverse youth voices per thematic cycle through innovative, open consultations taking place all across Europe.
- These voices are ultimately used to shape the outcomes compiled each cycle on a range of thematic areas - including concrete proposals for EU action.
- In order to ensure that this process complements the work of the advisory board - youth representatives of the youth advisory board should bring these outcomes of this process directly to the President to give greater visibility to young people's priorities for EU action.

Advising and agenda-setting in equal measure

- In line with the spirit of the announcement of the creation of the advisory board - equal weight should be given in the Terms of Reference to both young people's role in advising on the Commission's proposals and their role in bringing issues for discussion that are not already on the Commission's agenda.
- This way - there is a dynamic mix of content being driven by young people and content being proposed by the Commission for review.

Part 2: Composition of the Youth Advisory Board

Youth Representation

- The Political Guidelines note that young people from every Member State should be included in the advisory structure.
- National Youth Councils (NYCs) are democratically elected representative bodies of youth organisations in each Member State (and beyond, including the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries), are open to all and include most of the main democratic youth movements and organisations on the national level in the respective state.
- **It is therefore imperative that an elected representative from each of these NYCs are nominated to represent their countries as permanent members of the advisory board.**
- Beyond this Member State NYC participation - there should be further participation of International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs).
- INGYOs are international networks of youth organisations that are operating in numerous countries with national or local branches with developed expertise on a wide range of topics.

- **There should therefore additionally be thematic calls, facilitated by the European Youth Forum, for youth representatives from these organisations to act as ad hoc expert youth advisors to the board.**
- Finally, when relevant topics are discussed such as accession and relations with third countries, then a broader selection of candidates and third country NYC representatives could be invited to participate in the board's activity.

European Commission Representation

- In addition to the President of the European Commission and their cabinet members, it will be important to envisage a role for the Youth(-focused) Commissioner and EU Youth Coordinator within the board as permanent members.
- In addition - there should be dynamic Commission representation depending on the thematics discussed - and include the option of attendance of policy leads from Commissioner cabinets when relevant topics are discussed that fall into the Commissioner's portfolio and representatives from the Commission's Youth Network in different DGs.

Composition of the Youth Advisory Board	
Fixed Youth Representative Composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Youth Forum President • Representatives from the 29 National Youth Councils¹ nominated by the NYCs.
Ad Hoc Expert Youth Advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic calls for youth representatives with specific expertise (e.g. European Students Union if education is discussed, Rural Youth Europe if rural policies are discussed etc.) • Broader ad hoc participation of non-EU NYCs for topics relating to accession/relations with third countries. • These organisations would act as ad hoc expert youth advisors to the board.
Fixed European Commission Composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of the European Commission • Youth Commissioner • President's Head of Cabinet and Youth Advisor • EU Youth Coordinator

¹ 26 member state NYCs and YCs from the three BE communities

Rotating European Commission Composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives from the Commission's Youth Network in different DGs, depending on the topic(s) discussed. • Policy advisors from Commissioner cabinets, depending on the thematic topics being discussed
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Part 3: Structure of the Youth Advisory Board

Governance:

- In order to ensure meaningful dialogue on an equal footing, the Youth Advisory Board should be seen as a joint endeavour between youth civil society and the European Commission.
- In this spirit, it is essential that a **Steering Group structure** is set up consisting of the President's cabinet, DG EAC and the European Youth Forum. This technical-level group would be responsible for agreeing on the agenda for the meeting(s) and for developing specialised calls for organisations to be part of the meeting(s) and other activity depending on the thematic areas to be discussed/under consideration.
- This grouping would also facilitate two-way communication between the President and board members in between meetings.
- **Terms of reference for the advisory board should be developed** in a manner which makes it clear what the role of the board is and how youth representatives can expect their input to be taken into account in EU decisions and processes.

Meeting(s) and Continuous Engagement:

- In order to establish a close, trusting working relationship, the Youth Advisory Board should hold **one in person meeting per year in Brussels**.
- Beyond this meeting, **a two-way communication channel should also be established to allow for continuous exchange** between the President and youth representatives. Facilitated by regular discussions in the steering group, this channel would allow for:
 - The President to contact board members to stress test a new, time sensitive proposal;
 - Youth representatives to share proactively their thoughts on recent developments in their country, emerging trends, newly developed policy papers etc.
 - Ad hoc online exchange in between these meetings to be set up to discuss these areas where required.
- Where possible, NYC representatives of the board should also **convene smaller, national level discussions for the President when she is**

attending engagements in different Member States. These discussions would give the President a further insight into the work of these organisations at national level, the concerns and ideas of young people in each Member State, and generally enrich the relationship between the President and advisory board members.

Options for the Chairing of meetings

1. **Chair President of the European Commission** - personable element, consistent with the idea of a personal board to exchange and stress-test ideas.
2. **Co-chair President of the European Commission and Youth Commissioner**² - envisages a role for the youth commissioner and allows for them to also develop close relationships with youth representatives.
3. **Co-chair President of the European Commission and the President of the European Youth Forum** - in the spirit of co-ownership and dialogue on an equal footing between youth civil society and the European Commission.

Communications:

- In order to ensure that conversations can be meaningful and candid - we suggest that the meetings of the board take place offline under Chatham House rules.
- A summary could then be published so that the wider youth community and public can see what was discussed.
- In order to connect to the EU Youth Stakeholder Platform - we suggest that a youth representative involved in both groups together with the EU Youth Coordinator are tasked with updating the Platform on the activity via a post on the Teams channel and/or a brief agenda item during Platform meeting.

Part 4: Options for the Remit of the Youth Advisory Board

- The broad remit of the Youth Advisory Board as envisaged in the Political Guidelines is to advise the President of the European Commission on Commission proposals and bring issues that matter to their peers to the attention of the President.
- In order to fulfil the brief of young people advising on developments within EU decision making and bringing topics to the attention of the Commission which are not necessarily already on the agenda, there are a number of ways in which this could be done through differing levels of

² As a parallel example - in the case of the [Canadian Youth Council](#) set up to advise the Prime Minister - the chairing role is shared by the Canadian Prime Minister and Canadian Minister for Youth.

board activity - bearing in mind existing EU processes and the President's responsibility for the Political Guidelines.

Connecting to the State of the Union and general, regularised exchange

- An annual meeting would be held in the Spring in which the President of the European Commission shares suggested areas of focus and specific initiatives for the next State of the Union for youth representative feedback and youth representatives bring proposals for focus to the meeting.
- The format would be a candid exchange and allow the President to stress test ideas of EU action and young people to bring their own ideas of EU action, including highlighting relevant EU Youth Dialogue outcomes.
- A brief reflection on how the board had advised the ultimate content for the State of the Union could then be included in the State of the Union address so it is clear to a broader audience how these inputs have been used and what young people see as the main challenges and opportunities for EU action across a range of policy fields.
- In between this annual meeting - continuous two-way communication should be facilitated to allow the President to stress-test time sensitive proposals and for young people to keep the President informed on relevant developments and youth-relevant trends in their countries.

Drafting a 'Youth State of the Union' report

- In addition to the above meeting, the advisory board could be tasked with developing and updating a regular 'Youth State of the Union Report' as part of their activities in between meetings.
- This report would be formed of a combination of the EU Youth Dialogue Outcomes, Policy Papers developed by the European Youth Forum, relevant Eurobarometers etc. and present the current situation for young people in the EU across different policy areas and suggest additional or strengthened areas of EU action to improve these areas.
- This report would be presented to and discussed with the President during the annual exchange to help inform areas of focus for the coming year(s).

Additional ad hoc exchanges with other Commissioners/DGs

- In addition to their role as a personal sounding board for the President, the board could also be mobilised to advise other Commissioners on specific areas of the Commission's work plan³ and help them stress test ideas.
- The board could for example constitute a consultative group for any new legislative proposals going through an EU Youth Check, in addition to any new Strategies, programmes or other initiatives that are being developed.

³ Also the case for the [Canadian Youth Council](#) that advises the Prime Minister, but is also engaged to support the work of other ministers on specific thematic topics.