

7th Cycle of EU Youth Dialogue

Guidance for Youth Dialogue Events

Introduction

This document provides guidance for National Working Groups on how to conduct Youth Dialogue Events with young people as part of the Youth Dialogue process. The purpose of Youth Dialogue events is to conduct face-to-face discussions with young people on the three key subthemes of Youth Dialogue. National priorities can also be incorporated into Dialogue Events.

Youth Dialogue events can provide a variety of approaches for organising face-to-face events and focus groups with young people. These events can also include decision-makers. This guidance includes instructions for the following types of events:

- **Focus groups** – Are conducted with smaller groups of young people on the basis of provided set of questions on all three subthemes. The main purpose of these is to consult with young people directly on the three Youth Dialogue subthemes to gather information for the working group report.
- **Workshops** - Meetings with small groups of participants, actively engaging on a particular topic and subject using a variety of methodologies. Workshops can involve both decision makers and young people. Compared to focus groups these are more flexible and can be used for consulting with young people, creating a dialogue between young people and decision makers and can provide more of an educational opportunity for participants
- **Large events** – These can bring together 50-200 participants to work/discuss on subthemes of the cycle and make proposals, and can include a variety of activities. Focus groups and workshops can be conducted as part of large events. Large events can involve both decision makers and young people.

Involving decision-makers in Youth Dialogue events

Involving decision-makers in Youth Dialogue events can be an important part of the Youth Dialogue process. As one of the main objectives of Youth Dialogue is to bring about positive change in youth policy at local, regional, national and European levels, involving decision-makers in Youth Dialogue events helps to achieve this objective. The guiding questions have been designed to stimulate dialogue between decision-makers and young people at all levels. This enables, decision-makers from all levels, e.g. local, regional and national levels to be included whenever possible. Certain methodologies can be used to create a dialogue directly between young people and decision-makers.

This may mean involving decision-makers at a national level such as Government Ministers or senior civil servants in large events. For example, these national level decision-makers could participate in Questions and Answers session with young people during large events. It might also mean more in depth discussion with regional and local decision-makers such as through local politicians attending through the workshops. The involvement of decision-makers from national and local youth organisations can also be considered.

When organising your Youth Dialogue event you should think about the opportunities and possibilities for involving decision makers whenever possible.

Reporting the outcomes of Youth Dialogue events

As part of planning your Youth Dialogue event Working Groups should think about how they will collect the main messages and keep track of participants. This means thinking about how you will analyse and use the findings and gather common messages, problems, issues or solutions identified during the events.

For reporting on Youth Dialogue events, a moderator (or a rapporteur) of the events, should keep notes and prepare a short summary of the discussion and main conclusions for each of the three subthemes of the Youth Dialogue, identifying key themes, discourses and narratives, and share these with the NWG. You will also need to keep track of participants in the events and their backgrounds. You can use the template participant monitoring form to do this. The National Working Group should use moderator/ rapporteur summaries, as well as participant data to inform the National Working Group report to the ESC.

For subtheme “Opportunities for Rural Youth”, a moderator or a rapporteur of the focus groups should keep notes, prepare a short summary of the discussion and identify main three topics, issues or recommendations expressed during the focus group discussions. These responses are

collected separately by the National Working Groups and reported in a separate reporting tool, as the findings will be used by the Croatian Presidency to develop Council Conclusions on this subtheme.

Dialogue event type 1 - Focus Groups

In the context of the Youth Dialogue, one of the proposed methodologies or consultation tools (tools for national and local Youth Dialogue) at Youth Dialogue events are the focus groups. Focus groups consist of small groups of people who are brought together by a moderator, e.g. researcher or youth worker, to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a specific topic. Focus groups are a quick and cost effective method of capturing detailed information.

Method

- Focus groups usually begin with an outline of their purpose from the moderator and an explanation of how data will be used, the ground rules and confidentiality arrangements
- Young people should have the opportunity to ask the moderator questions about the focus groups, how the data will be used, confidentiality etc.
- After all young people are clear about the purpose of the focus group moderator then poses a series of questions to the group on the chosen topic. (see next section)

Moderator's role:

- The moderator should create a comfortable atmosphere for the focus group
- The role of the moderator should be to facilitate the group interaction rather than lead the discussion using the focus group questions
- The moderator should keep focus group discussions on track and focused on the topic
- The moderator should encourage contributions from all participants.

Length

- Focus groups should typically last 1-2 hours.

Number of young people:

- Ideally, there should be around 10-15 young people participating in each focus group. This allows for a range of opinions and experiences to be discussed among participants.

Recruitment of participants:

- Recruiting young people who are already part of an existing group to take part in a focus group can work better than recruiting participants who are strangers. This overcomes the problem of ‘breaking the ice’ among participants, is easier to organise and can tap into a ready-made group relevant to a specific topic.

Venue and time:

- The venue for conducting focus groups should be somewhere young people feel comfortable, safe and, if possible, familiar, i.e. a youth club
- The time of the focus group should suit young people and their availability, i.e. not during school hours.

Group discussions:

- There should be a particular focus to sessions, i.e. group discussions should be based on an issue or an experience about which all participants have a similar knowledge
- Particular emphasis should be placed on the interaction within the group as a means of gaining information
- Group discussions can sometimes lead to consensus on a topic or highlight significant differences among focus group participants.

Focus group questions

The table below outlines **focus groups questions** which can be asked directly to young people as part of the focus groups. For ease of use, each set of focus group questions is mapped to the main guiding questions and subthemes of the Youth Dialogue, shown in the first two columns. The nature of focus groups means that the answers young people give may be relevant to more than one guiding question, so you may need to think about this within your focus group recording and reporting.

Subtheme/ Youth Goal	Guiding consultation questions	Suggested focus group questions
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<p>Subtheme: Youth Goal #7 Quality Employment for All</p>	<p>1a) What measures and actions can we take in order to implement the targets of the Youth Goal #7?</p> <p>1b) What measures and actions can we take to improve formal and non-formal education so that it prepares young people for the future of work?</p> <p>1c) What can we do to make sure all young people including those from marginalised backgrounds are equally treated, protected, safe and secure in the workplace and the labour market of the future?</p>	<p>1. What are the main issues regarding your current employment situation?</p> <p>2. What challenges do you feel you are going to face regarding work in the future?</p> <p>3. What would help you to feel ready for the world of work?</p> <p>4. What sort of support do you require when looking for work?</p> <p>5. What would help you be more aware of the new sorts of jobs that might exist in the future?</p> <p>6. Do you think you have the right sort of skills and type of education for the jobs that will exist in the future? (please explain)</p> <p>7. How can we make sure all young people are treated fairly in the workplace?</p>
<p>Subtheme: Quality Youth Work for All</p> <p>Youth Goal #8 Quality Learning</p>	<p>2a) What measures and actions can we take in order to develop quality youth work?</p> <p>2b) What are the most important competencies that youth workers need in order to support and work with young people and why?</p> <p>2c) What measures and actions can we take to provide access to quality youth work for all?</p>	<p>1. What skills and knowledge would you like to have by the time you leave education? OR What kind of skills should youth work provide to you?</p> <p>2. What things do you wish you could learn about but don't get the opportunity to? This could be in school/college/university or somewhere else like a youth club. OR What are the most important things that you would like to learn that you do not have the chance to now?</p> <p>3. What kind of support do you feel you need when it comes to learning and developing your skills? What kind of support should youth work and youth workers provide to you?</p> <p>4. Do you know about youth clubs, organisations, institutions or other places in your area where you could learn things you are interested in</p>

		<p>outside of school?</p> <p>5. What kind of information should youth work and youth workers provide to you?</p> <p>6. What kind of opportunities should youth work and youth workers provide to you?</p> <p>7. What are your expectations from youth work? What else should youth work and youth workers provide to you?</p>
<p>Subtheme: Opportunities for Rural Youth</p> <p>Youth Goal #6 Moving Rural Youth Forward</p>	<p>3a) What measures and actions can we take to implement youth goal #6 Moving Rural Youth Forward?</p> <p>3b) What measures and actions can we take to improve rural areas for young people in the short term, in current conditions?</p> <p>3c) What are the main measures and actions to take in order to improve quality of life for young people in rural areas in the long term?</p>	<p>1. In your opinion, what are the things that young people living in rural areas need?</p> <p>2. With regards to answers provided under 1), what do you think is the most important?</p> <p>3. What is important for the quality of life of people living in rural areas?</p> <p>4. In your opinion, what kind of occupations are available for young people living in EU rural areas?</p> <p>5. In your opinion, what kind of occupations are available for young people living in rural areas in [name of your country]?</p> <p>6.a. If you already live in a rural area, what kind of job would you like to do as a source of income (what is your preferred occupation)?</p> <p>6.b. If you planned to move to a rural area, what job would you like to do as a source of income (what would be your preferred occupation)?</p>

		7. What changes are needed in order to improve the lives of young people in rural areas?
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Dialogue event type 2 - Workshops

A workshop is a meeting at which a group of people engage in intensive discussion and activity on a particular subject or project. Workshops can be run as part of a large event or can stand alone. Workshops are useful for creating dialogue with young people at a local level. On their own workshops can be particularly useful for engaging with small established groups of young people e.g. young people in a youth project or programme. Used as part of a large event they can provide a structure through which young people who have never met before can comfortably talk together. Decision makers can also take part in workshops alongside young people. Workshops will need a facilitator with research or non formal education experience to lead them.

Methods for conducting workshops

There are numerous workshop methodologies that could be used in Youth Dialogue workshops. Some examples of workshops methodologies that can be used to explore the key subthemes of Youth Dialogue are outlined below:

Open space

“Open Space” is a technique for running discussions where the participants create and manage the agenda of a discussion themselves. Participants agree on the areas of discussion that have importance for them and then take responsibility for leading the discussion sessions. This is particularly useful for developing a sense of ownership with participants and ensuring that the discussion is focused on the interests of participants. It can be used with between 20 - 200 people, however it is typically most effective with groups of 30-40. For the Open Space to be done effectively, plan approximately 2 hours.

Step 1 - Begin by asking young people to post ideas or suggestions for things they would like to discuss onto a board/wall using post-it notes. These ideas should be relevant to the subtheme of the Youth Dialogue (i.e. Opportunities for Rural Youth, Quality Employment for All, Quality Youth Work for All). Any young person can nominate an idea, however they have to be willing to join a group to discuss it.

Step 2 - As ideas are being posted the facilitator should group similar ideas together. This should be done in discussion with the group. At the end of this process there should be a series of topics which the group wishes to discuss.

Step 3 - The facilitator should assign a break space for each topic. A person from the group should be nominated to lead each space. Participants are then instructed to move to the space/topic they wish to discuss. However, before they move to each space, participants should be reminded of “the rule of two feet”:

“If at any time during the time together you find yourself in a situation where you are neither learning nor contributing, use your two feet

and go someplace else.”

In this way, all participants are given both the right and the responsibility to maximise their own learning and contribution, and they can leave any groups that they joined to find one which is more relevant to them. The only person who cannot leave the space is the person leading the topic who has the responsibility to host the space and take notes as needed.

World cafe

World cafe methodology facilitates young people to sit in small groups and have in-depth conversations – like you would do in a café – about an assigned topic. The process facilitates the sharing of ideas and young people get to consider a number of ideas in a short space of time. The length of the activity depends on the number of participants, number of topics and time allocated. For example, if you have 50 minutes to conduct the activity, there could be 4 moves: 20 mins, 10 mins, 10 mins, 10 mins.

To prepare for the activity the facilitator should place several tables (usually between 4 and 8) around the room. Each table should have a flipchart on it with one key question for discussion. The key questions should be linked to the Youth Dialogue subthemes. You may wish to use the focus group questions listed above. Before the activity begins, identify one participant/support facilitator who is willing to remain at each table and work with the selected key questions.

To begin the activity distribute the group randomly at the tables. Give the first group 20 minutes to discuss the question on their table. The flipchart paper on the table should be used as a space for young people to write down their thoughts and opinions.

After 20 minutes announce that the “round is finished” and participants should move to another table to discuss the next questions. After 10 minutes, young people are then asked to move to another group and another table. This process is repeated until everyone has had a chance to visit all of the tables. Alternatively, for larger groups of young people questions can be duplicated or different groups can discuss different questions.

At every move, the support facilitator remains behind at their table to explain the outcome of the previous conversation and to see what the new group would like to add. At the end, the support facilitators feedback the discussion to the whole room.

Moving debates

This is a short and quick activity used as a way of opening discussions. It is particularly effective with young people who are less comfortable in formal discussions as it enables all participants to express their view without having to speak. It can be used with 8 - 200 participants (assuming you have enough space). It usually lasts for no more than 20 minutes.

Before the activity - the facilitator will need to create a series of around 10 - 20 statements that can provoke a debate. These statements should be linked to the main subthemes of the Youth Dialogue - however they can be controversial, in order to provoke disagreement. Example statements could be:

- Young people are treated fairly in the workplace.
- Everyone can get a job - those who don't are just lazy.
- We have the right education we need for the future of work.
- I am confident I will find the job I want in the future.
- Youth work is about learning.
- Youth workers should give young people advice on any issues they might have.
- Rural areas are better than city areas.
- Rural areas have enough opportunities for young people.
- Rural areas need better transport links to the city.
- There are enough good jobs in rural areas.

Step 1 - At the start of the activity, the facilitator should hang a sign marked 'Agree' on one side of the room, 'Disagree' sign on the opposite side of the room and "Don't know" sign in the middle.

Step 2 - The facilitator should ask participants to stand, and read the first "statement" to the group. Ask members of the group to position themselves between the agree or disagree signs based on how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement. (If they completely agree or disagree, they stand against the wall close to the sign, "somewhat" would be towards the middle in various degrees).

Step 3 - After people have positioned themselves, the facilitator should ask different participants why they have chosen their positions, and what their opinion is. They should use follow-up questions to explore the issue more deeply and to start a discussion with the group.

Note - If the group has significant mobility issues, this activity will not be appropriate. You should consider running the activity on a table top, and asking participants to place counters between the cards.

Dialogue Event 3 - Large events

Large dialogue events can gather large numbers of young people to discuss key topics related to Youth Dialogue. Numbers can vary depending on events, (e.g. 50 - 200 young people per event), and an event can last from 3 hours to a full day. Decision-makers at a national, regional and local level such as Government Ministers, policy makers and local politicians can also be invited to attend large events to engage in dialogue with young people on specific topics.

During a large event you may wish to use a mixture of work in plenary with all participants together, and in smaller breakout groups. For the smaller breakout groups you can use the methods described for workshop or focus groups above. Activities to use with larger number of young people are described below.

Activities for large groups

The following activities are examples of methodologies that can be used at large consultation events and can incorporate the guiding questions, or even suggested focus group questions, related to the three main subthemes of Youth Dialogue:

Kahoot poll (<https://kahoot.com/>)

Kahoot is a free game-based online platform that can be used at large consultation events. This is a fun methodology that young people enjoy participating in and can be a good ice-breaker activity to conduct at the beginning of a large event.

For this activity, young people are divided into smaller groups and one person from the group must have the Kahoot app on their phone. (Internet/Wifi is a requirement for running this activity)

Prior to the event, organisers can set up a Kahoot poll on issues related to the three Youth Dialogue subthemes, (i.e. Quality Employment for All, Quality Youth Work for All, Opportunities for Rural Youth). The organisers then show the question poll on a presentation screen and each group gives their answer. Results from the poll can be displayed instantly on screen at the event for young people to see the results.

Kahoot polls are based on multiple choice answers. Examples of polls based on the Youth Dialogue subthemes could be:

1. What are the most important things to young people living in rural areas?
 - a. Broadband
 - b. Healthcare
 - c. Schools/colleges

- d. Good roads

2. What will help you prepare most for the future of work?

- Better links between education and employment
- More information about the jobs available
- Better protection in the workplace
- More training opportunities for young people.

3. What sort of skills do youth workers need?

- The ability to build relationships
- The ability to help young people learn
- The ability to advocate for young people
- The ability to organise youth projects

‘Dear Minister’ letter writing activity

This exercise can be useful to encourage dialogue between young people and decision-makers, especially if national decision-makers such as Government Minister are unable to attend events. The ‘Dear Minister’ letter writing activity involves dividing young people into smaller groups and writing a letter to a Government Minister on a certain topic. Organisers can use pre-printed letter templates with ‘Dear Minister...’ written on it as part of the methodology or simply use blank pieces of paper.

At large events different groups could work on different subthemes, e.g. Quality Employment for All, Quality Youth Work for All, Opportunities for Rural Youth.

For example, some groups could write a letter to the Government Minister responsible for employment in their country based on the question *‘What are the key measures and actions the government can take to improve formal and non-formal education so that it prepares young people in their country for the future of work?’*

Some groups could write a letter to the Government Minister responsible for youth work in their country based on the question, *‘What measures and actions the government can take to provide access to quality youth work for all young people in their country?’*

Some groups could write a letter to the Government Minister responsible for rural issues in their country based on the question, *‘What are the main measures and actions the government can take in order to improve quality of life for young people in rural areas in their country in the short and long term?’*

Letters can then be analysed thematically afterwards and key topics can be identified in the national working group reporting tool. At the end of the event all letters can also be sent to the relevant Government Ministers.

Questions and Answers panel debates with decision makers

Organising a Question and Answer panel debate with decision makers can work well at large events. They can be particularly useful to attract very senior decision makers who would be unable to commit the time to involvement throughout the entire event. Questions and Answers sessions usually work best as a final activity at the end of a large consultation event.

For some groups of young people it can also be beneficial for them to have time to prepare and develop questions earlier in the event. This is particularly helpful to enable young people who do not feel confident to ask questions to have the opportunity to engage and influence the debate. To do this activity, give participants time to work in small groups to prepare the questions and agree who will ask them. For example, young people could be divided into groups under the three Youth Dialogue subthemes, i.e. Quality Employment for All, Quality Youth Work for All, Opportunities for Rural Youth. Young people could then work on relevant questions under each of the subthemes which can be asked in the Questions and Answers session.

Table top discussion with decision makers

As an alternative to panel debates decision makers can be invited to take part in table top discussions with small groups of young people. A table top discussion involves 1-3 decision makers and around 8-10 young people, seated in a circle or around a table. This form of discussion can be more rewarding for both groups, but can also be harder to get decision makers to commit to. For large event it also means you will need to be able to attract more decision makers. Each table discussion will benefit from having a moderator, and it can be helpful to work with young people prior to the event to develop the questions they wish to ask.

Useful resources

These resources contain a variety of activities and methods for undertaking participation work with children and young people:

Council of Europe. Have Your Say! Manual on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life.
Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16807023e0> (see chapter 8 especially)

A practical guide to including seldom-heard children & young people in decision-making. Available at:
<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/20150903PracticalGuieSeldomHeardChildren.pdf>

Save the Children. Child Participation: Consultation Kit.

Available at: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/7816/pdf/consultation_toolkitpdf_1.pdf