



Proposal for a new Structured Dialogue

Goals the Structured Dialogue wishes to achieve:

- To ensure that all young people have their voices heard within the EU, in line with Article 165-2 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, to create a vibrant and engaged society into the future.
- To reach a larger number and a wider range of young people, including working with schools, refugee camps etc to reach out to unorganised youth.
- To ensure that youth policy reaches other policy areas: that it is cross-sectoral.
- To have policy impact at EU, national, regional and local level.
- For there to be a feedback culture, and for it to lead to more participatory policy-making cultures in general.
- National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations to be recognised as key partners with certain responsibilities (outreach, engagement in consultation and implementation) and rights (support, recognition, having a say).
- For the process to be as meaningful, simple, fun and engaging as possible for both young people and decision-makers.

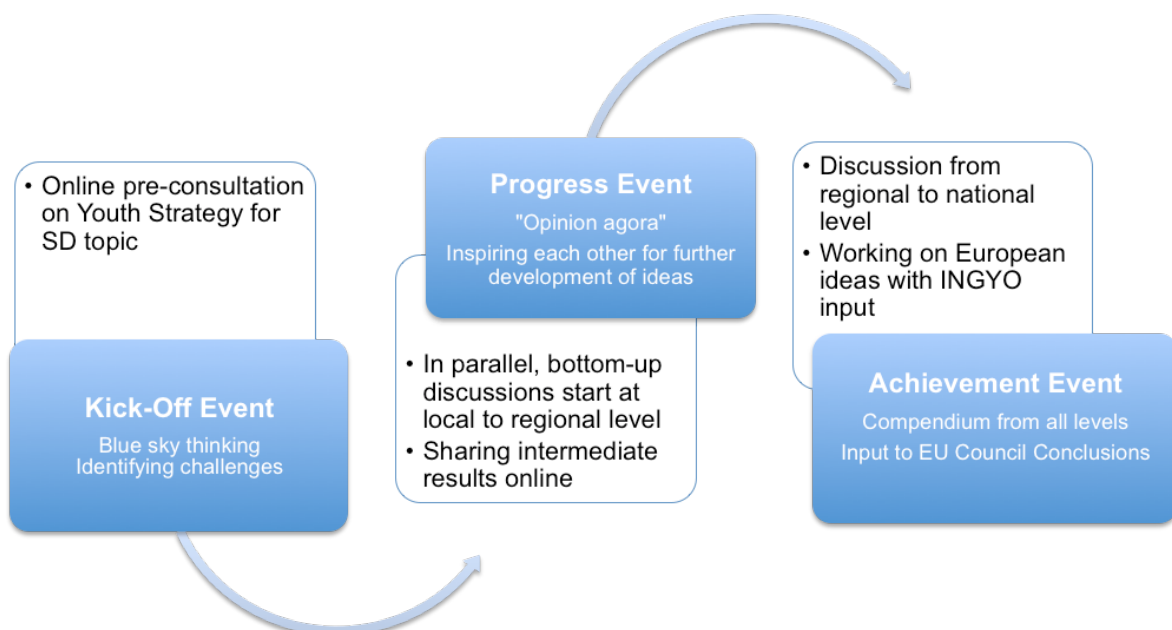
Potential pitfalls:

- The Structured Dialogue topics can be too broad or vague, which fails to engage other policy sectors.
- It is hard to engage unorganised youth and enough decision-makers.
- NWGs may not have the capacity to carry out wider conversations with their current resources.
- Implementation of recommendations is overall quite low.

Proposal: Executive Summary

The Structured Dialogue process as it currently stands is not achieving its full potential. While it undoubtedly has been one of the most influential tools of the current cooperation framework in the field of youth, the Structured Dialogue has some major challenges to overcome, such as a lack of local involvement, as well as low targeted involvement at a European level, no designated space for implementation and difficulties engaging a wide range of young people and decision makers. However the Structured Dialogue has already established more or less permanent structures and to this end, the process is sustainable and likely to continue in the future cooperation framework. To this end, the following proposal focuses on an amended approach to the Structured Dialogue, ensuring the continuation of the things it does well, and incorporating solutions in those areas where it is lacking. It focuses on a bottom-up approach, where ideas are developed at local level and progress upwards to the level at which they are most relevant for implementation. For example, if an idea appears at a local discussion and is most relevant for the local context, it will move forward to implementation immediately at the local level. Therefore issues that are relevant for young people in their local community context can also be solved in this context, bringing participatory decision-making closer to young people and addressing problems in the relevant scenario at which they can be solved. This will embrace the idea of implementation happening at the most immediate level, without the need for acceptance at European level first.

However to complement these discussions, there will also be three European events per Cycle. To ensure that the context is fully understood, these will be the former EU Youth Conferences but altered to reflect the new bottom-up approach. Their names will therefore change from first, second and third Youth Conference to Kick-Off Event, Progress Event and Achievement Event. We invite you to explore the concept in more detail below.



Full Proposal

Preparation

- Each 18-month Cycle of the Structured Dialogue would focus on one of the goals or main objectives, as defined for the Youth Strategy 2019-202X. The European Steering Committee will hold an online consultation and an online vote for young people to choose the goal of the cycle or to further develop the specific topic.
- Prior to each event, a webinar would be hosted by the European Steering Committee for the National Working Groups (NWGs) and the European Working Group (EWG) to inform them about the process and what is required from them at each stage.

Phase One

- **In a bottom up approach starting from local and progressing to European level, different challenges and ideas for solutions would be discussed, exchanged and the most relevant ones will be brought to the next level. This consultation process would be ongoing throughout the 18-month Cycle.**
- **Through the ongoing consultation process, discussions would take place at all levels from local to European level, across the continent. Problems related to the chosen goal/topic would be identified and solutions found within the local consultation context. Both young people (as wide a range as possible) and local level decision makers would participate in the consultations and also discuss solutions to the identified problems.**
- At all points within the process, young people and decision-makers at all levels are encouraged to jointly implement their ideas, even if they have not been retained for other contexts and brought to other levels.
- In parallel, the European Kick-Off Event would have youth delegates from each Member State representing the national, regional (if relevant) and local levels, as well as INGYOs from the EWG. NWGs and EWG are responsible for delegate selection. The Kick-Off Event would discuss the topic very broadly, outlining the current situation and using blue sky thinking to identify some of the challenges related to the topic from across the continent.
- At all stages throughout the process, facilitation would need to take into account methods and settings to ensure that each audience is catered to in the way that best suits them, and that all participants feel comfortable and engaged.

Phase Two

- The most innovative intermediate results, focusing on local and regional examples, will be presented at the Progress Event. It will serve as an “opinion agora”, receiving inspiration from others to further improve the original ideas in their context.
- After the Progress Event, the consideration of ideas from the the local, regional and national consultations will continue, while furthering the development of proposals using the inspiration of ideas being used in other parts of Europe from the Progress Event.

Phase Three

- During the final national consultation meeting, ideas will be merged and ranked before forwarding those with a European dimension to the Achievement Event.
- INGYOs are also invited to develop ideas at all levels. In addition, their natural expertise and biggest added value will be to develop ideas from a European perspective together with European decision-makers.
- At the Achievement Event, as with all three conferences, decision-makers would come together with the youth representatives from each country, as well as INGYOs. They would provide feedback to national recommendations and further develop the European ones. These would feed into the Council Conclusions, together with the intermediate results from the Progress Event.
- After the Achievement Event by the end of the cycle there will be a compendium of ideas, best practices, ideas and their stage of implementation from local to national level, as well as Council Conclusions at the European level.

Follow-up

- Implementation: Each regional, national and European meeting would select a group comprising of young people and decision-makers who would continue to monitor the outcomes, as well as their continuous implementation beyond the cycle, and will start their work as the discussion begins. NWGs would provide training in how to do this and would be responsible for overall national coordination. The EWG would be responsible for continuous monitoring of the implementation at European level.
- Monitoring: Due to the broader responsibility for implementation monitoring, NWGs and EWGs role would be simplified to one of coordination of implementation at different levels, changing from direct responsibility for overall implementation.

Principles on which the proposal is based:

- Bottom up approach: The ideas come from the lowest level to the highest. There is huge potential to involve many young people at the local level.
- Feedback: Due to the local level consultations and the tier system, it will be much easier to feedback outcomes to the young people involved in a quicker time frame, so they can see the impact of their contribution to the Structured Dialogue proposal.
- Engaging: As implementation is encouraged to start happening immediately, young people and decision-makers are more likely to engage to improve policies and realities together and contribute to a more participatory culture.
- Outreach: At local level and in a structured way, it is easier to involve a wider group of young people. There is potential to explore doing school/university/community only consultations to ensure that all voices are equally heard.
- Implementation & monitoring: Clear plan and progression in place. Results can be collected sooner and are already visible during the Events.
- Cross-sectoral: Policy-makers from other relevant policy areas would be invited to attend all conferences. Who was chosen to be invited would depend on the goal/topic of the Cycle.
- European aspect: Young people across the EU feel a sense of ownership and engagement with a broader European process.
- Online-offline: Online spaces and tools will be used to get broader input, for example on the topic, but also to keep everyone who participated in offline activities at some stage engaged and active throughout the cycle and beyond. This allows young people to track their ideas and suggestions throughout the process, making their final impact more visible.

Open questions:

- Do NWGs and the EWG have enough capacity to carry out such an ambitious consultation programme? How can they be further supported to manage increased responsibilities? Capacity for increased funds for NWGs under Erasmus+ and the successor to the Erasmus programme to increase outreach?