

M·H·E

Mental Health Europe



HOW TO USE THE EU YOUTH STRATEGY FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Guidance note

Executive Summary

This guidance note was developed to inform MHE members, interested organisations and individuals on the EU Youth Strategy and its relevance vis-à-vis mental health. It explains what the European Youth Strategy is and how it will be implemented during 2019-2027. This note also focusses on the European Youth Goal 5 on Mental Health & Well-being and its realisation through the EU Youth Strategy.

What you need to know about the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027

The [EU Youth Strategy](#) is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027. It is based on the [Resolution of the Council of the European Union](#) adopted on 26 November 2018. It aims to foster youth participation in democratic life, to support youth social and civic engagement and to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to play their part in society. This EU Youth Strategy follows the [EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018](#).

The Strategy focuses on three areas of action:

- ★ **Engage:** Fostering youth participation in democratic life;
- ★ **Connect:** Bringing young people together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding;
- ★ **Empower:** Supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.



The European Youth Goals

Between 2017 and 2018, decision-makers, young people and researchers took part in the [Structured Dialogue: 'Youth in Europe: What's next?'](#). This was a consultative and participatory action, implemented by the European Commission to increase cooperation with young people and to make their voices heard in the European decision-making process.

Participants in the Structured Dialogue provided issues of relevance for young people through an EU-wide consultation and clustered them in [11 European Youth Goals](#):

#01 **CONNECTING EU WITH YOUTH**

#02 **EQUALITY OF ALL GENDERS**

#03 **INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES**

#04 **INFORMATION AND CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE**

#05 **MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING**

#06 **MOVING RURAL YOUTH FORWARD**

#07 **QUALITY EMPLOYMENT FOR ALL**

#08 **QUALITY LEARNING**

#09 **SPACE & PARTICIPATION FOR ALL**

#10 **SUSTAINABLE GREEN EUROPE**

#11 **YOUTH ORGANISATIONS & EUROPEAN PROGRAMMES**

The European Youth Goals identify areas that need to be addressed to enable young people to realise their full potential. Although these are non-binding targets, the EU Youth Strategy should contribute to the realisation of the vision they represent. It should mobilise instruments and stakeholders at the EU, national, regional and local levels. The EU Youth Strategy emphasises that “within their respective competences Member States and the European Commission are invited to draw inspiration from the European Youth Goals among others and include this vision wherever suitable in all related policies and agendas.”



How will the EU Youth Strategy be implemented?

The EU Youth Strategy makes use of several instruments, which will serve for its implementation and for the realisation of the European Youth Goals. These instruments include:

Expert groups

The EU Youth Strategy foresees the establishment of expert groups to develop policy guidance, practical tools and share good practices;

Mutual learning activities

The EU Youth Strategy encourages the development and use of tools for mutual learning, such as peer reviews, peer counselling, high-level forums, analyses and studies;

Future National Activities Planners

This is a tool for EU Member States to share, on a voluntary basis, their youth policy priorities and strategies, as well as their initiatives in line with the EU Youth Strategy. This will allow Member States to strategically engage with each other, harness the full potential of bilateral or multilateral projects and activities, identify areas for mutual learning between Member States and give national and regional activities a role on the European stage. Future National Activities Planners will be made publicly available once realised;

EU Youth Dialogue

Building on the achievements of past dialogue processes, the EU Youth Dialogue brings together young people and youth organisations, policy and decision makers, as well as experts, researchers and other relevant civil society interlocutors. It serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection and consultation on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy.

EU Youth Dialogue is organised into 18-month work cycles and follows the [Presidencies of the Council of the EU](#). Each cycle focuses on a different thematic priority set by the [Council of Youth Ministers](#) (the Ministers responsible for the youth portfolio in EU Member States);

EU Youth Strategy Platform

The Platform is set up by the European Commission, which organises meetings to bring together representatives of EU institutions, Member States, National Agencies of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, youth organisations and other relevant stakeholders as well as local and regional authorities. The EU Youth Strategy Platform aims to facilitate participatory governance and coordination of the implementation of the Strategy through regular civic dialogue, opportunities to exchange information on activities and results, and a greater role given to stakeholders to coordinate the implementation of the Strategy;

Evidence-based tools

In order to be anchored in the real needs of young people, as well as to provide adequate actions and solutions to challenges they face, the EU Youth Strategy requires continuous research and analysis of data. [The sources used by the European Commission to analyse the situation of young people can be found here;](#)

EU Youth Coordinator

The EU Youth Strategy foresees the establishment of an EU Youth Coordinator within the European Commission. This will be the European Commission's contact and visible reference point for young people, with the objective of enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation, as well as knowledge development and exchange on youth issues within the European Commission services. The EU Youth Coordinator will work hand in hand with various stakeholders to ensure a coherent communication towards young people. The Coordinator's tasks include leading and following-up on the EU Youth Dialogue.

Focus on the European Youth Goal 5 on Mental Health & Well-being

Through the two-year participatory process of the *Youth in Europe: What's next?* Structured Dialogue, young people all over the EU identified mental health and well-being as a key area for action and cooperation.

The European Youth Goal 5 on Mental Health & Well-being aims to achieve better mental well-being and end stigmatisation of mental health problems, thus promoting social inclusion of all young people.

Its targets are:

- To encourage the development of self-awareness and less competitive mindsets by fostering appreciation for individual skills and strengths;
- To safeguard the rights to work and to study of people with mental health problems to ensure their ability to pursue their own ambitions;
- To develop an inclusive intersectional approach to mental health provision for all, especially marginalised groups;
- To provide all professionals working with young people as well as family and friends with quality mental health first aid training;
- To provide inclusive, respectful and well-funded care by incorporating high quality mental health provision;
- To focus on prevention measures that ensure young people are equipped with the knowledge and the skills required for better mental well-being;
- To fight stigma about mental health problems by developing awareness programmes.

Goal 5 on mental health and well-being and its targets represent a great new opportunity to improve young people's mental health across Europe.



#5 MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

How to use the EU Youth Strategy to achieve Youth Goal 5 on Mental Health and Well-being?

READ IT AND DISSEMINATE IT

The EU Youth Strategy is available in all EU official languages [here](#), while [this website](#) gives an exhaustive overview of its content and relevant resources. The European Youth Goals have [their own dedicated website](#), with handouts available in various European languages.

The European Youth Goal 5 on Mental Health and Well-being has its own [Thematic Report](#), which presents challenges and solution to address the mental health and well-being needs of young people. The report was produced as a part of the *Youth in Europe: What's next?* Structured Dialogue, which involved nearly 50.000 young people from a diverse range of backgrounds in Europe.

Once you have gotten acquainted with the Strategy, it is important to make the general public and stakeholders – particularly Ministries, service users, civil society, mental health professionals, service providers (including education providers) and government officials – aware of the importance to proceed with the implementation of Youth Goal 5 and its targets. Many policy makers and people working in the field of mental health would be happy to receive guidance and learn more on how challenges in relation to young people's mental health can be addressed. Making them aware of these materials and tools is a first, essential step.



KEEP INFORMED AND GET INVOLVED

As the section entitled '*How will the EU Youth Strategy be implemented?*' in this Guidance Note explains, there are a series of instruments foreseen for the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy and the realisation of the European Youth Goals. Some of these instruments are in the process of being set up and follow work plans or thematic priorities that are cyclically established.

Regularly consulting the [EU Youth Strategy webpage](#) and the [Youth Wiki](#) is essential to know what is planned, monitor developments and find opportunities to get involved and influence the process.

Since this is an EU initiative, being familiar with the EU decision- and policy-making process is extremely important to being prepared to react. Luckily for you, our [Keep in Mind Guide](#) can help you learn more and know which key players to contact in different situations.



USE IT IN YOUR ADVOCACY

If you are advocating for better mental health provision and/or youth rights and well-being, the Strategy instruments and tools (e.g. the [Thematic Report on the Youth Goal 5](#) or the [Youth Wiki](#)) can be used as a source of information and guidance to go forward. We encourage you to use specific quotes and references in your own work where appropriate.



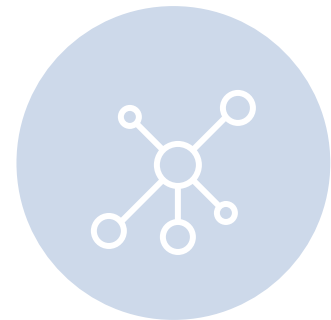
The EU Youth Strategy and the European Youth Goals also foresee the involvement and action of EU Member States to [engage](#), [connect](#) and [empower](#) young people. You can use this as a hook to advocate for the integration of mental health in youth policies and vice-versa.

BUILD NETWORKS AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

The EU Youth Strategy relies on the involvement of young people from various backgrounds. It strives to reach out to them at the grassroots level. Building on existing alliances and creating new partnerships is vital to be able to reach Youth Goal 5 and its targets.

Raising awareness on the EU Youth Strategy and the European Youth Goal 5 among your partners could serve as an occasion to further collaborations and engagement.

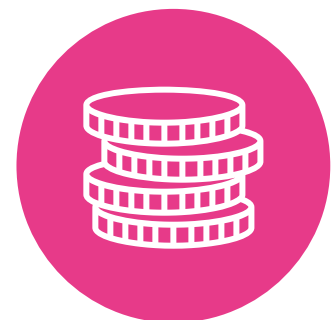
You could also find new allies in the [National Youth Councils and other youth organisations](#) and/or the [mental health organisations](#) in your country. Many of these organisations might already have projects or be involved in the activities foreseen by the EU Youth Strategy (e.g. mutual learning, the EU Youth Strategy Platform, the EU Youth Dialogue). This could be a great opportunity to work together, exchange information and learn from each other.



USE IT TO APPLY FOR FUNDING

The EU Youth Strategy foresees the use of EU funding, such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, to implement its vision. This means that there may be increased funding opportunities available to achieve its objectives, including the European Youth Goal 5 on Mental Health and Well-being.

When applying for EU funding for mental health or youth projects, you will need to show that you are aware of the existing work and current priorities at EU level. The EU Youth Strategy is the perfect resource to use for this as it is very recent and comprehensive, and it will be in place until 2027. It would be reasonable to refer to it to show that your project aligns or supports the targets of the European Youth Goal 5. These targets are quite broad so it shouldn't be too difficult to show how your projects support actions working in that direction.





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