

INTEGRATING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES IN MIGRATION POLICY PROCESSES

DIASPORA YOUTH
RECOMMENDATIONS

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FOREWORD

Young people are universally acknowledged for their role in sustainable development, both for how it will affect their futures, and how they are some of the most active, effective and dynamic advocates for global change. Youth is a priority partner for the European Union's external action, as set out in the Youth Action Plan, the first ever policy framework for a strategic partnership with young people around the world.

At the EU Global Diaspora Facility, we are firm believers in the great value of youth expertise in policymaking and programming. The transnational nature of diaspora youth means they often operate in multiple spaces, across the breadth of sustainable development goals, bridging gaps between cultures, nations and generations. To bring these attributes into the project, we began the Diaspora Youth Internship in 2020 which has seen 12 young people take active roles in EUDiF's first phase. Interns have shared their academic and professional skills and knowledge, as well as their lived experience as young people living in the diaspora. The internship naturally led to a thriving alumni community which has remained close to the project ever since and ensures youth perspectives are always part of the discussion.

Building on these successes and as a direct reflection of the European Union's commitment to youth inclusion, a focus session with diaspora youth active in migration and development was organised in March 2024 to gather insights that EUDiF could put into action directly within the project's second phase, as well as recommendations to promote more widely.

This document is the result of a working group which explored how to improve the inclusion of youth in migration policy processes. The topic is vast, yet the authors break it down into practical units and opportunities ranging from quick-wins to more structural changes, demonstrating the systems-approach and critical thinking that young people can bring.

EUDiF will continue to include youth perspectives in project implementation, both through a continuation of the internship programme and by strengthening ties with the alumni community and wider youth network. The recommendations in this document, along with those made directly on EUDiF's activities, are already informing the conceptualisation of activities in its second phase. We thank the focus session participants for sharing their time, ideas and expertise.

DIASPORA YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth perspectives are often seen as nice-to-haves while consultations are treated as a goal in and of itself. This approach to youth inclusion ends up creating tokenistic outcomes where youth voices are elevated in a performative way while relevant decisions are rubber-stamped. One of the Future Forum Report's recommendations states that: "young people must be systematically considered and integrated in decision making across the board, and not as a secondary consideration or target, both because all policy decisions impact youth and because young people prove time and again their ingenuity, commitment and capacity to contribute to addressing global issues."¹ Focusing on sustainability as the main cross-cutting objective, the working group has decided to focus on the following areas of action to foster meaningful and representative youth participation in migration policy processes:

- Recognition of youth expertise and participation in the production, collection and design of knowledge products
- Providing access to reliable, long-term and flexible funding
- Streamlining youth inclusion commitments in the governance of organizational structures and projects

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1 Future Forum Conference Report 22-24 June 2021

1. ON YOUTH EXPERTISE

1.1 Recognition of youth's skills and knowledge:

When young people are involved in research programmes, there is an underlying feeling that the youth's knowledge and skills are not as valuable as those of more experienced researchers. Often this assumption stems from the fact that the expertise gained in extracurricular activities during their studies, volunteer experiences and the involvement in mentorship programmes are little considered.

As such, we recommend:

- **Regardless of the age, young people should be recognised as experts** who can bring knowledge and unique perspectives to the table.
- **Experiences gained during programmes, volunteering and other activities performed during youth should be recognised in the workplace.**

1.2 Fair remuneration & compensation:

Mentorship and leadership programmes allow young people at the beginning of their careers to put their knowledge to the test. These are also spaces where young people are incentivised and motivated to have their say and sometimes these are the only spaces for young people of racialized communities to be involved. They are, however, usually not remunerated or are badly compensated. It is important to show that the expertise and time of young people are valuable. Non-paid opportunities also discriminate against some of the already discriminated groups.

As such, we recommend:

- **Capacity-building programmes should provide fair compensation**, especially the ones financed with EU funding. For instance, this could take the form of a paid study-visit.

1.3 Crediting

Young researchers who join research projects of more experienced professionals are often not given credit for their work, in academic work as well as professional work. This, for instance, is exemplified by the many cases where the collection and analysis of data as well as all the groundwork of the research are credited with an "et al". As emerging experts aim to establish their career profiles, securing recognition for their work becomes paramount.

We thus recommend:

- To address the issue of insufficient recognition for young researchers' contributions, **institutions should implement transparent authorship guidelines that emphasize equitable credit distribution**. This could include requiring detailed contributorship statements in publications, where each individual's role and contribution are clearly outlined.

1.4 Stop tokenism

Often young people, especially those with a migration background, are only invited to collaborate as tokens but their ideas are not actually listened to.

We thus recommend:

- **Young people, especially those with a migration background, should be actually listened to** instead of being invited to collaborate only in order to tick a box. The ideas and expertise brought should be taken into account and integrated.

2. ON FUNDING FOR YOUTH-DIASPORA-LED ORGANIZATIONS

2.1 Flexible funding

The absence of flexible funding poses a significant challenge for diaspora youth organizations and members. Many of these organizations operate within fluid contexts, characterized by changing membership dynamics and varying levels of professionalization. Moreover, the reliance on informal governance structures and the dedication of young individuals balancing part-time or full-time employment further complicates the funding landscape. Without flexible funding mechanisms that can adapt to these realities, youth-led initiatives struggle to sustain their activities and effectively address community needs. Traditional project-specific funding models often overlook operational expenses crucial for organizational stability, such as staff salaries, website maintenance, and administrative tasks. As a result, youth organizations face barriers to long-term sustainability and struggle to maximize their impact on the ground.

When designing and implementing funding mechanisms that can benefit diaspora youth organizations and members, we call on policymakers and employers to:

- **Offer funding that is flexible and accommodates the context** in which youth organizations operate, the changing nature of their membership, and varying degrees of professionalization. Many youth organizations

are informal and lack a formal governance structure, relying instead on the efforts and commitment of young people who are often working part-time or full-time jobs to support themselves.

- **Move beyond project-specific funding to ensure sustainability of youth-led organizations and initiatives**, this means support covering operational costs such as staff costs, website development and maintenance and the running of administrative tasks.
- **Advertise funding opportunities well in advance** and provide reasonable deadlines for application submission. The call for applications should detail all the legal documents requested, eligibility criteria, including region(s) of implementation, and an estimate of the time needed to complete the application.
- **Include a sustainability requirement clause in call for funding**, which could take the form of an exit or post-project strategy.

2.2 Enhance accessibility to funding

Accessibility to funding remains a pervasive issue for diaspora youth organizations, exacerbated by limited awareness of opportunities and restrictive application processes. The lack of advertising for funding opportunities in advance and unreasonable application deadlines hinder organizations' ability to prepare competitive proposals. Additionally, the emphasis on organizational capacity and visibility in funding criteria overlooks the real impact that youth-led initiatives can have within their communities. This exclusionary approach perpetuates a cycle of underrepresentation and limits the potential for grassroots organizations to access crucial resources. Moreover, the competitive nature of traditional funding mechanisms often fosters division among organizations, stifling collaboration and hindering broader outreach efforts. By promoting participatory funding models that encourage cooperation and prioritize impact over organizational size, policymakers and employers can foster a more inclusive funding environment that empowers diaspora youth organizations to thrive and address pressing social challenges effectively.

When designing and implementing funding mechanism that can benefit diaspora youth organizations and members, we further call on policymakers and employers to:

- **Embed capacity-building/development training on monitoring and fundraising as part of the funding process.** Building organizational capacity to fundraise with other entities can also increase the potential for sustainability of youth-led projects and organizations.
- **Focus on the impact and type of the applicant** rather than just the strength of the organization by shifting the funding requirements from the size, visibility, and capacity of the organization to the real impact that these organizations have on the ground and for the communities they serve.
- **Encourage cooperation rather than competition through participatory funding mechanisms.** Restrictive funding tends to pitch organizations against one another. However, youth organizations can strive by joining efforts and supporting broader outreach. When the funding is project-specific, collaboration with grassroots organizations could be a requirement promoting greater participation as well as diversifying the type of organizations that have access to funding, going beyond the usual 'champion' youth-led organizations.

3. ON GOVERNANCE

Integration of youth perspectives requires organizations to ground and mainstream these perspectives within their governance frameworks, partnerships and consultations. Embracing youth perspectives in governance can help organizations embed youth foresight within their structures. This enables them to have access to innovative and future-focused alternative perspectives on the team and helps combat ageism that can limit the impact of youth². It is important to have multiple levels of youth inclusion and review within the project design, the project team, implementation, and evaluation. This guarantees that youth perspectives become mainstreamed. We thus recommend to:

- **Systematically consider and integrate youth perspectives in decision-making** by treating youth perspectives as essential rather than secondary to ensure that policies reflect the innovative potential and needs of young people.
- **Embed youth foresight within organizational structures** – Incorporate youth insights to enhance innovative thinking and combat ageism.
- **Ensure multiple levels of youth inclusion** – Integrate youth perspectives in project design, team composition, implementation, and evaluation processes to mainstream their viewpoints.

3.1 In project teams

Organizations should diligently push for more diverse and inclusive recruitment practices. Paying attention to also value non-traditional and non-Western experiences and competencies. Diaspora youth leaders serving as activists, community organizers, and impact creators have high levels of adaptability, resourcefulness, and resilience that tend to be overlooked in recruitment procedures. This is why it is also important to have youth representatives within the recruitment committees, this can be done by making use of the resources and expertise of trusted youth organizations that are already being consulted. we thus recommend to:

- **Implement diverse and inclusive recruitment practices** – Value non-traditional and non-Western experiences and competencies, recognizing the adaptability and resilience of diaspora youth leaders.
- **Include youth representatives within recruitment committees** – Leverage the expertise of trusted youth organizations in the recruitment process.

3.2 Consultation and platforms

Young people's voices should be structurally consulted at a time where their input can be useful. Organizations should be responsive to youth recommendations; they should not be just a checklist to be filled. Institutions should include more than just the traditional organizations but should strive to embed smaller ones within their consultation

2 Designing a Youth-centred Journey to the Future A YOUTH FORESIGHT PLAYBOOK

mechanisms. Young people should get access to more high-level platforms like Davos, COP, and other international summits. There should also be equitable compensation for those who participate in them. Organizations should avoid favoritism, nepotism, and embrace a variety of youth organizations. We recommend to:

- **Structurally consult young people** – Ensure youth input is sought when it can meaningfully influence outcomes, not merely as a formality.
- **Respond to youth recommendations effectively** – Move beyond treating youth consultation as a checklist item.
- **Provide access to high-level platforms** – Facilitate youth participation in major international summits like Davos and COP, with equitable compensation.
- **Avoid favoritism and nepotism** – Embrace varying types of organizations, networks, and communities.

3.3 Project design

Organizations should integrate youth perspectives in the design phase of their projects and programs. Youth projects should be co-created together with young people and their input should be used as a starting point in defining goals and objectives. Furthermore, youth voices should be systematically engaged through structural consultations when projects are specifically aimed at youth. On a more broader scale, youth perspectives should be mainstreamed into all project design and evaluation procedures but also on a policy level. We recommend to:

- **Co-create projects with youth** – Utilize youth input from the beginning in defining project goals and objectives.
- **Engage youth voices systematically** – Include youth perspectives in all stages of project design, evaluation, and policy-making.

3.4 Integrating generational perspectives in policy

In policy design it is imperative that the EU address the long-term risks and challenges that will impact youth in the future even as they are already impacting young people today. The European Union should develop an interinstitutional declaration on the rights of Future Generations and should set-up a Future Generations' Impact Assessment for every policy that uses strategic youth foresight to model the impact that policies and projects have on the next generations. The Generational Criteria (Dutch: generatietoets) is a tool that is being developed by the Dutch government to evaluate proposed policies and the long-term impact that it has on future generations. Wales has passed their Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act which also evaluates policy proposals on future well-being criteria. Other EU States like Finland and Hungary have created independent bodies or committees that hold into account the perspectives of future generations. We recommend to:

- **Develop generational impact assessment tools** – Implement tools like the Future Generations' Impact Assessment and Generational Criteria to evaluate long-term impacts of policies on youth.
- **Establish platforms and bodies to advocate for future generations** – Create institutions that ensure policies consider the well-being and rights of future generations.

3.5 Youth as leaders and advisors

Include youth on boards and as advisors to the executives. To mainstream youth, organizations should launch their own Youth Sounding Boards that advise them and co-create projects with them. Furthermore, both private and public organizations should have young people on their boards, such initiatives like 2100³. We recommend to:

- **Incorporate youth in leadership and advisory roles** - Include young people on boards and as advisors to executives to ensure organizational strategies align with youth perspectives and needs.
- **Launch Youth Sounding Boards** - Set up boards that involve youth in co-creating projects and advising on organizational strategies.

3.6 Youth experts in implementation and evaluation

- **Youth expertise should be commissioned and deployed in the implementation and evaluation of projects.** The expertise allies them to keep projects accountable and connected to their main purpose.

3 <https://impacteconomyfoundation.org/2100-manifest/>



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