

Youth for a Just Transition

A toolkit for Youth Participation
in the Just Transition Fund



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Foreword



The European Green Deal sets out Europe's ambition to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. We have no choice but to succeed in this effort. It is something we owe to our citizens, and to the next generations. Given the different starting points of various regions to face the coming changes, the Just Transition Fund was created with the aim of alleviating the socio-economic impacts of the transition to a climate-neutral economy, specifically in fossil-fuel dependent and carbon-intensive regions, so as to ensure that everyone in Europe benefits from it and no one is left behind.

Whilst policymakers and authorities – at European, national, regional and local level – can steer the corresponding policies, we will only succeed if we bring citizens along with us. This must be a collective effort involving regions, local governments, social partners, industries, academia and civil society. This transition has to be locally-owned and everyone must be involved. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the Just Transition Fund is placed under the cohesion policy umbrella, with its long-standing tradition of partnership with actors on the ground.

History tells us of the vital importance of youth participation. Four decades ago, many regions in Europe underwent traumatic structural transitions faced with external pressures that significantly shrunk many traditional economic activities. In those transitions young people, the locomotive of the future of those regions, were often left out. Today, we still see the consequences of this in the high levels of out-migration and higher than average unemployment rates in these regions, especially among their youth.

The mistakes of the past cannot be repeated. It is essential that youth are actively involved in the governance of the Just Transition Fund. We cannot have a future-proof economy without involving those who will live and shape the future. The fund is about inventing a new economic and social future for these areas, and youth must play a leading role in this.

The 'Youth for a Just Transition' toolkit offers a vital support for your work to involve young people in the implementation of the Just Transition Fund in your region, whether you are a region with well-established experiences of involving youth in policy process, or a region doing this for the first time. It offers principles, best practices and strategies that can help you maximise the meaningful participation of youth in the programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the fund. Our collective task is to seize the opportunity offered by the transition to a cleaner, more efficient economy: the opportunity to give new life to our regions for decades to come. We will only succeed if we share this journey with Europe's youth.

I wish you well in your work to ensure meaningful participation opportunities for your young people and you can count on the Commission as a steadfast ally in this.

Marc Lemaître
Director-General,
Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy

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Introduction



On 11 December 2019, the European Commission adopted the Communication on the European Green Deal¹, setting out an ambitious roadmap towards a new sustainable growth policy for Europe. This landmark strategy is on the one hand about cutting emissions, and on the other hand about transforming the EU into a fair and prosperous society with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. As such, it is an ambitious growth policy that strives to reconcile the economy with our planet, and to reconcile the way we produce and the way we consume with our planet, as well as to make this new economy work for people.

In order for the European Green Deal's ambitious objectives to be achieved, the transition to a climate-neutral economy needs to be just and inclusive, leaving no one behind. The engagement of the Union's citizens is crucial in this respect. It is a strategy 'based on ambitious climate and environmental objectives and on participatory processes bringing citizens, cities and regions together in the fight against climate change and for environmental protection'².

Two of the main pillars of the European Green Deal are the European Climate Pact³ and the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM)⁴. The first will be the vehicle for raising awareness about climate change and support broad social mobilisation towards climate and environmental action. The latter will support the EU regions most affected by the transition to a climate-neutral economy so as to ensure that no citizen is left behind.

The Just Transition Fund is the first pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism and will ease the economic and social impacts of the climate transition on regions most dependent on fossil fuels or carbon-intensive industries. The success of this initiative, and the transition more broadly, will rely on the ownership and buy-in of the concerned territories and their citizens. The Regulation establishing the Just Transition Fund states clearly that it 'will be implemented through shared management in close cooperation with national, regional and local authorities and stakeholders'. This will support shared ownership of transition strategies and provide 'the tools and structures for an efficient management framework'.

In this context, it is clear that young people have an important role to play. Their future will be directly affected by the upcoming transition, and their needs, opinions, fears and hopes are an important part of the dialogue. There are several important reasons why meaningful participation of young people in the decision-making process of the Just Transition Fund, as well as buy-in in its implementation, is crucial.

RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

Young people have an internationally recognised right to participate in decision-making that impacts their future⁵. This is particularly relevant in the climate change context, where they more than any other generation will bear the greatest costs of its impacts.

VALUABLE IDEAS AND SKILLS

Nobody knows the challenges, needs and aspirations of young people living in a transition region better than youth themselves. In this way, they can provide valuable insights for diagnosing problems relevant for transition. Moreover, youth has unique knowledge and skills, offering a rich creative potential to develop solutions to the challenges of the transition.

INTERGENERATIONAL DIMENSION

Young people can play a key role in fostering intergenerational dialogue. This is particularly pertinent for many transitioning regions, as even with well-designed plans, policymakers often start from a place of mistrust towards younger generations. Young people can become a bridge in raising awareness about the transition, its reasons and consequences.

ACHIEVING A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

A successful transition will be one that offers true revitalisation and hope for the future to communities. Such success requires the achievement of sufficient opportunities and good alternative jobs for young people from transitioning regions so as to overcome the challenges of high out-migration of young people seen from many deindustrialised communities.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: The European Green Deal (COM(2019) 640 final): https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/communication-european-green-deal_en

² Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Just Transition Fund (COM/2020/22 final)

³ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/pact_en (to be updated as Climate Pact website will be launched next week)

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/just-transition-mechanism_en

⁵ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



Toolkit Function

This toolkit was created to push the mission of inviting young people to the table of shared management of the Just Transition Fund forward. The toolkit can also be useful for other policies addressing the transition.

This toolkit is addressed in particular at regional and local policy-makers responsible for implementation of the Just Transition Fund, as well as other stakeholders involved in the process. Its goal is to support and guide on how to organise meaningful participation of young people. It provides a set of principles, methods and concrete tips of how to maximise the meaningful participation of youth in the programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Just Transition Fund. Moreover, it offers examples of how particular techniques were successfully used in the past.

The toolkit builds on extensive deskwork, review of relevant literature, and engagement and interviews with experts and stakeholders in the field of youth engagement and/or the climate transition. This analytical work led to the identification of 30 good practice examples of youth engagement in policy processes transferable to the Just Transition Fund context (see the annex document), as well as in another stand-alone publication on the Just Transition Platform¹.

Moreover, the project sought to directly involve young people, policy-makers, youth organisations and academics in shaping the main design elements of the toolkit, so as to ensure it is as useful and as close as possible to the real needs and challenges of both young people and the authorities working on the Just Transition Fund. Most notably, a virtual participatory co-creation workshop was held for these audiences during the 2020 European Week of Regions and Citizens² on many of the themes covered by the toolkit.



Toolkit Structure

The toolkit is structured in four main sections:

- Section I ‘Basic conditions for meaningful youth participation’** includes the step-by-step golden rules, basic conditions and enablers that authorities should always bear in mind when embarking on youth participation processes.
- Section II ‘Youth participation along the Just Transition Fund programming lifecycle’** offers advice on how to meaningfully engage with youth at each of the main stages of the Just Transition Fund: programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It outlines the specificity of and opportunities for youth participation at each stage, including associated enablers and conditions needed for successful and meaningful youth participation, as well as concrete methods, tools and techniques suitable for each stage.
- Section III ‘Ensure youth impact and address concrete challenges’** provides concrete advice and solutions for some of the recurring enablers and challenges you might encounter when approaching youth participation.
- Annex Document** provides detailed outlines of 30 best practice examples of youth participation from across Europe that are referenced throughout the toolkit. They provide possibilities to not only learn from these projects’ experiences, but also to take interesting ideas and methods from them, and adapt them to your own local context, needs and capabilities.

This Toolkit aims to encourage more ambitious, meaningful and numerous youth participation processes in the regions targeted by the Just Transition Fund, and that the effects of such processes will lead to better-quality strategies and interventions addressing the challenges of the just transition.

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/just-transition-mechanism/just-transition-platform_en

⁷ See the recording of the workshop: <https://euregionsweek2020-video.eu/video/youth-for-a-just-transition-preparing-a-toolkit-for-meaningful-youth-participation-in-the-just-transition-fund>



Basic conditions for meaningful youth participation

This section contains the step-by-step golden rules, the basic conditions as well as the enablers that authorities should always bear in mind when embarking on youth participation processes. It is divided into three main sections:

1. Before you start – adapt and enable;
 2. Youth participation – work with them, not for them;
 3. Close the circle.
-



Before you start – adapt and enable

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IS NOT A TOKEN: GIVE IT A REAL MEANING

Treating young people as equals and having them on board throughout the process will enrich your work and the outcomes of the implementation of the Just Transition Fund as a whole, giving the transition a long-lasting relevance and significance on the ground. It is important not to treat youth participation as a mere formality, a box to tick in the bureaucratic chain or an accessory embellishing your project.

Once you recognise the value of young people's voice, let them know: show them from the outset the impact that their participation will have and attach a clear weight to the outcome of their participation in the decision-making process. Give young people the space to express themselves, the means to put their ideas into practice, and empower them to contribute actively.

PREPARATION IS ESSENTIAL: SCAN YOUR HORIZON

Youth participation is a continuous process that cannot be left to improvisation, but must be thought-through and put at the centre of the Just Transition Fund implementation. Before embarking on any youth participation process, it is important to decide on your motives and objectives, as well as to assess the resources at your disposal. Budgeting deserves a special mention: in order to have an impact and be meaningful, youth participation requires appropriate funding.

Before starting with the design of any youth participation process, set clear goals and scope, and assess the resources and constraints you will have. Have a strategy and ask yourself the following questions:

1. What do I want to achieve?
2. Who should be involved, i.e. what are the most affected segments of the youth population? Are there existing youth structures representing these particular groups?
3. When should the participatory process happen in order to ensure the impact of young people's contribution? How much time do I have at disposal?
4. How much financial resources can I invest in the project?
5. Where will the process take place? Will this place ensure that participation is easy and accessible for young people?
6. What will be the best activity/activities (i.e. a single event, a permanent structure, etc.) to foster meaningful participation of young people, considering my resources and constraints?

CO-CREATE CLEAR RULES WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people need clarity and full transparency about their roles and responsibilities: an appropriate setting, clear instructions, and an explanation of what is expected from them is crucial to frame their participation and sustain their interest and commitment. They can be an invaluable resource in the very design of the project. Make sure you agree and co-create with them the rules and the process from the very beginning.

ENABLE MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION – IMPROVE YOUTH'S KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Meaningful youth participation is not a given. Enable youth participation by preparing young people and their local environment: make participation opportunities accessible, by reaching out to them, invest in awareness raising campaigns, and give them the tools and skills to partake through capacity building actions, e.g. trainings in leadership, communication and advocacy.

Make the most out of social media to get the word out: Instagram, TikTok and Facebook are the best - although not the only - means to spread the news about your project or event among younger generations. When reaching out, using an accessible and youth-friendly language will encourage them to join.

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL ACTORS

Recognise the crucial role of an enabling local environment: local authorities and organisations are crucial partners and involving them is essential to raise awareness among young people regarding the relevance of their participation at the local level. Schools, including vocational ones, and universities can play a decisive role in passing the message onto local youth who are in education, coming from different backgrounds and representing diverse interests and needs. However, it is important to go beyond school settings and reach youth in the informal spaces they inhabit. Partnerships with civil society organisations and youth groups in regions in transition can support your actions. Local businesses relevant to the transition can also get involved and support youth participation processes through trainings and sponsorships.



Youth participation – work with them, not for them

A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

Youth participation starts from the design! Make young people full partners and involve them along all the stages of the implementation of the Just Transition Fund, from design and programming to implementation, all the way to monitoring and evaluation

LISTEN TO, TRUST AND EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people need to be taken seriously and treated as equal partners. It is necessary to put aside any pre-conceived perceptions on what youth are capable of and interested in. Trust them and their abilities, and empower them to lead the change. They have opinions and ideas about the development of their communities that should be heard. Build collaborative discussions between generations to help find common ground to act together and remain open to young people's ideas, their knowledge and contribution to your work.

Young people need to be given the opportunity to make a change. Give them the means and the tools to implement their ideas through real projects. Once young people are empowered, they feel ownership and find a renewed confidence that they have a voice and that this voice can have an impact on political processes in their community.

THERE IS NO SINGLE 'YOUTH'

Avoid treating 'youth' as a homogeneous group. When it comes to regions undergoing the transition, open up to their different stories on how they will be affected by the upcoming transition. Make sure you understand the different needs and potential of teenagers, vocational training and university students, young workers, young professionals and entrepreneurs, young members of trade unions, youth employed in carbon-intensive industry, climate activists, and many others. Each of them comes from a specific background and carries values and beliefs that are unique and have to be recognised and valued in the process. .

REACH OUT TO THE UNHEARD

When planning participatory processes, remember to be inclusive and ensure that all segments of the youth population are represented. Unfortunately, participatory processes tend to reach out to and be dominated by the most politically active, highly educated and socially privileged young people, as well as those already organised in groups.

However, especially when it comes to the climate transition, it is essential to reach out to young people from less active and underrepresented backgrounds so as to ensure that all those who have a stake in the process are involved. These may include, but are not limited to, those from a minority ethnic background, youth living in poverty, care and/or geographical isolation, young refugees and asylum seekers, LGBTQIA youth, youth with disabilities, unemployed youth, and early school/education leavers. Making such young people who tend to be excluded from the political debate understand that their experience, values, and opinions are relevant and valued and that their voice needs to be heard is a pre-condition for the overall success for a Just Transition.

Furthermore, gender parity is crucial in the climate transition context. Given that carbon intensive sectors are often heavily dominated by men, there is a risk that public participation processes will skew their focus disproportionately towards them. However, women and other marginalised groups, whilst often under-represented in such roles, are often over-represented in indirect, supportive roles to these sectors, such as lower-paid service work and unpaid care work, which are equally affected by impacts to these sectors. Thus, equal engagement of genders among the next generation is essential to ensure that existing biases and inequalities do not become entrenched and simply transferred from today's industry into the new industries of tomorrow.

To ensure a safe and positive environment necessary for meaningful engagement, you should ensure you have an appropriate safeguarding policy and plan in place to promote the welfare of young participants and protect them from harm. This should be in line with European best practice and national standards for protecting children and young people. The policy should be clearly communicated to all participants, with trained safeguarding coordinators on-site and a clear incident management plan.

CONNECT YOUNG PEOPLE

Map out existing youth organisations at national, regional and local level, and create a database of young people and youth groups in different sectors for your use. Help them connect to each other, network, work together, share experiences and partake in more and more participatory processes. Join the mission of building a culture of youth participation in your region and country!

BE READY TO YOUTH-IFY YOUR STYLE

Communicating with youth in the right way and through the appropriate channels is of the utmost importance. A conscious effort to youth-ify institutions and your communication style when reaching out to young people through innovative and original means contributes to a better reciprocal understanding.

Adapt your processes and communication style, be fun yet thought-provocative, and invest in digital methods to support young people's participation in policy-making.

Often political debates and participatory events are very formal, technical or academic. This can be inaccessible to those with less experience in engaging in mainstream participation processes and with institutions. Hence, reaching out to and involving all those who have a stake in the transition requires you to ensure events and discussions are open and accessible. It is important to adjust language and terminology, support knowledge-building and skills development necessary for participation, and give them the space and tools to be able to act on these.



Close the circle

LET THEM KNOW

Young people should take part in policy development on all the areas where their present and future is at stake. Most importantly, there should be a systematic follow-up to their discussions and policy proposals. This way, young people feel trusted and engaged in the development of their community.

When you ask young people to give their contribution, you become accountable to them. In other words, you owe them a follow-up, an explanation on what happened to the idea they fed into the process, why and how it was implemented or not, and what outcome it brought about. For every process, these feedback mechanisms need to be established, to the largest extent possible together with young people, and clarified at the very beginning of the process. Make use of existing youth infrastructure (youth councils, youth organisations, youth ambassadors, NGOs active at the local level, etc.) or build new ones to make sure that this happens systematically.

THE FIRST STEP OF A LONG JOURNEY

It is important to give young people the place they deserve in shaping the transition towards a green and economically vibrant future for their community. However, it is only the first step towards the systematic change needed to make youth participation a staple of future policymaking.

From this points on, it will be crucial to make youth participation a priority, make it regular and continuous, and embed it in institutional structures and policy-making processes. Moreover, it will be important to integrate young people's input in a wider range of topics that concern and impact them.



II.

Youth participation along the Just Transition Fund programming cycle

In this section of the toolkit, you will find tips of how to meaningfully engage with youth at each of the main Just Transition Fund stages: programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The tips for each stage are divided into four parts:

1. Aim of youth participation at each stage,
 2. How to best involve youth in the main processes and mechanisms at each stage,
 3. Specific enablers: crucial conditions needed for successful youth participation at each stage,
 4. Concrete methods: examples of inspirational tools and techniques suitable for each stage, as well as good practices of their application in various contexts.
-



Retaining youth involvement and interest throughout the whole Just Transition Fund lifecycle

Whilst longer processes provide the scope for more well-developed youth output, several challenges may occur in long-term participatory processes. One of them may be that that young people want to have the option of participating in a variety of ways, at different times and in different contexts.

It might not be realistic nor desirable to expect that the same group of young people will remain actively engaged in the Just Transition Fund throughout the seven-year long programming cycle. Seven years is a big part of a young person's life, so it can be expected that their interest and motivation to engage in activities related to the Just Transition Fund will change over this time. For these reasons, try to maintain a high level of engagement and enthusiasm throughout the whole cycle. Below you can find examples of how to do that.

In order to empower young people to participate throughout the whole cycle, you can:

- ✓ TIP: Make **continuous and ongoing** outreach efforts, especially given many youth will drop in and out of the process. Youth themselves can be empowered to deliver such efforts (see concrete examples in Section 3).
- ✓ TIP: Equip young people with **knowledge** needed to participate at a particular stage of the Just Transition Fund cycle: the green transition, its associated challenges and the Just Transition Fund (as explained in the Section 3).
- ✓ TIP: Support them in developing the **skills** needed to make their participation meaningful and enriching (see more detailed tips in the Section 3).
- ✓ TIP: Ensure **peer-to-peer learning** to strengthen the culture and capacity of youth participation.
- ✓ TIP: **Combine different methods** of youth involvement and hold activities in different settings so as to maximise your reach and sustain involvement.
- ✓ TIP: Leverage moments for **large-scale** youth involvement - accept the reality that smaller numbers may participate in certain stages or remain for the entire whole cycle. However, identify the moments with the greatest potential for large-scale involvement to bring in new participants as well as old ones. For example, participation of a wider audience in the approval of ideas, legitimises their implementation, especially if this is done with democratic means.

In order to ensure high levels of motivation for participation among young people, you can:

- ✓ TIP: Be **honest and transparent** regarding the impact that young people can have on concrete documents and decisions.
- ✓ TIP: Highlight **benefits** for young people of participation in a particular process, make it attractive.
- ✓ TIP: Design **iterative** processes with different stages that young people can join in and out.
- ✓ TIP: Allow commitment **flexibility** - enable room for people to join/re-join at different stages along the process, and in different formats.
- ✓ TIP: Keep **regular contact** with the youth representatives and youth in general, to make the engagement vivid and transparent.
- ✓ TIP: Ensure clear **follow-up** after the youth participation activities (see more detailed tips and methods in Section 3).

EXAMPLES OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Get inspired by the numerous tools and techniques of youth engagement, and check the Annex to find concrete examples of how each method was used in practice.

Technique	Main function	Ideal for	Good practices using this method (see Annex)
Citizen researchers	Inviting young people from various schools to interact with policy-makers and experts, and on the basis of this organising debates about the Just Transition Fund in their schools, then coming back with conclusions and proposals to policy-makers..	Small group reaching their peers	✓ MH:2K Oldham (UK)
Youth ambassadors	Selecting young people to spread awareness about the Just Transition Fund and the upcoming transition among their peers.	Small group reaching their peers	✓ POSH: Pioneers of Sustainable Hope (UK)
Dedicated activities at schools	Introducing the topic of upcoming transition and the Just Transition Fund during chosen classes at schools, inviting NGOs, policy-makers or researchers, and using attractive educational materials, e.g. games, debates, etc.	Big groups, a few events	✓ Democs for schools (IE, UK), ✓ Youth Active locally (PL)
Participatory arts	Inviting young people to express their feelings and opinions about the upcoming transition through a chosen form of art: photography, painting, music, film. Promoting the effects in the offline and online public spaces, organising debates between policy-makers and youth.	Inclusiveness of various groups	✓ Participatory Arts with Young Refugees (UK)
Youth Councils	Asking youth representatives to organise debates about the upcoming transition and Just Transition Fund in their networks, engage with the wider youth public and gather their input, and work to publicise their work	Existing structures of youth representation, regular meetings	✓ Youth Climate Council (DK) ✓ Comhaire na nÓg (IE) ✓ Barents Regional Youth Council (SE, FI, RU, NO)
Structured dialogue	Preparing informative materials and dialogue opportunities about a particular policy, preparing for the stage of co-creation, e.g. participatory workshops or next phases of a structured dialogue.	Medium groups, a few informative sessions	✓ ÖREK 2030 – Austrian Spatial Development Concept (AT) ✓ Gaia Municipal Plan for ‘All Youths’ (PT)
Online consultations	Preparing educational materials about the upcoming transition and Just Transition Fund, as well as main goals of the key policy documents (e.g. Just Transition Plans), inviting young people to express their opinions online – in writing and during webinars with policy-makers.	Unlimited number of participants, limited period of time	✓ Ichmache>Politik (DE)



Programming of the Just Transition Fund

AIM AT THIS STAGE

The aim at this stage is to invite young people to co-create solutions to the challenges of the upcoming transition and to come up with ideas for Just Transition Fund interventions.

HOW TO BEST INVOLVE YOUTH IN JUST TRANSITION FUND PROGRAMMING

Crucially, this stage involves preparations of the Just Transition Plans. They will involve an analysis of the challenges and opportunities of the upcoming transition, as well as formulation of the objectives and direction of the plans. The Plans will become the basis for selecting projects to be funded by the Just Transition Fund. It is crucial that young people have an active role and say in the shaping of these Plans' content, as it will arguably affect their future more than any other age group.

- ✓ TIP: Commit to youth participation in your **Territorial Just Transition Plan** and reinforce this with allocation of funding for youth-specific projects. Specify a concrete commitment to involve youth. This should build off consultations with youth on this very topic.
- ✓ TIP: Ensure youth representatives have **at least two seats** on all working groups and bodies involved in the preparatory and drafting process (before the official consultations), e.g. in the thematic working groups, debates of advisory bodies, etc.

Moreover, there will be debates and informative meetings for citizens related to the Just Transition Fund.

- ✓ TIP: Always ensure you have **at least one youth speaker** on every panel you organise!
- ✓ TIP: Invite young people to **attend** such debates and be ready to **answer** their questions!

Finally, at this stage the rules and procedures of Just Transition Fund implementation will also be designed. This includes eligibility and selection criteria for projects, as well as who and to what extent participates in assessing the projects as well as in the monitoring and evaluating Just Transition Fund implementation. .

- ✓ TIP: Include a specific '**youth participation**' selection criterion, encouraging project applicants to involve young people to their project preparation and implementation.
- ✓ TIP: Envisage **dedicated calls for youth projects** with small scale financing schemes, e.g. mini grants supporting youth's business ideas and social intervention projects, as well as involving young people in the selection process too.
- ✓ TIP: Consult draft **project selection criteria** with youth representatives.
- ✓ TIP: Include youth representatives in the **monitoring committees** and other bodies.

SPECIFIC ENABLERS AT THE PROGRAMMING STAGE

Support young people in acquiring all necessary knowledge and make the process transparent, so as to strengthen their motivation. Young people might lack the specific sectorial expertise and hence, use of a highly specialised vocabulary could hinder their ability to suggest meaningful solutions. In addition, their motivation might end up being limited when there is lack of clarity on how their solutions can be put into action or implemented in the real world.

Expert knowledge and support

- ✓ TIP: Provide young people with **detailed information** on particular topics to support their ideas, e.g. by preparing youth-friendly info packs. (see detailed tips in Section 3).
- ✓ TIP: Organise youth's **interactions with experts**: businesses, policy-makers, NGO activists and researchers (see detailed tips in Section 3).
- ✓ TIP: Support young people's preparations of policy proposals through mentorship programmes. Concrete follow-up and motivation
- ✓ TIP: Specify how young people's proposals will be **concretely used** or implemented. (see detailed tips in Section 3).
- ✓ TIP: Incentivise young people through **competitions**, rewarding the best ideas and supporting their implementation.

EXAMPLES OF CO-CREATION METHODS

Get inspired by the numerous tools and techniques of youth engagement below, and check the Annex to find concrete examples of how each method was used in practice.

Technique	Main function	Ideal for	Good practices using this method (see Annex)
Hackathons, datathons, competitions	Inviting youth to create concrete solutions to predefined challenges, offering prizes to the authors of the best ideas	Young professionals, students, 1-4-day events + preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ EU Datathon 2019 (EU) ✓ Social Entrepreneurship Challenge on eHealth (DE)
Youth seats on working groups and decision-making bodies	Providing youth with a voice at the decision-making table itself, through seats on all decision-making bodies where stakeholders hold seats	Representatives from youth organisations, trade union youth representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Slovenia (SI)
Youth-led strategy development	Inviting youth to a constructive dialogue with policy-makers and experts, allowing them to come up with proposals for concrete solutions to policy challenges or implementation mechanisms	Small groups of youth specialised in particular topics (young professionals, students), regular meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Young professionals' participation in the Dutch Climate Agreement (NL) ✓ ÖREK 2030 – Spatial Development Concept (AT) ✓ TBI: Youth, City and the Heritage (SI)
Co-creating workshops	Inviting youth to come up with proposals for concrete solutions to the challenges of particular a policy, programme or project (e.g. to be funded from the Just Transition Fund)	Small groups, general youth or students of particular professions, a few short events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Vocation Labs: Co-creating an ESF project (EE) ✓ Kecejme do toho (CZ) ✓ ÖREK 2030 – Spatial Development Concept (AT)
Youth councils/ parliaments	Inviting youth representatives to provide constructive feedback and draft formalised proposals for Just Transition Plans and other policy documents/strategies	Existing structures of youth representation, regular meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ European Youth Parliament: Power Shifts (EU) ✓ House of Youth Representatives Project (CY)
Structured dialogue	Inviting young people to provide constructive feedback and come up with proposals for draft policy documents related to the Just Transition Fund	Large groups, longer period of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Kecejme do toho (Have Your Say) (CZ) ✓ Gaia Municipal Plan for 'All Youths' (PT) ✓ Ichmache>Politik (DE)
Deliberative discussion day	Inviting young people to provide constructive feedback and come up with proposals to draft policy documents related to the Just Transition Fund	A single-day event for a large group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Deliberative Discussion Day (FI)



Implementation of the Just Transition Fund

AIM AT THIS STAGE

The main goal of the participation at this stage is to allow young people to be proactive about the challenges of the upcoming transition, and to contribute actively to the implementation of the Just Transition Fund.

HOW TO BEST INVOLVE YOUTH IN JUST TRANSITION FUND IMPLEMENTATION

This stage will involve the preparation and assessment of particular projects funded from the Just Transition Fund. Many of them will affect the future of young people, and therefore they should be heard when the projects are drafted and assessed. Moreover, ideally some projects will be directly targeted at youth, and it is crucial that young people have a role in ensuring that these projects are answering their real challenges and expectations, and that they effectively reach young participants.

- ✓ TIP: Design processes encouraging project applicants to consult and co-create the details and **content of their projects** with youth.
- ✓ TIP: Match the concrete commitment explicitly taken in the Territorial Just Transition Plan to involve youth with **funding commitments** on your part to support youth participation.
- ✓ TIP: Set aside a budget for **small-scale financing** (e.g. mini grants) for youth's ideas and create processes to support youth in developing their ideas.

Moreover, during the Just Transition Fund lifecycle each Member State and region will prepare and implement sectoral and specific policies, programmes, and projects related to the upcoming transition. You may wish to make use of youth with particular expertise in certain topics under the Just Transition Fund.

- ✓ TIP: Involve youth representatives in the official **working groups** preparing the executive, operational and sectoral policies related to the transition

SPECIFIC ENABLERS AT THE IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Young people often would like to implement their own projects and ideas, but lack the necessary resources. Lack of professional networks also may hinder them from getting involved in other organisations' projects.

Financial support

- ✓ TIP: Provide **small-scale financing** (e.g. mini grants) for youth projects and start-ups, and proactively look for external sources of additional financial support;
- ✓ TIP: Consider **reimbursing** the costs incurred by youth representatives involved over the long-term in policy advisory.
- ✓ TIP: Micro-financing could be made available for young adult entrepreneurs with concrete business ideas that support the transition to decarbonisation and enable sustainable living practices. Ideally, this should be supported by a dedicated incubator support system for the selected projects and mentorship.

Network

- ✓ TIP: Connect **organisations** working on Just Transition Fund-related projects targeted at youth with young people willing to participate.
- ✓ TIP: Connect **key policy-makers** involved in Just Transition Fund implementation with young people willing to provide ongoing feedback.

EXAMPLES OF METHODS AT THE IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Get inspired by the tools and techniques of involving youth in policy implementation, and check the Annex to find concrete examples of how each method was used in practice.

Technique	Main function	Ideal for	Good practices using this method (see Annex)
Call for talents and ideas	Offering grants for start-ups in the priority economic sectors identified as crucial during and after the transition, and/or addressing challenges defined in the Just Transition Plan	Young entrepreneurs and graduates in specific fields of study, longer period of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Next Energy - New talents, new ideas, new growth (IT) ✓ SILTA - A bridge to youth entrepreneurship (FI)
Youth fund	Offering mini grants within a Just Transition Fund project for young people willing to realise concrete social projects in their local community, addressing the challenges of the upcoming transition, and involving young people in selecting the youth projects to fund	Students and young professionals, longer period of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ LEADER Youth Fund and Local Youth Action Team (FI)
Reverse mentoring	Inviting young people to 'shadow' and give direct feedback to policy-makers involved in the Just Transition Fund implementation process and/or local industry leaders	Small groups, longer period of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ju & Me – The Reverse Mentoring Project (DE)
Working groups	Inviting young people to policy implementation: co-creating executive and operational policy mechanisms, following up on the co-created policy documents	Small groups of youth specialised in particular topics (young professionals, students), regular meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Slovenia (SI) ✓ Young professionals' participation in the Dutch Climate Agreement (NL) ✓ TBI: Youth, City and the Heritage (SI)
Participatory budgeting	Supporting youth in submitting proposals to the urban or regional participatory budget, addressing the challenges related to the upcoming transition	Large groups, annual cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Com'ON Cluj Napoca (RO) ✓ Thessaloniki Local Plan of 'Activities for the city and the youth 2018-2019' (EL) ✓ 'If I was the mayor' Youth participatory budgeting in Colle di Val d'Elsa (IT) ✓ RuutiBudgetti (FI) ✓ Youth active locally (PL)



Monitoring and evaluation of the Just Transition Fund

AIM AT THIS STAGE

The main goal of youth participation at this stage is to empower young people to keep track of the progress of the Just Transition Fund's implementation, to participate in assessing its outcomes, and to formulate constructive proposals for improvements.

HOW TO BEST INVOLVE YOUTH IN THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE JUST TRANSITION FUND

In terms of monitoring, relevant authorities for each Just Transition Plan will need to report on the use of the funds, fulfilment of indicators and provide the list of selected projects. It would be useful for young people to understand how preparations for transition are progressing, and how the Just Transition Fund is supporting this process.

- ✓ TIP: Reserve at least two seats for youth representatives in the Just Transition Fund **monitoring committee** and ensure they have a place in its working groups or other relevant bodies.
- ✓ TIP: Prepare a publically available **online data platform** allowing young people to monitor Just Transition Fund implementation, search for information about the projects and evaluate the benefits from them.

Young people should have the possibility to express their opinions regarding the quality of Just Transition Fund implementation, and to provide suggestions for the future throughout the three stages of evaluation (ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post).

- ✓ TIP: Involve youth representatives in preparing the **evaluation reports**. If an external organisation prepares the evaluation, specify youth's role in the tender.
- ✓ TIP: Organise **public debates** regarding Just Transition Fund implementation and ongoing preparations for the transition, inviting youth representatives as speakers and active participants.

SPECIFIC ENABLERS AT THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION STAGE

For young people – especially those involved in the previous stages of the Just Transition Fund – one of the most important aspects of participation is being able to see that their ideas are taken into account, how they are transformed into concrete actions and what impact they have. The monitoring and evaluation stage of the Just Transition Fund needs to enable a systematic feedback mechanism allowing young people to trust that their input is valued and has a follow-up.

Regular contact with policy-makers

- ✓ TIP: Ensure **regular meetings** with policy-makers involved in Just Transition Fund implementation, during which young people can discuss the ongoing progress and milestones in the transition, discuss the monitoring of data, and inquire about the next steps.
- ✓ TIP: Make a clear **follow-up** an integral part of the plan: make sure you always provide feedback to the young people who contributed in the programming and implementation stages, on how their ideas and opinions were used in practice.
- ✓ TIP: Promote and share information **on social media** about the input and impact of youth on the specific project so as to inform other young people, as well as to concretely demonstrate to them that youth's voice matters and influences the directions of the transition.

However, data gathered for monitoring requirements and the language of evaluation reports are often very technical and difficult to understand. This could prevent young people from participating in this stage in a meaningful way.

Access and capacity to analyse data

- ✓ TIP: Create a **youth-friendly platform** and use **data visualisations** (e.g. in the form of infographics, maps, icons) to represent progress in Just Transition Fund implementation.
- ✓ TIP: Organise **training sessions** for young people on how to use data sources and how to analyse the available data (e.g. at schools during IT classes, in libraries, universities etc.).

EXAMPLES OF METHODS AT THE MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

Get inspired by the numerous tools and techniques of involving young people in policy monitoring and evaluation, and check the Annex to find concrete examples of how each method was used in practice.

Technique	Main function	Ideal for	Good practices using this method (see Annex)
Participatory civic monitoring	Educational programme and civic challenge aimed at training young people to make them develop the key skills to design projects of civic monitoring, collect and analyse data, and report on the outcomes of projects financed by EU cohesion policy funding.	Large groups, longer period of time	School of Open Cohesion (IT)
Youth councils	An existing youth council can also be given monitoring function, executed for example through regular meetings with public authorities.	Existing structures of youth representation, regular meetings with Minister	Ungeklimarådet (Youth Climate Council) (DK)
Structured dialogue	A monitoring youth council can be created in order to monitor activities of a particular public body, or implementation of a programme. It may have the power to make suggestions and corrections.	Large groups, limited period of time	Gaia Municipal Plan for 'All Youths' (PT)
Deliberative Discussion Day	Enabling young people to evaluate, reshape or improve practices based on their experiences. Organising the evaluation as a regularly repeated process secures follow-up for the issues raised and brings positive side effects for both young citizens and decision makers; leading thus to a more sustainable service production.	A single-day event for a large group, organised yearly or bi-annually	Deliberative Discussion Day (DDD) (FI)
Youth fund	Through small scale funding, young people learn how to manage project all the way to monitoring and evaluation. The 'gate method' allows young people to learn how to manage and report on a project from small scale to larger scale.	Small group of young entrepreneurs, Longer period of time	LEADER Youth Fund and Local Youth Action Team (FI)



Ensure youth impact and address concrete challenges

This section provides concrete advice and solutions for some of the recurring enablers and challenges mentioned so far in the toolkit. You can find the list below. While the solutions it provides are by no means exhaustive, it offers appropriate advice for taking steps to address these issues. All advice is complemented with recommended examples, on each of which you can consult the Annex for more details.

1. How to reach out to a youth audience and raise awareness?
 2. How to adjust your language and communication to be more youth-friendly?
 3. How to select youth for participation activities?
 4. How to improve inclusion of youth from underrepresented backgrounds and groups?
 5. How to prepare participants with knowledge needed to participate?
 6. How to involve specialists, policy-makers and experts?
 7. How to support skills development of youth in the framework of your activities?
 8. How to enable youth-led participation?
 9. How to ensure effective youth involvement in mainstreamed settings?
 10. How to use social media effectively?
 11. How to use digital methods effectively?
 12. How to implement effective follow-up and youth-led accountability processes?
-



How to reach out to a youth audience and raise awareness?

An effective outreach strategy is of key importance for looking beyond already engaged youth and achieving meaningful participation. In order to raise awareness among young people about opportunities to engage in participatory events:

- ✓ Apply a combination of attractive outreach and engagement methods,
- ✓ Use language that is appealing to your youth audience (see next section).
- ✓ Get inspired by some of the following methods that can bear fruit in this context.

AMBASSADOR SCHEMES

Too often, a discrepancy between young people and policy-makers can be observed. One solution could be to select a small group of young people, train them and put them into direct contact with policy-makers. Then, these “young ambassadors” can act as an effective communication channel between authorities and young people, sharing information and organising debates on selected topics while simultaneously incentivising their peers to participate

- ➔ Example: **POSH (UK)** – Youth ambassadors raise awareness among their peers on important topics and negotiate commitments directly with local authorities.
- ➔ Example: **MH:2K (UK)** – Young “researchers” interact with experts, and then initiate and engage in topic specific debates with their peers, as well as present proposals to policy-makers

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL TOOLS

The use of online and digital tools is a necessity in today’s world. Please refer to p.31 (social media) and p.32 (digital tools) for specific guidance on these.

GAMIFICATION

In order to diversify your channels for reaching youth, including games created by experts on the relevant topics can be very appealing. Such an approach can be used to spread the word in a game-like relaxed environment. However, the games in question should be adapted to the needs of the particular group, region or initiative.

- ➔ Example: **Democs for schools (IE/UK)** – Deliberative discussions through a purpose-designed card game. The card decks are designed by experts to enable individuals to discuss complex topics, all within the context of an enjoyable, location-flexible, game-based setting.

STREET BASED METHODS, LOCAL EVENTS AND SCHOOLS

Street based methods, through schools or local events like concerts, workshops and festivals can attract young people, especially those not belonging to formal groups or living in sparsely inhabited regions.

- ➔ Example: **Kecejme do Toho (CZ)** – Events held in unique settings including music clubs and bar camps, as well as an open-air festival in Prague as a launch event at which youth put forward topic ideas for discussion.

STRUCTURED DIALOGUES

If you have the necessary time and resources needed to organise them, structured dialogue sessions offer ideal settings to reach out to different youth groups. These events bring young people, youth experts and decision-makers together in an environment designed to allow everyone to have a place to speak and feel heard.

- ➔ Example: **Gaia “More Voice to Youth” (PT)**– 500 young people and other local actors, such as secondary school students, NGOs, youth actors, local agents and health experts, were engaged in a year-long structured dialogue. The incentive for participants to engage in the process was the possibility to co-design the city’s municipal plan.



How to adjust your language and communication to be more youth-friendly?

Much feedback gathered from stakeholders in the course of preparing this toolkit highlighted the need for youth-friendly language when trying to reach and engage young people. The following are some non-exhaustive tips for going about this¹:

- ✓ Be straightforward in your writing. Keep it uncluttered, brief and to the point.
- ✓ Avoid acronyms, jargon, or phrases/terms that are specific to your field. At the same time, avoid inappropriate use of slang, as it can be counterproductive and deter youth. The best approach is to use simple, colloquial and everyday expressions.
- ✓ Avoid patronising or condescending language that treats young people as lacking knowledge or understanding.
- ✓ Adjust your vocabulary and messaging depending on factors including age group, level of education and interests.
- ✓ Assume your audience is not familiar with any policies or projects you reference in your communications and adjust your text accordingly. Be careful of 'policy-speak' such as 'action plan', 'strategy' or 'budget'.
- ✓ Use images, colours and visuals to complement your written or spoken words.
- ✓ Ensure every piece of communication (social media post, press release, website post) has a clear call to youth for input or action (e.g. "please share your opinions on...", "tell us what you are doing/would like..."). Avoid one-way transmission of information, such as messages that presume audience compliance (e.g. this is what will be done and how") or non-empowering calls to action ("Attend this meeting").
- ✓ Ask some young people to proof-read any material that you plan to distribute among a broader youth group, checking if they understand the message you want to pass and their advice for making it more appealing.
- ✓ Use online readability and text complexity tools to check the difficulty of longer texts. Many of these tools are available in various EU languages.



How to select youth for participation activities?

Where places are limited for activities, there are two main methods of selecting participants:

1. By nomination,
2. By open call.

BY NOMINATION

Under this system, individual young people are nominated for the selection process by youth groups or other relevant entities. This system can support accountability if the nominations are made by youth groups in your region. However, it can also risk over-representation of engaged and active youth.

➔ *Example: **Youth Climate Council (DK)** – Half of the members were appointed by relevant youth organisations.*

BY OPEN CALL

In this method, a public call is released. Any young person who fits the announced criteria can apply. You can select on a first-come-first-served basis or on merit, with the possibility for quotas or suggestive criteria to ensure a balanced sample of youth. If you have undertaken successful outreach efforts, particularly towards underrepresented groups, this method can help lead to improved diversity. However, equally if this is not the case, it can risk leading to a very small pool of unrepresentative candidates.

➔ *Example: **Dutch Climate Agreement (NL)** – Youth themselves organised the call and made the selection.*

⁸ The recommended actions draw extensively on the resource developed by the OECD "Engaging Young People in Open Government: A Communication Guide": <https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/Young-people-in-OG.pdf>

Regardless of which method you choose, the following should apply:

- ✓ Plan enough time for selection processes. Rushed selection processes open the door to tokenism.
 - ✓ Share the opportunity widely (through your outreach work), inform youth of the selection criteria, and involve youth representatives or a youth panel in the selection process.
 - ✓ Be transparent with young people about the opportunity, selection process and selection outcomes.
 - ✓ Develop selection criteria, preferably together with youth organisations. Strive for gender parity and set yourself a quantitative target in terms of the number of participants from underrepresented groups.
- ➔ *Example: **Comhaire na nÓg** (IE), Ireland's structure of youth councils, have a target of having at least 20% of participants from seldom-heard backgrounds.*
- ✓ Keep technical, academic or skills-based requirements to a minimum. Those who are in the most precarious situations will face the greatest challenges from the transition and thus participation initiatives should be open to all youth as much as possible.



How to improve inclusion of youth from underrepresented backgrounds and groups?

Involving seldom-heard youth can be challenging due to reduced access to information about youth participation opportunities in their social circles. Moreover, structural barriers and historically low engagement of such groups feeds into reduced trust in and less knowledge of the system of the public policy system and its institutions. For this reason, targeted outreach efforts are needed to raise awareness about participations opportunities among these groups and to convince them to partake:

- ✓ Complete mapping of the existing initiatives and organisations working with these groups in your region, particularly those whose work touch on similar themes as the Just Transition Fund. Identify those who would be suitable to work with.
- ✓ Partner with such individuals and local groups who are trusted by seldom-heard youth to support your access to such youth and to build trust with them. This could be a strong youth leader or influencer, youth-led organisations representing these groups, and/or youth and community-serving workers and organisations, as well as sporting, cultural and church groups.
- ✓ Ensure use of appropriate language and terminology - especially regarding gender, sexuality and disability inclusion.
- ✓ In regions with minority languages, provide translation support for participants – whether formal or informal.
- ✓ Tailor the outreach actions listed in the previous section.
- ✓ Include various forms of expression (e.g. painting, videos, music, theatre) for allowing young people to share their daily challenges with policy-makers and other groups in society.

➔ *Example: **Participatory Arts with Young Refugees** (UK) used photography to allow youth from minorities to express their opinions and feelings regarding their life in the new neighbourhood.*

In organising and running your event or process, you should consciously develop policies that create a welcoming and enabling environment. Examples of actions include:

- ✓ Create an informal and enjoyable format – such formats help to create a safe space for inexperienced participants and build their confidence.
- ✓ Create space for their voices – it is one thing to have a balanced composition at your event and another thing to ensure all voices are heard equally. Your methodology should foster confidence and give a voice to all participants and not just the most confident. Knowledge- and capacity-building efforts (see next section) are important enablers in this regard.

- ✓ Hold events in their spaces – youth are most likely to participate when events take place in familiar settings.
- ✓ Address financial and logistical barriers – Put in place supports and compensations for disadvantaged youth to ensure they are not deterred by costs of participation. Equally, put in place transportation support to ensure that scheduling and location do not present barriers to participation for youth living in remote areas.

➔ *Example: **Comhairle na nÓg** (IE), Ireland’s structure of youth councils, has a dedicated strategy for involving such groups and a specific toolkit⁹ for event organisers on the issue.*



How to prepare participants with knowledge needed to participate?

Given the nature of the Just Transition Fund, a certain level of knowledge will inevitably be needed for many events on

1. The upcoming transition in their particular region, reasons for it and potential consequences for young people and their families,
2. The Just Transition Fund, its role, goals, main resources and implementation rules,

This toolkit strongly cautions against installing background knowledge as criteria for participation. Instead, integrate knowledge-building processes into your event plan, deploying **knowledge-sharing** and **capacity-building** techniques that enable youth to learn as they participate. This will help to create a level-playing field among participants enabling less-experienced voices to be heard, as well as support factual and informed outcomes.

➔ *Example: **Both Kecejme do Toho** (CZ) and **Ichmache>Politik** (DE) deliberative dialogue projects had dedicated “information” stages at the start of their processes, where information materials were prepared by youth for youth on the topics.*

➔ *Example: **Youth active locally** (PL) included a series of educational classes by NGO activists during normal classes in primary and secondary schools on participatory tools available in the city. On this basis, students were ready to prepare and submit their own projects to the city, i.e. within the city’s participatory budgeting framework.*

➔ *Example: **Democs for Schools** (IE/UK), a deliberative consultation technique using a card game, sees information and viewpoints on the topic presented in “bite size” chunks on various cards prepared by experts, so that participants acquire knowledge on the topic as they play.*

At some stages of the Just Transition Fund, engaging experts may be beneficial. Please find advice in the following section on this.



How to involve specialists, policy-makers and experts?

All events and processes should be structured in a way that respects and amplifies the voice of young people. Therefore, the involvement of non-youth experts or policy-makers must be based on the principle of young people as equal partners.

When involving experts, it is important that:

- ✓ Experts should have a well-defined role, which is clearly communicated to both them and youth. They should also be briefed on the process itself and its youth-led nature so they have a better understanding of the broader context of the process.
- ✓ Experts should maintain an arms-length role, providing neutral analysis of the implications and trade-offs to be borne in mind (e.g. budgetary realities) to help youth deliver tangible output.

⁹ <https://www.comhairlenanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Seldom-Heard-toolkit.pdf>

- ✓ Expert input should always strive to be as interactive as possible and avoid classroom-like presentations in which youth are passive recipients of knowledge.
- ✓ Identify the best moment in your process to involve experts. Whilst many projects do this in early stages, the Czech structured dialogue project, Kecejme do Toho, for example, involved experts only after the workshop phase, so as to avoid any outside influence on the initial opinion formation of youth. Therefore, the discussion with these experts and policy-makers consisted of youth presenting their proposals followed by dialogue on these.
- ✓ Alternatively, experts can work with a small group of selected young people, e.g. ambassadors or citizen researchers, in order to equip them with knowledge and informative materials, which young people can then share with their peers.

When involving policy-makers, it is important that you provide for meaningful interaction. Situations, in which policymakers arrive to make a speech and then leave, raise questions regarding the importance and relevance attached to youth contribution and should be avoided. Make sure young people have opportunities for meaningful interaction from policy-makers, get support when developing their own ideas and solutions to challenges, and/or get feedback to their policy and project proposals.

In keeping with these principles, it is important that both experts and policy-makers are briefed and prepared on how to optimally discuss with young people in advance. This may include training adults to listen to, work jointly with and engage young people effectively in accordance with their evolving capacities³.

➔ *Example: **Ju&Me** - The Reverse Mentoring Program trained young people to become mentors advising local political leaders, administrators and business managers on specific topics related to local development. Involving young people to give trainings to develop digital and communication skills can be a win-win situation: allowing adult workers to learn skills that would prove useful for their professional reconversion, and employing young people to share their knowledge.*



How to support skills development of youth in the framework of your activities?

Every youth participation activity is a leadership and skills development opportunity. These non-formal educational experiences provide settings in which young people learn important competences, which is particularly important given the underlying objectives behind the Just Transition Fund. Moreover, equipping youth with skill development opportunities is important for helping them to feel empowered and able to participate.

- ✓ As a first step, map out in advance of your events and process the skills and competencies that could be developed through a given youth participation activity.
- ✓ Once you have done this, identify ways in which you can deploy support to further boost this learning, such as targeted capacity-building trainings on relevant issues and soft skills.
- ✓ If your participatory process involves particular tools, e.g. a specific online platform, organise a training for young people on how to use it in practice.
- ✓ For shorter single-event processes, kicking-off with teambuilding activities is an excellent way to build skills and appreciation of principles of working together among participants.

➔ *Example: All events of the **Power Shifts** project of the European Youth Parliament (EU) begin with half-day or full day of team-building, in which the committees engage in a variety of fun indoor and outdoor activities designed to break the ice, build a team and establish principles in an informal setting for working together in a group.*

➔ *Example: **LEADER Youth Fund, Keskipiste Local Action Group** (FI) – young people are supported to transform their ideas into concrete projects and initiatives through small-scale financing. At the heart of the initiative is the ‘gate method’ – the fund is a small gate opening a wide space of opportunities for young people to apply their newly acquired skills at a larger scale.*

¹⁰ <https://www.who.int/pmnch/mye-statement.pdf?ua=1>



How to enable youth-led participation?

Youth-led engagement means enabling events and processes to be run by youth for youth. You can support this by taking some of the following actions:

- ✓ Formalise a mandate or agreement with youth organisations that sets out the structures that you will put in place to take young people's ideas on board in a meaningful way. This provides accountability and empowers these organisations to take actions in support of your objectives.

➔ *Example – **The Youth Climate Council** (DK) has a Terms of Reference which provides for at least two meetings with the Minister per year to handover recommendation. The formal structure in turn supports their work to reach out to a wider youth audience.*

- ✓ Partner with youth organisations and empower them to lead the organisation and delivery of events.

➔ *Example – **Power Shifts** is a joint initiative of the European Youth Parliament (EYP) and the Innogy Foundation for Energy and Society. In focusing on energy topics, it use the well-established structure, methodology and network of the EYP, with all events run by EYP youth volunteers for youth.*

- ✓ Empower youth to decide what areas they will focus on within the broader framework of the headline topic.

➔ *Example – **House of Youth Representatives Project** (CY) – within the broader overarching committee topic, young people select the specific thematic that will be discussed by the committee via an online survey.*

- ✓ When working in school environments, it is important to remember that youth engagement processes should still aspire to be non-formal education settings. Therefore, teachers should be briefed on youth-led engagement and how they can be an effective support to this.

➔ *Example – **Warsaw's Youth Active Locally** (PL) project involved education classes, project developing and participatory budgeting in a classroom environment. This was enabled by effective dialogue with teachers, trainings for teachers, and preparation of simple and attractive lesson plans for them.*

➔ *Example – **School of OpenCohesion** (IT) – Teachers accompany their students in an innovative educational programme and civic challenge aimed at promoting and developing principles of active citizenship in secondary schools using open data.*

- ✓ Finally, youth can be harnessed to engage other groups in society also.

➔ *Example – **TBI** (SI) – young people in Idrija, Slovenia used innovative consultation methods to collect ideas from the wider city population, which then fed into their designing of urban plans, projects and initiatives.*

How to ensure effective youth involvement in mainstreamed settings?



Youth should not participate only in youth-specific events, but also have opportunities to be included in wider Just Transition Fund processes with other groups. This involves deliberately creating places and positioning for young people throughout the Just Transition Fund implementation process in your region in order to ensure full, regular and normalised youth participation⁴. To achieve youth equality in mainstreamed settings,

- ✓ Provide young people with the necessary support (training, mentors).
- ✓ Reserve at least two seats for youth in any working groups in which non-government representatives have seats.

¹¹ <https://freechild.org/youth-mainstreaming/#:~:text=Youth%20mainstreaming%20is%20deliberately%20creating,of%20worship%2C%20and%20other%20places>.

➔ *Example: **Implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Slovenia** - Representatives from the youth sector are directly involved in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the European Youth Guarantee in Slovenia. They hold seats in the governmental working group responsible for such work, and as such have had an active say in and shaped its implementation. In turn, their involvement has fostered higher levels of youth buy-in and youth involvement in some implementation initiatives.*



How to use social media effectively⁵?

Social media offers platforms for sharing information, expressing views and mobilising peers. Facebook and Twitter are the most commonly used platforms for youth participation processes.

- ✓ Set up accounts on both to spread the word. Get your partners and relevant organisations in the youth participation space to share your posts. Use hashtags to facilitate interactive engagement, as well as for tracking engagement.
- ✓ Where a region has more than one language, try to issue communications in each language. Individual social media channels in each language are advisable.
- ✓ Be responsive to messages you receive via these platforms and ensure you answer them just as you would for those received by email or post.
- ✓ Ensure you monitor conversations online to identify any areas of concern and de-escalate them quickly e.g. abusive comments or misinformation.

TikTok, Instagram and YouTube enjoy increasing market share among the youth audience, particularly teenagers. They offer particular scope to:

- ✓ Involve influencers and vloggers with large youth audiences to raise awareness on youth participation activities and launch debate on just transition topics.
- ✓ Once activities are underway, social media can also help you reach a wider audience not in attendance at your events:
- ✓ Identify and publicise success stories, tangible results to date and participant testimonies.
- ✓ Encourage young participants to share information and promote their activities on their own social media accounts. Such content can reach a wider youth audience and tend to enjoy more legitimacy among youth.



How to use digital methods effectively?

New technologies offer a wide array of possibilities when it comes to improving the overall process of youth participation. Digitisation offers enhanced potential from the very first steps. Fully online registration systems, including the possibility to complete or upload any necessary forms online, is highly advisable, and reduces complexity for youth, parent/guardians and organisers.

Digital means can also help maintain engagement levels among participant and help news of the workings of your events reach a wider audience. To this effect, invite young creatives and influencers to your events with the task of developing unique and engaging content on the discussions taking place⁶.

Digital methods are particularly relevant in the context of COVID-19, which has forced greater contemplation on how participatory processes can be replicated online and how to address the lack of in-person contact. Look at youth projects that successfully took place in 2020 in your region, which could provide you with inspiration and concrete ideas of how to deliver participatory events and processes suitable for your local audience whilst remaining compliant with COVID-19 public health guidelines. Good examples of such methods include:

- ✓ Virtual webinars and dialogues can bring together youth from different regions and backgrounds in the comfort of their own home.

¹² This section draws on the resource developed by the OECD “Engaging Young People in Open Government: A Communication Guide”: <https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/Young-people-in-OG.pdf>

¹³ UNFPA, Operational Guidance for My Body, My Life, My World, to be published in 2021.

- ✓ For deeper engagement, online tools can be developed that allow the direct participation of youth in the design of a concrete policy. Well developed software can bundle youth inputs together efficiently as well as provide individualised records for youth participants to follow what happened to their inputs. Such processes can be an effective way to represent large numbers of citizens in diverse location, however they can run the risk of being dominated by a small number of engaged participants if steps are not taken to ensure it reaches a wider audience
- ✓ Systems facilitating digital voting by youth to select the best youth-designed projects.

When using digital methods, bear in mind that not all young people have equal internet access. Geography and affluence are well established in research as having a correlation with young people's access to internet connectivity and digital devices. Therefore, ideally, digital process should be complemented with other forms of participation.

➔ *Example: **Ichmake Politik** (DE) – Creation of a project-specific digital tool which allowed for the consultation and the direct involvement of participants.*

➔ *Example: **Ju&Me** (DE) - The Reverse Mentoring Program trained young people to become mentors advising local political leaders, administrators and business managers on specific topics related to local development. Involving young people to give trainings to develop digital and communication skills can be a win-win situation: allowing adult workers to learn skills that would prove useful for their professional reconversion, and employing young people to share their knowledge of the digital era.*



How to implement effective follow-up and youth-led accountability processes?

A commitment to follow-up from the organisers' side is essential. Young participants should be informed as to how their ideas have been implemented and, where necessary, provided with the opportunity to influence the end-result of a project. Youth should also receive clear feedback on how their participation was considered and has influenced any outcomes. In this respect, it is recommend to:

- ✓ Put in text a clear commitment on the organisers' side to provide follow-up to participants, so that young people can follow step by step what became of their contributions.
- ✓ Include a roadmap of follow-up actions after events, which helps to ensure accountability on the part of authorities and commitment to solve potential problems in the implementation of a project. In turn, it enables youth to take initiative in support of the agreed actions.

➔ *Example: **Ichmache>Politik** (DE) – included a special feedback feature online allowing young people to follow step-by-step what became of their contributions, including how their input was bundled with that of other youth, how it was presented to authorities, and how policy-makers responded to this input. .*

➔ *Example: **POSH** (UK) – Charters were negotiated between young people and decision makers leading to a partnership agreement (incorporating sets of commitments) of what municipalities will do to address the issues in question.*

