

Manifesto for Young People by Young People to Shape the European Cooperation Policy

‘Tick the boxes: coop with youth!’

Check-list for decision-makers*

***Public Authorities (including EU Staff, Managing Authorities, Joint Secretariats), Project Beneficiaries, Members of Macro Regional Strategies**

The current challenges the EU is facing has triggered a huge response for the next generations. The EU has put in place a the Green Deal, the Digital Strategy and many others to overcome the impact on young people, as they will inherit the state of the environment, relations among people or the socio-economic situation. This is why it is so important for young people today to be actively involved in creating the future, not only in terms of regional development and the creation of a European community, but also in all issues affecting their future lives, such as education, the labour market, the environment, climate change, digital development as expressed in the Youth Manifesto.

3 good reasons to involve young people in your daily work

- 1) Because it is their future which is being decided right now, so they have a moral imperative to have a voice in this discussion
- 2) Because one of the central aspirations they have is that of fair society which we need more than ever.
- 3) Because they have a different perspective, they grew up surrounded by new technologies and new tools

The following ‘Tick the box list’ is a non-exhaustive list of possible actions, which may help you to streamline your plans and initiatives toward young people.

- **Young people’s participation at an early stage** to identify problems and solutions can **reduce, or avoid altogether, conflict at a later stage** and thus reduce associated costs and delays.
- In local projects, **young people can bring local and up-to-date knowledge**, so **projects are more appropriate to local circumstances, needs and aspirations**. Programmes can be adapted to local circumstances so **scarce resources can be used more efficiently**. Increasingly at wider levels than the local, **young people can also bring a range of different knowledge that contribute to the quality of the projects**.
- Carefully designed and implemented participation can create mechanisms to **enable marginalised or excluded young people’s groups to join the decision-making process, reducing the divisions in society** by bringing excluded groups into the mainstream of society and community. Open debates are an effective way to **empower** the younger generation to make it happen whilst facilitating discussions help to lower the risk of polarisation.

- The **inclusion of many stakeholders, such as young people, and the transparency of interests and arguments from all parties help to reach compromises or the acceptance of unpopular decisions.** This helps to implement hard decisions while maintaining **honest communication.**
- **Involving young people would increase trust in the institutions,** which is very much needed in current hard times for democracy and factual/correct information dissemination.

How to best involve young people?

- 1) Identify which of the 12 recommendations listed below you are willing to/can implement**
- 2) Identify/Map the target audience to address for each of the recommendations, such as:**

-Schools? Universities? Technical institutes? Training centres? *TIP: Try to reach out to young people who have as diverse backgrounds as possible!*

-Civil Society Organisations in your area working with young people?

-Youth/After-school/Neighbourhood centres? Sport centres/clubs?

-Young people's associations? Youth movements?

-Young elected politicians?

- 3) Check the list below with practical tips on how to best reach out to and involve young people for each of the 12 recommendations.** Remember: **informing** young people is a first great step but it is not enough. We strongly encourage you to **consult**, and even better, **engage with them in your decision-making process**, i.e. making them active agent of your policy and financial choices as much as possible.
- 4) Consider delegating one or more of the following tasks** to your interns, trainees or "[Interreg Volunteer Youth](#)" (IVY) volunteers, whenever it is appropriate.

1. "Increasing the number of online events and meetings via digital platforms, with a clear timeline and pre-established agenda to facilitate civil society organisations' and young people's involvement."

Plan a youth-dedicated session in all events you organise or you partner with and if possible associate young people to the preparation of this session. This session could be about inviting younger generations to share their opinion, successful project stories and suggest practical solutions on relevant cooperation matters.

Involve all your youth-related projects in this type of events and meetings on a regular basis.

Inform key multipliers such as educational and youth actors (schools, universities, technical institutes, civil society organisations) about all planned events so that they can contribute with speakers and audience.

Offer a digital connection to all your events so that they are more easily accessible (e.g. Facebook or Twitter live, web-streaming, etc...).

2. "Planning regular thematic meetings (for example two per year) on Interreg matters with young people and European Commission's staff specialised in territorial cooperation."

- Associate young people to the preparation of some sessions of the events
- Allow young people to take active part in thematic sessions organised during your events or organise *ad hoc* thematic events and meetings with young people/associations.
- Invite European Commission's staff to your thematic meetings with young people to have an ever broader perspective on cooperation matters.

3. *“Involving young people in meetings of relevant EU-wide groups and networks, such as the Interreg Annual Meetings, the Interreg Communication Officers Network, and INFORM.”*

- Systematically invite young people, such as your trainees, interns or IVY volunteers, to your internal and external meetings and events, and allow them to express their constructive opinions during these occasions; this way they can contribute to shape your policy-making.

4. *“Enabling young people to encourage their region to apply for the REGIOSTARS Award competition and consider keeping a category dedicated to youth every year.”*

- When promoting the annual REGIOSTARS competition in your area, please encourage youth-related projects to apply so that they can get even higher visibility. This is even more important considering that one of the cross-cutting criteria for awarded projects is to involve civil society.

5. *“Further promoting the regular exchanges within existing governance structures like the Macro Regional Strategies, at regional level (e.g. boosting more regular dialogue with young people during the Annual Fora allowing them to participate in the B2B meetings...) and make sure that NGOs are also part of those exchanges.”*

- If you operate within a Macro-Regional Strategy (MRS), make sure to involve all youth-organisations in your territory in events, consultations and more, as they may not be aware of such cooperation framework.
- Systematically include a youth-dedicated session/side-event during your MRS Forum with related activities (e.g. competition, project highlights, etc...) to mobilise young people in the long term.
- EU MRS Presidencies can play an important role in involving young people in the elaboration of their annual programme.

6. *“Increasing the knowledge of Interreg in schools and universities: Interreg programmes (Managing Authorities) should create partnerships with local schools and universities to talk about Interreg and to make young people more aware.”*

- Plan physical or digital visits/meetings with young students to speak about your job in relation to EU cooperation (Interreg and/or MRS) and do not hesitate to extend the invitation to a colleague from the European Commission (see below).
- Make sure that you also explain what young people can do to take advantage of and/or contribute to the world of European cooperation (e.g. get involved by becoming an IVY volunteer or taking part to the

Manifesto Core Group of young people; participating to your events and competitions; applying for projects; etc...).

7. “Encouraging European Commission’s staff to boost their participation to the “Back to School/University” initiative and students to pro-actively contact and invite EU staff to go visit their school and university.”

- Set up physical or digital events/visits/meetings with your local educational institutes (e.g. schools, universities, technical institutes, etc...) and invite European Commission’s staff to show young people how many layers of cooperation there are and disseminate about a positive message around the EU (which is much closer than they think it is!).
- Promote it via personal social media

8. “Creating and disseminating dedicated “edutainment” programme on territorial cooperation via Interreg projects or with massive open online courses (MOOC) that may interest students and teachers.”

- If not done yet, produce catchy educational (so-called “edutainment”, i.e. educational entertainment) for different age ranges (children – teenagers – young adults) on your cooperation programme (Interreg programme or MRS) in your local language(s) and disseminate it digitally among all educational institutes in your area (schools, universities, technical institutes) to increase awareness among young people of such cooperation instruments.

TIPS: 1) you can use your TA budget for this; 2) you may want to involve youth or education organisations on the ground when designing this material to make sure it corresponds to what young people are attracted to.

9. “Encouraging each Interreg programme to plan more calls more easily accessible by young people with simpler rules and a dedicated budget.”

- Design, launch and promote among other Interreg programmes and your European Commission counterparts at least one youth-specific call for projects in 2021-2027 targeting young people and allow for simpler rules so that they can have easier access to Interreg funding.
- Encourage young people to launch projects on every priorities of your Interreg programme (or in Macro Regional Strategies work programme). In particular on environmental issues, employment and social priorities.

TIP: you can also set up a “Participatory Budgeting” processes in which young people decide how to allocate part of your EU budget. Participatory budgeting allows citizens to identify, discuss, and prioritise public spending projects, and gives them the power to make real decisions about how money is spent. The principles of participatory budgeting can be applied in the selection of projects or the preparation of grant applications by beneficiaries. All this to be applied for the benefit of young people.

Youth could be involved in the selection of projects, either by being represented in steering committees/monitoring, or they could be brought in as experts to assess the “youth aspect” of certain project applications related to e.g. labour market and education. Another way to make Interreg funding more accessible to youth is to set up for example people-to-people projects. This could be done through a Small Project Fund, or through the provisions on “projects of limited financial value”, which is obligatory for 2021-2027 and could provide a simplified administrative procedure.

10. “Inviting young people in meetings and enable them to actively participate to the monitoring committees.”

□ Systematically invite young people (e.g. your trainees, interns, IVY volunteers) or youth associations in your area to your Monitoring Committees and allow time and space for their active participation.

TIP: you can also appoint, invite and select young people to a consultative or decision making forum in order to support or control the planning, implementation or monitoring of a program or project, similarly to the current system of Monitoring Committees

□ Consider “crowdsourcing” which is used to exploit the power of community (in this case, young people) in order to gather or process information. It can be an effective tool to collect ideas from a broad circle of young people and youth associations but also to receive information that can help to monitor implementation or assess the impact of programs and projects. For example, “[At the School of OpenCohesion](#)” is a project that was developed to involve high-school students in the monitoring of EU cohesion policy funds.

TIP: check “[Participedia](#)” and “[Consul](#)” as interesting platforms to easily involve young people!

11. “Mobilising resources for the Interreg priority objective related to boosting skills and tackling youth unemployment”

□ Make sure to mobilise resources (e.g. calls for projects) to tackle youth unemployment, in line with Interreg priorities.

□ Play a more active role in offering job opportunities to young people in border areas by setting up a job offer platform in multiple languages, in partnership with local companies, organisations and educational and training institutes.

12. “Boosting more EU inter-institutional and multi-governance relations, dialogues and actions on young people’s role and needs linked to Interreg.”

□ Invite young people and youth organisations from your area to external events organised by other EU partners, including the European Commission.

□ Disseminate the Manifesto within and outside of your institution/organisation to involve as many actors as possible in making them aware of the importance and the benefits of involving young people in policy making.

□ Work hand in hand with young people on your communication strategy: young people could be your ambassadors. They would help reach out other young people.

□ organising competitions like awards/hackathons/challenges between Interreg programmes or projects

TIP: use - and disseminate - the Manifesto communication toolkit for social media communication

FOR ANY QUESTION, DOUBT OR NEED SUPPORT (e.g. contacts of young people in your area), **do not hesitate to contact:**

REGIO-TRANSNATIONAL-AND-INTERREGIONAL-COOPERATION@ec.europa.eu

REGIO-D2-CROSS-BORDER-COOPERATION@ec.europa.eu

REGIO-A2-COMMUNICATION@ec.europa.eu

We are also very happy to be informed about all your Manifesto-related actions and activities, thanks!