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# Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks

**A comparative overview**

**Youth**



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## List of country codes

<b>BE de</b>	Belgium – German-speaking Community
<b>CY</b>	Cyprus
<b>HR</b>	Croatia
<b>FI</b>	Finland
<b>IE</b>	Ireland
<b>IS</b>	Iceland
<b>LI</b>	Liechtenstein
<b>LT</b>	Lithuania
<b>LU</b>	Luxembourg
<b>LV</b>	Latvia
<b>MT</b>	Malta
<b>NO</b>	Norway
<b>RS</b>	Serbia
<b>SE</b>	Sweden
<b>SI</b>	Slovenia
<b>TR</b>	Türkiye

## Foreword



### The Youth Check: An Instrument for Youth Mainstreaming

Young people represent the future of our society. They come from diverse backgrounds, possess varied experience and hold unique viewpoints. They offer a distinct generational perspective that I firmly believe should be integrated into EU policymaking and contribute to shaping it now and in the future. Mainstreaming a youth perspective – and ensuring that their interests are reflected across policies, particularly those that

impact their lives - requires listening to their views, needs and aspirations and embedding them to our policy design. This approach will make our policies more inclusive so that they benefit our society as a whole.

The 2022 European Year of Youth underscored the importance of young Europeans in shaping Europe's future. It provided young people with opportunities to enhance their participation in democratic life through over 13,000 activities in Europe and beyond.

Building on the successes of the European Year of Youth, the European Commission announced earlier this year 60 actions to address young people's concerns. A key action was the introduction of a 'youth check' at the EU level. This initiative ensures that the impact of our policies on young people is systematically considered during policy design. By leveraging the full potential of the Better Regulation framework and engaging in consultations with stakeholders, the youth check places young people at the centre of our policymaking.

This paper provides an overview of youth mainstreaming practices in European countries, focusing specifically on the functioning of youth checks in four EU Member States. The youth check increases the visibility and prominence to young people's concerns and needs across various policy fields in these countries.

I am confident that this report will be valuable to decision-makers across Europe in advancing their commitment to youth-relevant policies and in expanding our evidence base on youth mainstreaming practices. This is key to ensuring the gradual uptake of these practices at all levels of decision-making, contributing to make the legacy of the European Year of Youth last for young Europeans.

### **Iliana Ivanova**

European Commissioner for  
Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

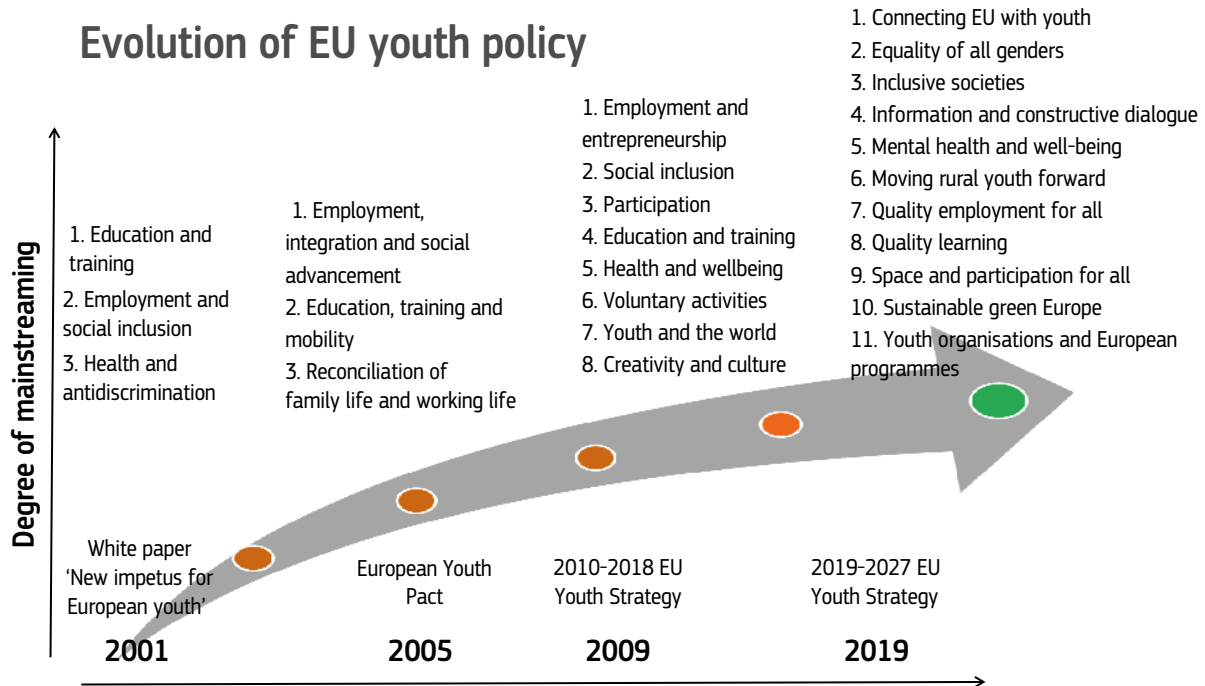
# Introduction

Youth mainstreaming involves the integration of a youth perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes that concern and affect young people. Youth mainstreaming also aims to shape institutional and policymaking processes that provide space and opportunities for young people to have a say in the decisions that affect them.

At the European Union level, youth mainstreaming has its roots in the 2001 White Paper on a new impetus for European youth (European Commission, 2001), which laid the foundations for European governance in the youth field. More than two decades later, mainstreaming youth and youth participation are

foundational principles of the 2019–2027 EU Youth Strategy, which – supported by instruments such as the EU youth dialogue and EU youth programmes (Erasmus+ youth in action and the EU Solidarity Corps) – highlights that ‘only by mainstreaming youth as a priority amongst different policy areas it can be ensured that the specific needs or effects for young people in envisaged policies or programs are taken into account. To lead by example, at EU level a cross-sectoral approach should be further pursued as a fundamental basis. Furthermore, youth mainstreaming can only be effective when it also guarantees a say for young people in all possible policy areas that affect them’ (Council of the European Union, 2018).

**Figure 1. Degree of youth mainstreaming during the evolution of EU youth policy**



Against this background, the 2022 European Year of Youth set youth participation as a central priority of EU action in the field of youth and gave voice to the demand by young people that a youth perspective be integrated into relevant EU policies. A Eurobarometer survey on young people’s opinions on democracy conducted in that year revealed that they expect decision-makers to listen more to young people’s needs (European Commission, 2022b). Furthermore,

youth participation was the topic most often addressed in activities organised during the European Year of Youth – a clear sign of the interest on the part of many young Europeans in having their opinions included in policymaking. In consideration of young people’s wish for youth-responsive policies, youth mainstreaming – factoring the youth dimension into all relevant policy areas – has emerged as a priority for EU youth policy cooperation.

Building on the achievements of the Year of Youth, the European Commission has established a set of 60 actions aiming to take forward its commitment to fostering young people's participation and engagement (European Commission, 2024). To this end, it has set up several measures (e.g. the exchange of good practices, peer-learning activities and evidence gathering) to facilitate youth mainstreaming across policy fields that are relevant to young people. One of the actions concerns the production of an analytical overview of national experiences with youth mainstreaming.

This is the context in which this paper has been produced. It analyses youth mainstreaming practices in 33 European countries, with a focus on youth regulatory impact assessment (RIA) instruments in four EU Member States: Belgium (the Flemish Community), Germany, France and Austria. In the absence of a common term used to designate such instruments, the paper refers to them as 'youth checks', as this term is employed in two of the four Member States analysed (Germany and Austria).

This comparative analysis of the features and processes of the youth checks is a first attempt at delineating the workings of these instruments, highlighting their differences and similarities and contributing to the exchange of best practices among countries. The paper consists of five sections.

The first section of the paper introduces the concepts of youth mainstreaming and youth impact assessment (YIA) as a form of RIA in the youth field.

The paper then proceeds to describe the instruments of YIA at the EU level, with a particular focus on the Commission's better regulation agenda. This is followed by an overview of the YIA practices across European countries.

The third section is dedicated to an in-depth description of the features and processes of the youth checks. The procedures in place in each of the four Member States are covered in detail, with reference to the national contexts and institutional settings. Particular attention is paid to the actors involved in the youth checks, the institutions concerned, the processes of their implementation and the policy areas to which they apply.

The fourth section presents a comparative overview of the four types of youth check. The analysis covers various elements. The **scope** of application of the youth checks is discussed, along with the dimensions of young people's lives that are concerned. The different **methodologies** of the youth checks are compared in order to identify the sources of evidence used and the criteria used to assess the impact of policies on young people. The **procedures** followed in the four cases are explored from various perspectives, such as the administrative bodies involved, the stage of application in policymaking and the inclusion of young people. The analysis concludes with an assessment of the **results** of the youth checks in terms of the consequences for draft legislation.

The conclusions sum up the main findings of the comparative analysis. Similarities and differences in the workings of the youth checks in the four countries are highlighted. The section also identifies further aspects of YIA and youth checks to be addressed in future research.

The analysis is based on first-hand qualitative information collected by the national correspondents of the Youth Wiki network in March 2023, and through interviews with representatives of national public administrations, along with secondary information derived from desk research. In total, 26 EU Member States <sup>(1)</sup> and seven non-EU countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye) participated in the data collection.

<sup>(1)</sup> Portugal did not take part in the data collection.

# 1. Youth mainstreaming and youth impact assessment

The Council conclusions adopted in November 2023 on **youth mainstreaming** in policymaking processes in the European Union (Council of the European Union, 2023) define it as ‘an approach that incorporates the perspective and needs of young people in the processes of policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as in decision-making processes. Mainstreaming ensures that the challenges and concerns inherent to young people are not addressed in isolation but are integrated cross-cuttingly into broader policy frameworks.’

Youth mainstreaming is based on the recognition that the lives of young people are impacted by measures designed in the context of manifold policy areas. In practical terms, it can be implemented through the establishment of procedures (e.g. interministerial committees, coordination groups across ministries, youth focal points) ensuring that youth priorities are not confined to youth-specific policies, but rather integrated into a multisectoral approach across all policy areas.

Youth mainstreaming can be upheld by several factors. One is the existence of a national youth strategy (or a national youth law) (OECD, 2018). By establishing general objectives for youth policy that cut across various fields, the strategy is liable to create synergies among different branches of government and foster the incorporation of a youth dimension into their policy planning.

Evidence-based policymaking that makes use of data broken down by age is another factor that can stimulate youth mainstreaming <sup>(2)</sup>. Observing the potentially different implications that a planned policy might have for different age groups not only makes policymaking permeable to youth interests and preferences but can also extend a youth perspective beyond the boundaries of youth policy.

Assessing the impact of policies on young people in various policy fields, to address potential challenges and avoid negative effects, also contributes to youth mainstreaming. To this end, such assessment ought to go beyond the traditional area of youth policies and be integrated into a general process of RIA applying to all policy areas.

**RIA** consists of a systematic appraisal of how proposed legislation will affect certain categories of stakeholders, economic sectors and the environment (European Court of Auditors, 2010; Radaelli, 2009; Adelle and Weilan, 2012).

RIA provides evidence on the expected and unexpected benefits and costs of legislative approaches and a critical assessment of policy options (OECD, 2020). By providing information on the potential trade-offs of legislative proposals, RIA supports the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of policies. RIA can also indicate the absence of a need to regulate or the failure to regulate where there is a need to do so (ibid.).

RIA can be conducted to ascertain various types of impacts – particularly economic and financial, but also environmental and social. The latter fields typically include aspects of gender equality, poverty, socioeconomic equality and age equality (Deighton-Smith et al., 2016; OECD, 2022).

Cutting across all these dimensions, young people represent a segment of the population that bears significant consequences resulting from policies. Young people are at an important point in life in which their access to education and training, meaningful employment, housing and other rights have a considerable influence on their future trajectories (OECD, 2020). In this context, governance tools such as impact assessments can help integrate the concerns and needs of young people into policymaking and intergenerational dialogue in a systematic way (ibid.).

Against this background, a survey of 28 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries reports that about a third – including several European countries <sup>(3)</sup> – use general RIAs and provide specific information on the expected impact of draft legislation on young people (OECD, 2020). In the context of youth policy, RIA can help recognise potential differentiated impacts of policies on young people (ibid.). RIA in the field of youth – or **youth impact assessment (YIA)** – implies the consideration of the intended and unintended consequences that draft policies might have for young people. This kind of impact assessment stipulates the inclusion of a youth perspective in the *ex ante* evaluation of the consequences of a new piece of legislation (Kompetenzzentrum Jugend-Check, 2022).

<sup>(2)</sup> This and the following point are inspired by the digital fishbowl discussion on how governments can integrate a young people's perspective into decision-making, organised by the Kompetenzzentrum Jugend-Check on 5 December 2023.

<sup>(3)</sup> Austria, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Sweden.

## 1.1. EU policy instruments

At the EU level, the Commission uses a comprehensive set of regulatory and policy tools, such as RIA, evaluations, stakeholder consultations, and cooperation and dialogue instruments.

The first reference to **regulatory assessment of impacts in the field of youth** can be found in the Council resolution of 8 February 1999 on youth participation (Council of the European Union, 1999). According to the Council's indications, the Commission is invited 'to focus on young people's interests as a guiding principle for action to be applied to all relevant policy areas and, where appropriate, to assess the potential effects of measures to be launched at the Community level on the living conditions of young people, and to show ways and means of taking the interests of young people into account'.

Officially defined as a policy instrument in 2000, the **open method of coordination** <sup>(4)</sup> followed up on the commitments set out in that resolution by including youth policy among its policy fields of application, with the specific priority of increasing youth participation in decision-making. The Commission proposed 'strengthening a consultation structure for young people at European level' in which civil-society organisations representing youth would participate (European Commission, 2001; Banjac, 2014).

Going a step further, in 2005, the Council adopted a resolution that invited both the Commission and the Member States to develop and implement the **structured dialogue with young people** and their organisations, researchers in the youth field and policymakers (Council of the European Union, 2005). The resolution stated that 'young people and their organisations should be consulted on and closely involved in the development, implementation and follow-up of policy actions affecting them'. Notably, it also mentioned the importance of including a youth dimension in other relevant EU policies.

However, it was the **2019–2027 EU Youth Strategy** that formally invited the Commission and the Member States to put in place mechanisms to involve young people in the development of policies affecting their lives (Council of the European Union, 2018). Recognising that decisions in various policy fields have a long-term impact on young Europeans, and that they are poorly represented in decision-making structures, the strategy calls for European and national authorities to implement processes that include young

citizens and the organisations that represent their interests in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies. The strategy concomitantly reinvigorated the structured dialogue – renamed the EU youth dialogue – by including more decision-makers and young people, especially those with fewer opportunities and those whose voices are less often heard, in decision-making processes (ibid.).

With the goal of ensuring the effectiveness, efficiency, foresight, transparency and participatory nature of policies, the **better regulation communication** (European Commission, 2015) reinforced the instrument of impact assessment for its legislative initiatives.

In general, impact assessments are conducted on Commission initiatives that have a significant impact on the economy, society and the environment. Initiatives include legislative proposals, non-legislative initiatives (e.g. financial programmes, recommendations for the negotiations of international agreements) and implementing and delegated acts. The results of the impact assessment process are collected in an impact assessment report, which must identify the groups in the population that will be affected and the results of public consultations with citizens and stakeholders, and include an assessment of the environmental, social and economic impacts of the initiative.

An independent body, the **Regulatory Scrutiny Board**, assesses the quality of the impact assessment. Impact assessment reports are public documents, and they are sent to the European Parliament and the Council for consideration as they decide whether to adopt the proposed initiatives.

In the context of the better regulation policy, **guidelines and a toolbox** have been established. Chapter 3 of the toolbox is dedicated to identifying impacts in evaluations, fitness checks and impact assessments <sup>(5)</sup>. In this context, several tools have a dimension that relates directly to young people: **tool #31** on education and training, culture and youth; **tool #30** dealing with employment, working conditions, income distribution, social protection and inclusion; **tool #29** concerning fundamental rights, including the promotion of equality; and **tool #20** on strategic foresight for impact assessments and evaluations. These tools are complemented by **tool #51** under Chapter 7, which is dedicated to stakeholder consultation.

First and foremost, tool #31 recognises that the impact of policies on young people can often be

(4) The open method of coordination in the EU is a type of 'soft' law. It is a form of intergovernmental policymaking that does not result in binding EU legislative measures and does not require Member States to introduce new or amend their current laws. Further information is available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/open-method-of-coordination.html>.

(5) [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/9c8d2189-8abd-4f29-84e9-abc843cc68e0\\_en?filename=BR%20toolbox%20-%20Jul%202023%20-%20FINAL.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/9c8d2189-8abd-4f29-84e9-abc843cc68e0_en?filename=BR%20toolbox%20-%20Jul%202023%20-%20FINAL.pdf)

greater than on other age cohorts and recommends assessing the consequences that new policy initiatives – especially in the fields of employment, education and social inclusion – might have for youth. The tool includes a set of questions <sup>(6)</sup> to be answered in order to compile a thorough analysis, according to evidence drawn from various sources including the EU youth report <sup>(7)</sup>, the EU Dashboard of Youth Indicators <sup>(8)</sup> and the Youth Wiki <sup>(9)</sup>.

Furthermore, tool #30 covers several dimensions of social impact: employment, working conditions, income distribution, social protection and inclusion. The tool recognises that the impacts of legislative initiatives in those fields vary for different subgroups of the population. Level of education and training, risk of exclusion and age are among the characteristics that can lead to different consequences stemming from the initiatives that are promoted. In this regard, it is important to consider that young people often suffer from unemployment and are exposed to the risk of social exclusion and poverty to a greater extent than the general population (European Commission, 2021a). Therefore, the tool is essential in duly assessing the impact of measures in the fields of employment and social inclusion, and in ensuring equality among age groups and the protection of the most vulnerable. The tool further recommends that, when significant negative effects are identified, ways to mitigate them be proposed, for example by including exceptions for the most disproportionately affected stakeholders.

With reference to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union <sup>(10)</sup>, tool #29 establishes the steps for assessing the potential impact of policy options on the principles of equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of sex, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation and – notably for the purpose of YIA – age. On this basis, policy initiatives that are liable to have an impact on young people have to undergo a thorough and evidence-based assessment to detect the potential risks and, if negative consequences are identified, propose mitigating measures.

<sup>(6)</sup> The questions are as follows. 1. 'How to reach out to young people in consultations and decision-making?' 2. 'Is there an impact on social inclusion and integration of youth? Are the needs of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and of young persons with disabilities duly considered?' 3. 'Is there an impact on learning opportunities in respect to youth?' 4. 'Is there an impact on labour market, continuity of transition between education and professional performance in respect to youth?'

<sup>(7)</sup> The EU youth reports, published every 3 years, describe relevant policy measures taken in support of young people and provide an analytical overview of the situation of young people at the EU level and in Member States.

<sup>(8)</sup> The [EU Dashboard of Youth Indicators](#) consists of some 41 indicators across various sectors that provide a broad picture of the situation of young people.

<sup>(9)</sup> The [Youth Wiki](#) is an online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies in Europe. It provides a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and initiatives supporting young people.

<sup>(10)</sup> [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#), OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 391.

Additionally, tool #20 concerns strategic foresight in impact assessments and in the evaluation of policy initiatives. The tool envisages the proofing of policies against megatrends – described as 'long-term global driving forces that are observable in the present and are likely to continue to have a significant influence for a few decades' – and future scenarios. Among the megatrends identified, two are particularly relevant for the purpose of YIA. The first concerns demographic imbalances that, in Europe, are due to an increasingly ageing population. This trend is liable to affect the sustainability of public financing and the related availability of public services (e.g. healthcare, pensions, education) for generations to come. The second megatrend that has an impact on young people is the diversification and digitalisation of education and learning. Societal and technological changes are transforming the way young people access and experience learning. A shift is occurring from classes, classrooms and curricula towards exploring, customisation and coaching, and this will gain momentum over the coming decades (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2019). New digital technologies are reshaping the way young people learn, and demand the development of innovative approaches to teaching and learning (ibid.). Based on these considerations, the tool prescribes that new policy initiatives acknowledge the connected changes in the lives of young people and undergo an assessment of their potential consequences for the new realities younger generations will experience.

The tools described above are complemented by tool #51, which introduces a stakeholder dimension into the process of impact assessment. The tool concerns the consultation of stakeholders and citizens on the Commission's legislative proposals. Through a call for evidence – a document that describes an initiative and, where relevant, includes a 12-week public-consultation questionnaire – the contents, objectives and expected effects of a proposal are presented to the public in order to collect feedback. The instrument also applies to impact assessments: the description of the problem, issues relating to subsidiarity, the policy objectives, the options and the likely impacts of each option are illustrated in detail.

Over the years, the effective integration of young people's views and interests into decision-making has gained momentum as a highly relevant topic in the field of youth policy. At the Conference on the Future of Europe, all voting components expressed the need to give young people more leverage in the processes of policymaking (Council of the European Union, 2022b). In the Annex to its communication 'Conference on the Future of Europe – Putting vision into concrete action', the Commission states its intention to propose a 'coherent and meaningful approach to ensure youth involvement in policy-making, through their

systematic participation in citizens panels, in the smaller deliberative co-creation processes, as well as by a specific attention to the impact of envisaged policies on the young generation' (European Commission, 2022a). The proposal states that one third of the members of citizens' panels should be young people, and envisages the possibility of organising panels composed solely of young members (ibid.). Support for this proposal was expressed by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in its opinion on the EU youth test (EESC, 2022), by the Parliament in its resolution on the legacy of the 2022 European Year of Youth (European Parliament, 2022), by the European Committee of the Regions in its opinion on the future of youth policy in the EU (European Committee of the Regions, 2022) and by youth organisations such as the European Youth Forum. In July 2023, the EESC started a pilot project on the implementation of a YIA instrument (the EU youth test) in its opinion-making process. EESC sections and other bodies are invited to select pilot opinions that will be checked for their relevance to youth. Young people are directly involved in the consultation process.

The most recent step taken at the EU level is represented by the Commission's plan to conduct a youth check on its policy initiatives. As described in the communication on the European Year of Youth (European Commission, 2024), the first step of the youth check is an assessment of the relevance of initiatives for young people. If the policy initiatives bear significant relevance, the Commission considers whether to organise dedicated youth consultations (e.g. targeted surveys, debates with young people and youth stakeholders). The Commission then performs an impact assessment on the initiatives, where relevant. This process is based on the better regulation tools described above. The last step is an appraisal conducted by the Regulatory Scrutiny Board.

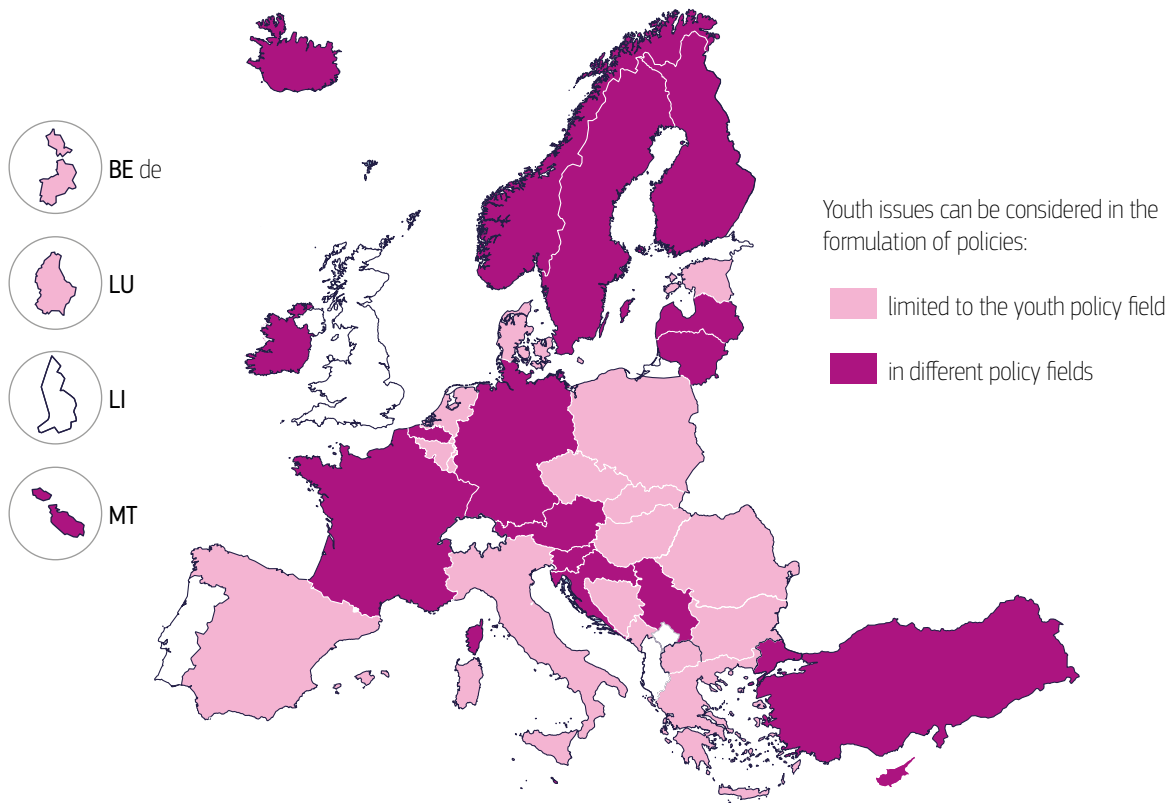
From the overview of the methods and instruments of the Commission's approach to the assessment of youth impacts, several advantageous features can be identified for the purpose of incorporating young people's demands and needs into policymaking. Firstly – far from being confined to the youth policy field – it integrates the analysis of the consequences of legislation on young people into a wide regulatory framework that allows for the comprehensive consideration of their needs across various policy fields. Secondly, it is based on a diffuse participatory dimension that includes youth stakeholders in the assessment of policies' effects on the younger population. Furthermore, it integrates that assessment into a long-term perspective that ensures forward-looking consideration of the interests of generations to come.

## 1.2. National policy instruments

At the national level, all countries participating in this data collection report the existence of formal or informal, systematic or ad hoc procedures for taking young people's concerns into consideration in the preparation of legislative initiatives. However, they differ in several respects.

The first difference concerns the scope of **policy fields** in which youth implications can be assessed. In about half of the countries analysed (18), youth issues can be taken into consideration in the drafting of legislation limited to the youth policy field. In the other half (17), the assessment can cover legislation in any policy field that has repercussions on young people (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Consideration of youth issues in the formulation of policies, 2023**



Source: Youth Wiki.

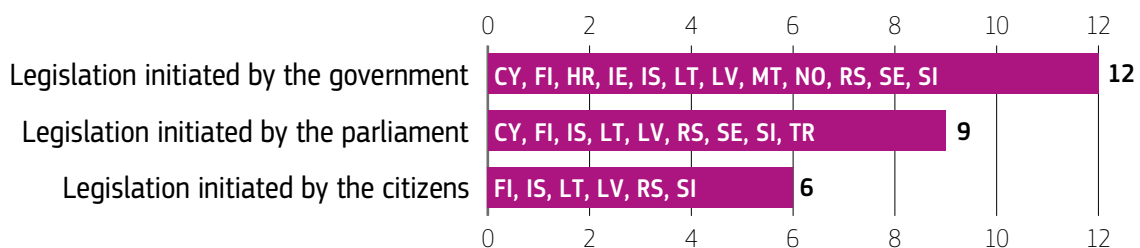
As discussed in Section 1, assessing the consequences of legislation for young people across different policy fields supports youth mainstreaming. To discern how this happens, the analysis focuses on the 17 countries that fall into the second category. Among them, Belgium (the Flemish Community), Germany, France and Austria have introduced formal instruments for impact assessment in the field of youth, either specifically or as part of a general process. As their features are illustrated in detail in the following sections, they are not discussed in this overview.

The analysis looks at four dimensions of policymaking: the type of legislation proposed, the stage in the legislative process, the actor initiating it and the procedures that are applied. The categories listed

under each dimension are not mutually exclusive: countries can belong to more than one.

Differences exist in the **type of legislation** for which youth issues can be considered. In most countries, youth concerns can be taken into consideration in the drafting of legislation introduced by the government (Figure 3). Legislation originating from the parliament comes next, while in six countries (Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia and Slovenia) legislation initiated by citizens can also be checked against youth impact. In Croatia, Ireland, Malta and Norway, only legislation drafted by the government can be evaluated in consideration of youth interests. In Türkiye, this can happen solely for legislation introduced by the parliament.

**Figure 3. Countries where youth issues are considered, by type of legislation, 2023**

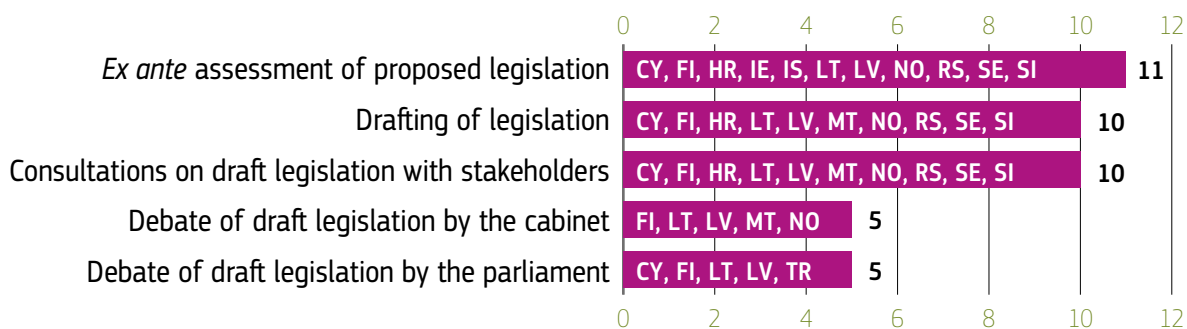


Source: Youth Wiki.

The **stage of policymaking** during which the consequences of legislation for young people can be addressed differs among countries. Figure 4 shows that the stage of *ex ante* assessment of lawmaking is the most common one. This is the phase when the main objectives of new legislation are set and its impact is assessed. In Iceland and Ireland, this is the

only stage during which impact assessment can take place. The stages of drafting and that of consultations with the public and stakeholders are also ones in which youth issues can often be considered. In a smaller number of countries, the implications of legislation for young people can be included in the debate within the cabinet and the parliament.

**Figure 4. Countries where youth issues are considered, by stage of policymaking, 2023**

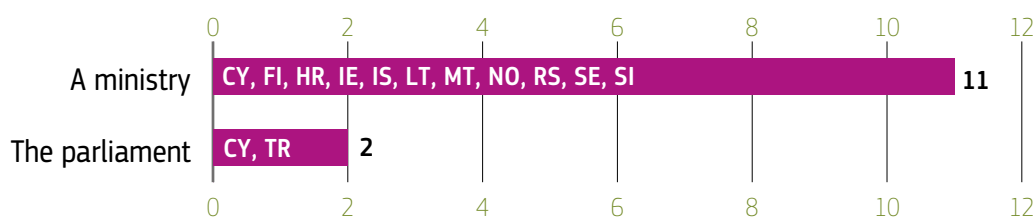


NB: Categories are listed based on the sequence of the legislative procedure.  
Source: Youth Wiki.

The **initiator** of the impact assessment process is most often the ministry in charge of the legislation that is proposed (Figure 5). In some cases, the ministry responsible for youth policy cooperates with the line ministry in evaluating the consequences of legislation for young people. Since, in general,

legislation is proposed by parliaments less frequently than by governments, parliaments are more seldom initiators of the procedures for considering youth issues in drafting legislation. In the case of Türkiye, the evaluation of the consequences of legislation for young people can only be initiated by the parliament.

**Figure 5. Countries where youth issues are considered, by institution initiating the procedure, 2023**



NB: Data for Latvia are not available.  
Source: Youth Wiki.

There are various **procedures** through which the impact on young people can be considered in the drafting of new policies (Figure 6). Consultations with young people or youth stakeholders (e.g. youth councils and students' unions) in the field of youth are the most frequent approaches. All countries participating in the analysis provide for these procedures. The use

of reports, studies and results from surveys is also a means of gauging the implications of legislation for young people and supporting evidence-based policymaking.

**Figure 6. Countries where youth issues are considered, by procedure, 2023**

Source: Youth Wiki.

As indicated at the beginning of this section, one region and three Member States – the Flemish Community of Belgium, Germany, France and Austria – have formal instruments for impact assessment in the field of youth, here referred to as ‘**youth checks**’.

Youth checks address the impact of policy proposals on young people in an almost systematic way, by applying formal evaluation methods and ad hoc evaluation procedures that complement the general process of RIA. Policymakers are required to systematically establish whether a new piece of legislation bears consequences for young people and, if so, to initiate a formal process of impact assessment. The methodology consists of predefined detailed questions regarding the expected impact of a piece of legislation on young people that are answered on the basis of quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Some Member States (the German-speaking Community of Belgium and Ireland) are holding debates on the possibility to introduce a youth check, while others (Italy, Malta and the Netherlands) are developing concrete plans.

- In the **German-speaking Community of Belgium**, the implementation of a youth check is part of the youth 2025+ project. Existing youth check models in other European countries are being assessed in order to identify good practices. Broad consultations among all stakeholders are planned, with the objective of launching a pilot phase.
- **Ireland** has been conducting extensive consultations on the introduction of a youth check. The debate, mainly driven by youth organisations, has involved institutional actors such as the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs of the Oireachtas (the Irish parliament) and the Children and Young People’s

Policy Consortium, chaired by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Implementing a youth check in Ireland is one of the recommendations of the ‘young voices’ EU youth dialogue processes in Ireland.

- As a first step in implementing a complete youth check, in 2021 **Italy** established a committee that oversees the impact of public policy, on young people. The committee is composed of various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Youth, the National Youth Council, the Italian Youth Agency and the National Institute of Statistics. The committee provides data and analysis in support of effective government coordination and implementation of youth policies. The first set of guidelines was published in 2022. As of early 2024, a draft law envisages the introduction of a ‘generational impact assessment mechanism’, which will evaluate *ex ante* the possible impact of new legislation on young people, using the abovementioned guidelines as a reference framework.
- The latest revision of **Malta’s** national youth policy ‘towards 2030’ envisages the introduction of a system of youth proofing to ensure that while enacting legislation and formulating national policies and strategic plans and initiatives, the interests of young people are recognised and taken into account.
- In the **Netherlands**, a ‘generation test’ is currently being developed. Advocated for by youth organisations and endorsed by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the generation test will be a new instrument aiming to make visible what the long-term and generational effects of laws and regulations, government policy and investments are on age groups, now and in the future.

## 2. Youth checks

Following the above overview of YIA in general, this section is dedicated to the national applications of the youth checks. The analysis is based on information collected by the Youth Wiki network of national correspondents, desk research and interviews with representatives of national government administrations involved in conducting the youth checks. The aim is to provide a general description of the national instrument and to identify, where possible, essential comparable elements.

### 2.1. National experiences

#### Flemish Community of Belgium

The Kind-en-jongereffectrapport (JoKER) [Child and Youth Impact Report] of the Flemish Community of Belgium was the first youth check introduced in Europe. Following the establishment of the previous Child Impact Report in 1997, in 2008 its scope was extended to include young people up to 25 years of age.

JoKER is applied to the *ex ante* assessment of legislation in order to gauge the consequences that it would have for children and young people. The process is initiated by the ministry responsible for the proposed legislation. JoKER is applied only for legislation that originates from the government and is subject to parliamentary approval (government regulations that are directly implemented do not undergo the JoKER process as they fall under the full competence of the government). When legislation is liable to have an effect on young people (whether or not they are specified as a particular target group), the application of JoKER is mandatory. In all other cases, it is up to each ministry to evaluate whether JoKER should be applied or not. If it is not applied, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media can question the ministry regarding the reasons for the decision, and can request that JoKER be applied. In the case of a refusal, the matter is referred to the Minister for Youth, who can exert political pressure during the process of government approval. The final decision on whether JoKER must be included is conditional upon the advice of the Council of State. Therefore, a governmental draft law for which there has been no JoKER when the Council of State demands one cannot be sent to the Flemish parliament until the impact assessment is conducted.

The JoKER report is composed of three parts: a description of the intended effects of the draft legislation on the situation of young people; a description of the situation of young people in the absence of the proposed legislation; and alternatives to the legislative proposal in the form of mitigating measures if critical effects are identified.

All dimensions pertaining to the life of children and young people are considered, descending from the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is the ethical and legal framework for the Flemish youth and children's rights policy and its instruments <sup>(1)</sup>.

JoKER is included in its entirety in the impact assessment section of the explanatory memorandum, which is the document that clarifies why the new regulation is needed. Ministries mainly employ secondary sources of qualitative and quantitative information when conducting JoKER, such as statistical data, experts' reports and reviews of the relevant literature, but can also use the results of consultations with young people and youth stakeholders.

In drafting the JoKER report, ministries receive, within a maximum of 12 days (4 if the situation is urgent), advice from the Department of Culture, Youth and Media, which is tasked with supporting the implementation of JoKER.

The Department of Culture, Youth and Media structures its advice around five aspects directed at assessing the main elements of the JoKER report: the factors requiring legislative intervention; the identification of young people as a target group, along with subgroups in the youth population (e.g. young children, students, young adults, young people with a foreign background); the assessment of the impact that new legislation would have; the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the proposed law; and the potential participation of youth stakeholders in the preparation of the report.

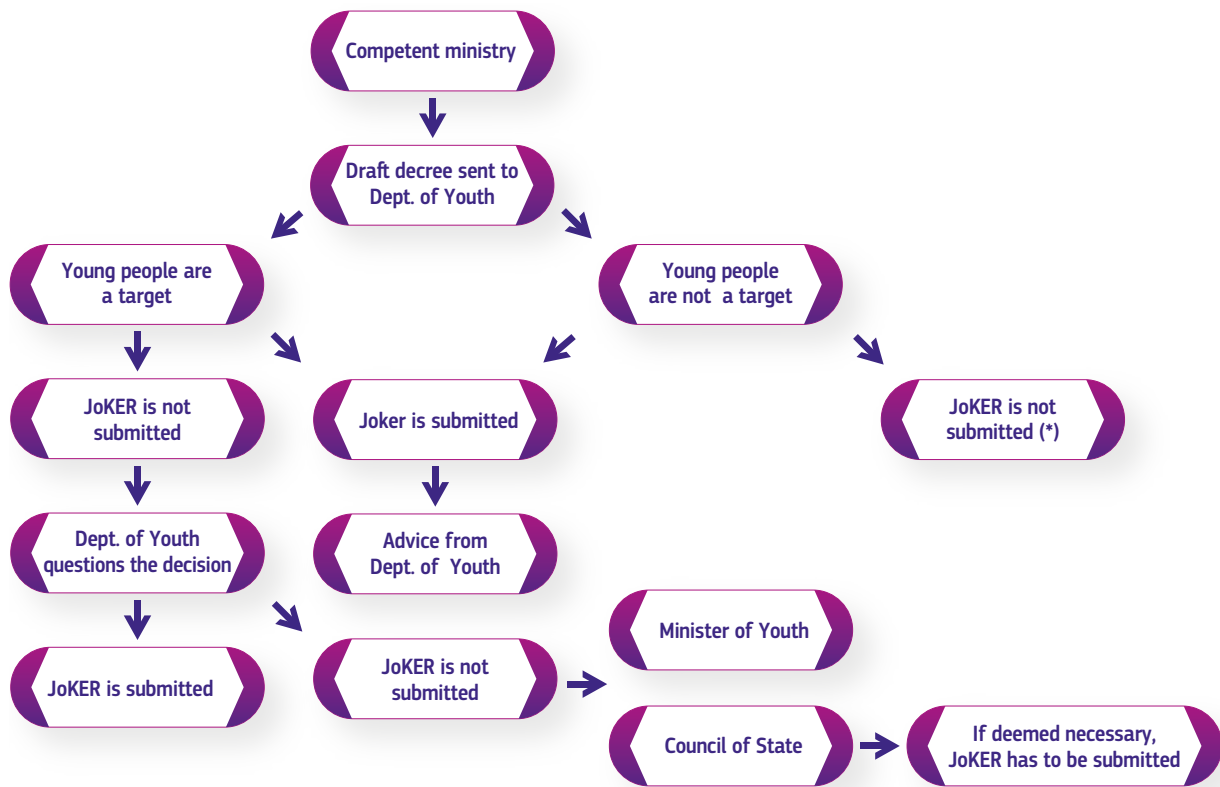
There is no obligation for the ministry to involve other actors (e.g. representatives of young people or stakeholders in the field of youth) in the impact assessment, although official regulations consider this possibility.

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/crc.pdf>.

The report is submitted to the department together with the draft legislation and the explanatory memorandum, before the government’s initial approval. If new provisions are added or amendments are made to the legislation during the government’s

debate, the advice from the department can be requested for a second time. If so requested by the competent ministry, the report can also provide for an evaluation of the effects of the legislation 5 years after its promulgation.

**Figure 7. Belgium: JoKER**



(\*) The Minister for Youth can also request a JoKER when young people are not a target group.

### Germany

The introduction of the youth check in Germany dates back to 2017. The rationale behind this decision was the consideration that youth interests were not taken into account in the formulation of policy as much as those of other age groups.

Unlike the other countries where a youth check exists, the responsibility for the youth check in Germany lies outside the realm of government administration, with the Competence Centre Youth-Check (ComYC). The ComYC is a project initiated and run by the German Research Institute for Public Administration. The ComYC receives long-term funding from the German Ministry of Youth, and is part of the federal government’s youth strategy.

The youth check is conducted in all policy fields

during the *ex ante* examination and draft stage of legislation initiated by a ministry. Different procedures are used depending on the initiator of the legislation. When tabled by the Ministry of Youth, draft bills are submitted systematically to the ComYC. When bills are drafted by other ministries, the Ministry of Youth may receive them during the interdepartmental coordination process. If this is the case, the Ministry of Youth forwards them to the ComYC. Other draft bills are identified by the ComYC itself by browsing the websites of the various ministries.

Draft legislation first undergoes a preliminary assessment, to establish whether young people (aged 12 to 27) or specific subgroups in the youth population are affected. If this is the case, a main assessment is subsequently conducted, using various methodological approaches, to offer a comprehensive and differentiated appraisal of the effects of the

proposed legislation.

Information is drawn from various sources, such as studies, secondary data and official statistics. The ComYC can also generate its own data, especially when data are not otherwise available. The ComYC strives to ensure a comprehensive assessment of the draft legislation and of its expected impact on young people.

During the youth check, several areas of young people's lives are taken into consideration according to a pre-established assessment chart: family, leisure, education and work, environment and health, politics and society, and the digital world. These are then assessed using 11 impact dimensions <sup>(12)</sup>.

The youth check consists of factual descriptions of the intended and unintended effects of the proposed legislation on young people's lives. The youth check is submitted to the Ministry of Youth, which then forwards it to the competent ministry. There is no obligation for the legislator to amend draft legislation on the basis of the youth check, nor to provide for measures to mitigate the potential negative effect of policy measures on young people. Nevertheless, the youth check helps to raise the awareness of policymakers and public administration with regard to youth as a stage of life in its own right. The youth

check is also published on the ComYC's website <sup>(13)</sup>.

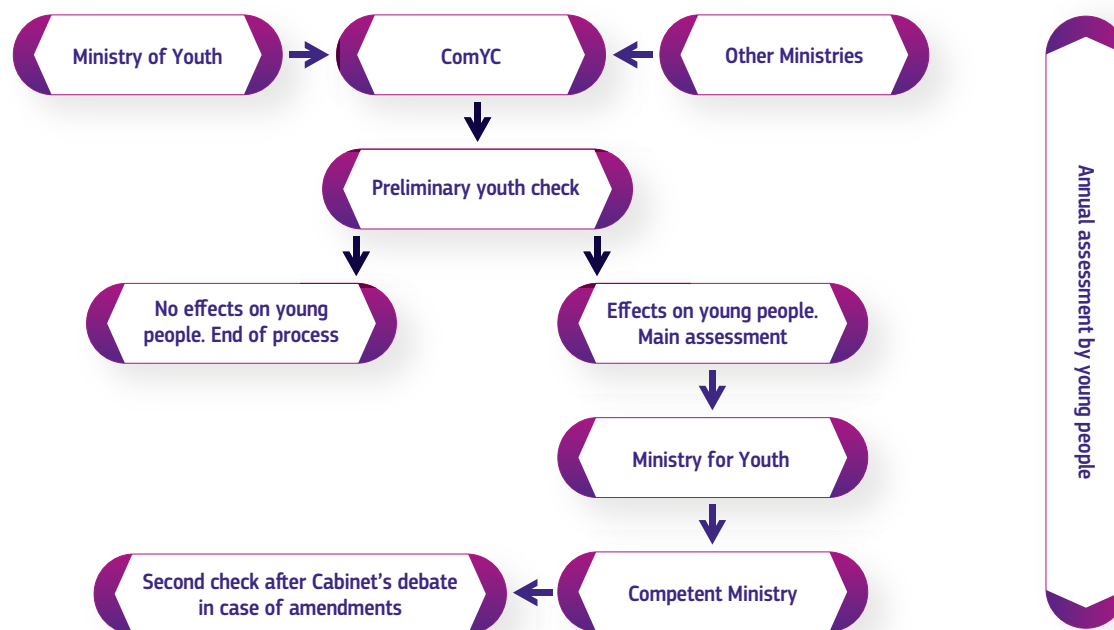
The participation of young people is not envisaged in the process of the youth check. However, young people are involved as experts on their own lives in two different events that the ComYC organises. The first event sees the participation of around 70 young people from all over Germany, who are invited to discuss the work of the ComYC. The discussions include feedback on the assessment chart in order to evaluate its comprehensiveness and relevance. The other event is dedicated to the assessment of a specific piece of future legislation before the official drafting stage. A central requirement to be able to hold these events is that the ComYC has access to some of the key elements of the proposed legislation, such as a cornerstone paper. In this context, young participants express their perspective on the potential effects of the legislation and help identify possible effects that can be integrated into the youth check.

The ComYC examines the bills again after they have been dealt with by the cabinet, i.e. when they have been adopted by the federal government. If there are changes to the draft bill that are relevant to young people, an updated youth check is issued on the government bill. In addition, a short version of the youth check that contains the most relevant effects on young people is sent to the members of the Bundestag (the federal parliament).

<sup>(12)</sup> Participation opportunities; education conditions and opportunities; health effects; individual rights; financial effects; media access and use; mobility; protection against discrimination/stigmatisation; protection against violence; self-determination/independence; social relationships.

<sup>(13)</sup> <http://www.jugend-check.de/english>.

**Figure 8. Germany: the youth check**



## France

The French youth impact clause was established in 2016 within the framework of the 2012–2017 national youth strategy (the youth priority plan). The youth impact clause is part of the general impact assessment that is conducted on a mandatory basis on any new piece of legislation initiated by the government.

The authority responsible for the youth impact clause is the General Secretariat of the Government, attached to the Office of the Prime Minister. This is the body that monitors the application of the impact clause by identifying the ministries involved, appointing a coordinator or providing general guidelines.

Ministries are responsible for implementing the youth impact clause for the regulations they draft. In the process, ministries can receive technical support from the General Directorate for Youth, Non-formal Education and Volunteering of the Ministry of National Education and Youth. Ministries are therefore responsible for the process, which applies systematically to the regulations drafted by the government. Parliamentary bills can also include a youth impact clause, subject to the will of the member of parliament initiating the draft.

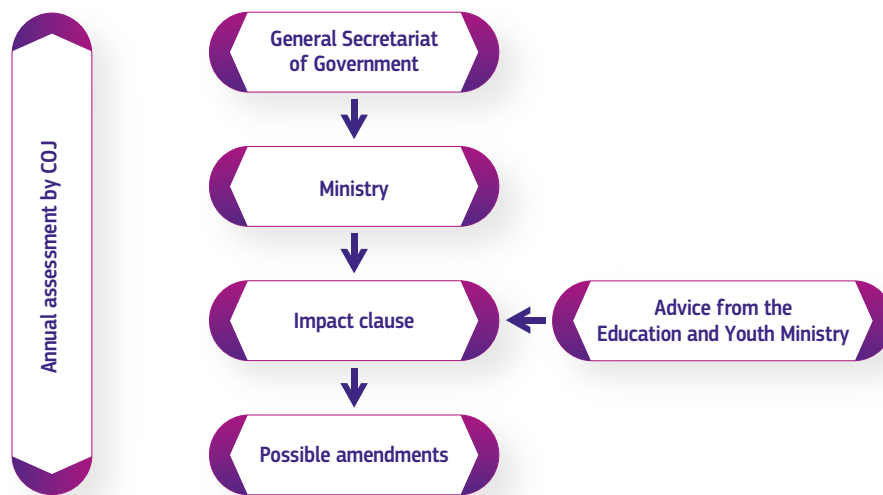
The youth impact clause is applied in all policy fields during the *ex ante* legislative examination and drafting stage. It revolves around three main objectives: ensuring equality among all young people (aged 16–25); upholding intergenerational justice; and avoiding discrimination in relation to access to services and rights.

The information underpinning the youth impact clause is collected in specific administrative forms, which were established by a memorandum in 2018. These forms spell out the questions that must be answered in order to assess the expected impact of legislation on young people. Questions cover aspects like the existence of specific age groups targeted by the legislation, the expected consequences for

young people in the short and long terms and the inclusion of measures specifically targeting young people. The quantitative and qualitative information used to answer these questions usually comes from internal consultations with government services and from research reports, among other sources. There are no predetermined indicators used to measure the significance of the impact.

Besides the representatives of the ministries and departments involved in the drafting of legislation – and potentially the ministry of National Education and Youth, if consulted – no other actors contribute to the application of the youth impact clause. Representatives of young people are thus not officially consulted, according to the General Directorate for Youth, Non-formal Education and Volunteering. However, informal consultations can take place at the discretion of the ministry in question.

At the end of the process, amendments to the draft legislation can be formulated – including as a result of the impact assessment – in order to mitigate any potential negative effects on young people. Although there is no *ex post* evaluation of the implementation of specific legislation, as is the case in Austria, each year the Advisory Council on Youth Policies assesses the implementation of the impact clause, based on a report by the General Directorate for Youth, Non-formal Education and Volunteering. The results of the assessment can ask for improvements in the way the youth impact clause is applied, for example by enhancing the publicity of its findings, by repeating the assessment at the end of the drafting process, by suggesting also applying the youth impact clause in relation to legislation initiated by members of parliament or by carrying it out once the parliamentary amendments have been voted on.

**Figure 9. France: the youth impact clause**

## Austria

The RIA (children and youth dimension), or youth check, was introduced in 2013, in the context of a general reform of the country's Federal Budget Law. The underlying intention was to raise awareness of the concerns and needs of young people and broaden the scope of political decisions to include their perspective. This, in the long term, was intended to enable a more child- and youth-friendly society in Austria.

The youth check is a mandatory YIA mechanism that is part of the more general process of RIA. Initiated by the ministry responsible for the draft legislation or by the relevant budgeting authority, the youth check applies to all laws drafted by the government, regardless of their policy field. The Federal Performance Management Office, with a mandate relating to internal quality control, monitors the application of the youth check by ministries.

An ad hoc handbook describes the 'materiality tests' that ministries need to perform as part of the check, which are based on the legislative framework found in Austrian constitutional law and in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. For each draft law, ministries must answer a number of questions with the aid of a specific IT tool. Firstly, they are asked to decide whether the target legislation will have an impact on young people. If the answer to this initial question is yes, ministries will proceed with a youth check; otherwise, no such check will take place.

When a youth check needs to be performed, the aspects that are taken into consideration refer to three general dimensions: protecting and promoting health, and the development and fulfilment of

children (aged 0–18) and young adults (aged 18–30); caring for children and young adults and providing them with support; and securing the future of children and young adults in the medium term.

The presence of significant effects on the aforementioned dimensions of young people's lives is measured by means of several indicators. The first two dimensions are checked against the number of young people who are potentially affected by a new legislation, establishing the threshold at 1 000 individuals. Conversely, the impact on the third dimension – the safeguarding of young people's future – is gauged by examining the level of resources invested, fixed at EUR 1 billion over a period of 10 years. The same dimension also considers whether any other significant effects are expected to last for more than 25 years (e.g. those relating to strategies or policies about taxation, energy or the environment).

The level of significance determines the need for a simplified or a more detailed impact assessment. When the latter option applies, the assessment is conducted on the basis of quantitative and qualitative data. Sources may vary, but they generally include evaluations of existing data and statistics, survey results and research reports.

The youth check delivers objective and reasoned opinions on the impact of legislation on young people, which are then taken into consideration in the drafting of legislative projects. In particular, when the youth check signals any counterproductive effects on young people, mitigating measures will be established. For quality assurance purposes, the Directorate General for Family and Youth needs to check that the information included in the impact

assessment is complete. Ministries do not have an obligation to implement all recommendations, but they must justify their choices.

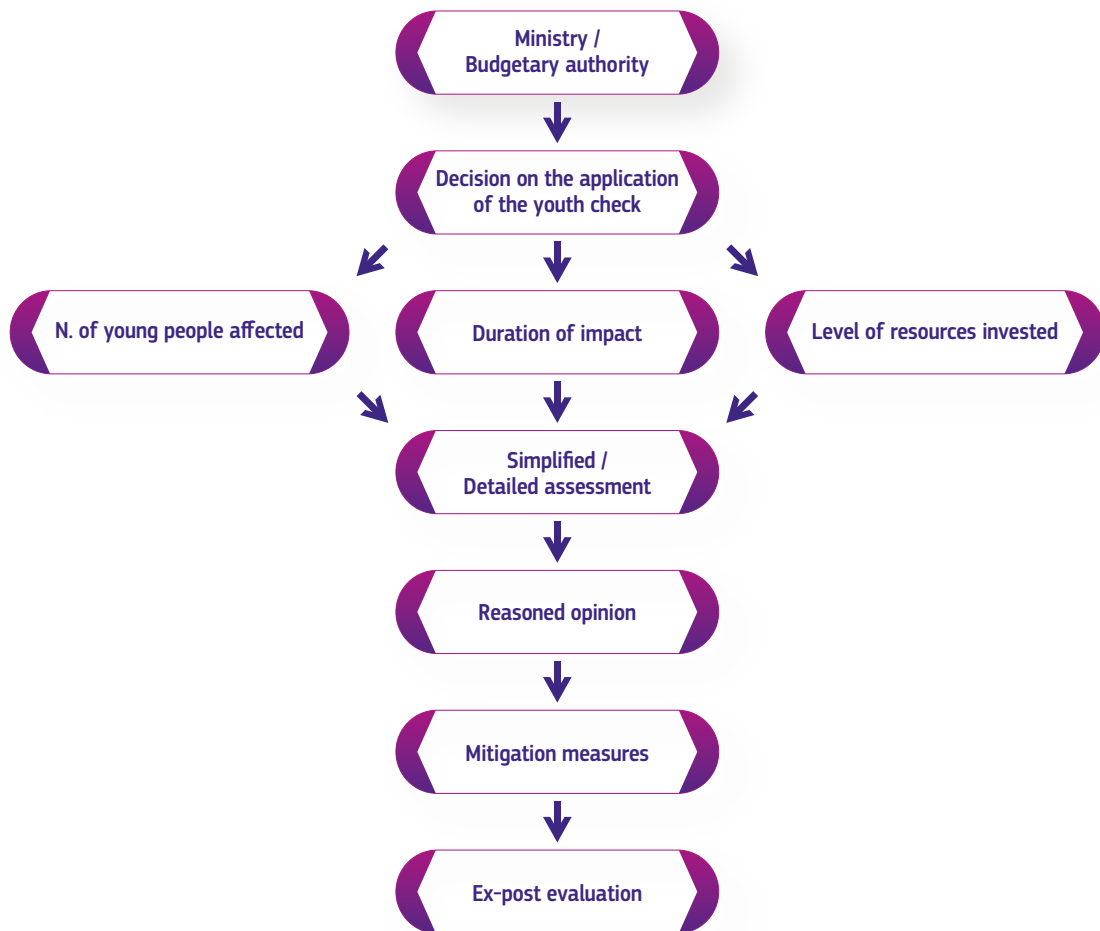
The process does not officially provide for the involvement of young people’s representatives.

The youth check also envisages a systematic *ex post* evaluation: within 5 years of entering into force, legislation must be evaluated against the recommendations delivered during the impact

assessment, in order to appraise the actual effects and, where applicable, identify aspects to be improved.

Every year, the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sports presents a report on RIA – including the youth check – to the parliament. This document contains the evaluation results of the individual departments, along with an overall assessment of the success of the process.

**Figure 10. Austria: the youth check**



## 2.2. A comparative overview

The comparison of these four experiences allows us to identify common general patterns, along with some differences. The following analysis looks at such patterns from four perspectives: scope, methodology, procedures and use of the results.

### Scope

#### Realm of application

In all the countries where they are established, youth checks are applied to draft legislation issued by the government. However, differences exist. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, JoKER only applies to legislation that originates from the government and that is subject to parliamentary approval, while governmental acts that are directly implemented do not undergo the check. On the other hand, in France, parliamentary bills can also include a youth impact clause, subject to the will of the member of parliament initiating the draft. In terms of the content of legislation, youth checks can be applied to any given policy field. They therefore contribute to streamlining youth interests across all spheres of policymaking. This approach has the potential to include youth perspectives in areas that do not traditionally belong to the youth policy field.

#### Youth-related dimensions

The identification of the impact of legislation on young people takes into consideration a vast number of aspects relating to young people's lives. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, all dimensions pertaining to the lives of young people are considered. In the other countries analysed, the dimensions against which the effects of legislation are usually checked revolve around five main areas: health, care and well-being, autonomy, equity and non-discrimination. The German youth check covers a wider scope of youth-related dimensions using an assessment chart that consists of six areas of life and 11 impact dimensions. The areas of life include family, leisure, education and work, the environment and health, politics and society, and the digital world.

### Methodology

#### Evidence based

In all countries under consideration, the assessment of the consequences of legislation for young people is based on the collection of evidence, in the form of both qualitative and quantitative information. Ministries in France rely mostly on in-house work and consultations between government services. The youth checks in the

Flemish Community of Belgium, Germany and Austria are generally based on secondary sources such as scientific studies and official statistics. In Germany, whenever data are not directly available, for instance when novel aspects are regulated, evidence can be collected on an ad hoc basis (e.g. through surveys and stakeholder consultations), in consideration of the time available for producing the youth check results.

### Criteria and indicators

In Germany and Austria, youth checks are carried out on the basis of predefined criteria and indicators. In Germany, an assessment chart is used to assess where and how young people's lives may be affected by new legislation. A detailed list of impact dimensions helps to determine and describe the effects. Conversely, the youth check in Austria involves three specific indicators (the number of young people affected, the budget allocated and the expected duration of the effects of legislation) that are used to measure the significance of the consequences for young people. On the other hand, the Flemish JoKER and the French youth impact clause are not conducted using specific criteria. In France, the absence of a pre-established set of indicators was deemed a limitation by the Advisory Council on Youth Policies in its 2017 general evaluation of the youth impact clause (Advisory Council on Youth Policies, 2017).

### Procedures

#### Application of a youth check

While in France all laws initiated by the government and all government regulations are automatically subject to the impact clause, in the other countries the youth checks require the institution responsible (the ministries in charge of the draft legislation or, in the case of Germany, the ComYC) to establish whether the legislative initiative bears consequences for young people. This is the first step in deciding upon the necessity of running a detailed youth check. If one is required, the effects of legislation are then evaluated by default, ensuring consistency in the consideration of youth needs across policy fields. Moreover, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, the decision of the competent ministry not to apply JoKER can be questioned by the Department of Culture, Youth and Media, the Minister for Youth and the Council of State.

#### Stage of application in the policymaking process

In all countries, youth checks are conducted during the preliminary assessment of future legislation (i.e.

the *ex ante* stage) and during the successive drafting stage. The role of the youth check is therefore to provide information on the likely impact of the new legislation on young people, and to attract the attention of the legislator to youth interests, alert them to potential negative outcomes for the specific social group and request or suggest the formulation of mitigating measures at an early stage of the policymaking process.

### Involvement of various administration services

The ministry that initiates the legislation is generally responsible for youth checks, except in Germany, where the youth check is conducted by the ComYC, a body that is outside the state administrative sphere but mandated to oversee the process. In addition, in three countries, several other services and departments may be involved. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, in the case of JoKER, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media is consulted in order to receive advice and support. This department is also mandated with the task of ensuring that JoKER is conducted whenever necessary, and can question the relevant ministry in the event that a JoKER report is not produced. The Ministry of Youth can exert pressure on the competent ministry, while the Council of State can ultimately decide not to allow a law to reach the parliament if they believe that a JoKER was necessary but has not been drafted. In France, the Ministry of National Education and Youth can be included in the preparation of the youth impact clause with a consultative function. In Austria, the Federal Performance Management Office is in charge of monitoring the application of the youth check. Moreover, the Directorate General for Family and Youth provides ministries with feedback on their implementation of the check.

### Inclusion of young people

In all countries, young people are not systematically involved in the workings of youth checks. However, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, the Youth Council can be informally involved in the drafting stage of the JoKER. In Germany, although young people are not consulted in the everyday workings of the youth check, they are included in its periodic assessment. Their participation aims to identify aspects that can be improved, for example in relation to the evidence and criteria employed in the analysis of policies. Furthermore, in some cases, young people can be invited to give their perspective on the potential effects of a specific piece of planned legislation with relevance for young people. In France, the consultation of young people can be organised by the competent ministry.

### Government adoption

Draft legislation can undergo substantial modifications during the stages of government adoption and parliamentary debate as a consequence of the revisions and amendments that are introduced in the text. In this regard, the Flemish Community of Belgium and Germany provide for specific procedures. JoKER requires a second advice from the Department of Culture, Youth and Media if new provisions are added or amendments are made to the legislation during the government's debate. Similarly, in Germany, the ComYC examines the bills again after they have been dealt with by the cabinet, i.e. when they have been adopted by the federal government. If, compared to the draft bill, there are changes relevant to young people, an updated youth check is issued in relation to a new version of the government bill. While a second round of assessment does not currently take place in France, the Advisory Council on Youth Policies has issued an opinion in favour of it. The recommended measure would entail an evaluation after the draft legislation has been discussed by the government in order to decide whether the youth impact clause should be applied again.

### Periodic evaluation

The youth checks undergo periodic evaluations in order to improve the tools over time through the consideration of aspects linked to their scope, methodology and processes. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, evaluations can be conducted by independent bodies as well as by the Department for Youth, although not on a structural basis. As described above, in Germany the youth check is assessed regularly by young people at events organised by the ComYC. In France, the Advisory Council on Youth Policies assesses the implementation of the impact clause on an annual basis. The results of the evaluation describe the improvements sought in the application of the youth impact clause. In Austria, every year, the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sports presents a report on the RIA – including the youth check – to the parliament. This document contains the evaluation results of the individual departments, along with an overall assessment of the success of the process.

### Ex post assessment of the actual impact of legislation on young people

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, Germany and France, the youth check procedure terminates with the conclusion of the *ex ante* and drafting stages of policymaking and the identification of the potential effects that legislative initiatives might have on young people. The situation in Austria is different. There, the youth check requires that an assessment of the

impact of legislation on young people be conducted systematically within 5 years of its implementation. This is required in order to assess the effective consequences of legislation for the situation of young people, monitor implementation and identify any shortcomings that may be remedied through new legislative initiatives.

## Results

### Youth check conclusions

After youth checks are conducted, the information on the expected consequences of legislation for young people is compiled into reports, which are made public. These reports are often included in the general documentation accompanying the draft legislation <sup>(14)</sup>. In this manner, the consideration of the potential consequences for young people is integrated into the overall impact assessment, and can thus gain prominence in the work of the legislator.

### Basis for the identification of mitigating measures

In all countries, one essential aim of the youth checks is to highlight any potential negative effects of draft legislation on young people. This is instrumental for the formulation of mitigating measures on the part of the legislator. This approach allows alternative or complementary measures that better take into account the needs of young people to be identified at an early stage, and potentially allows risks to the youth population to be pre-empted. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, proposals for mitigating measures are part of the JoKER report, although this does not entail an obligation for the government to reflect them in the draft legislation.

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<sup>(14)</sup> There is no obligation in Germany to include the youth check in the general documentation. The Ministry of Youth attaches the youth check to its own statement to the cabinet.

## Conclusions

The overview of the functioning of the youth checks and the comparative analysis of their features allows several similarities and differences to be identified among the four cases.

Starting with the similar aspects, youth checks in all countries apply to legislation initiated by the government and can be conducted in any policy field. A second common aspect is the application of the youth checks during the *ex ante* stage of policymaking, and in the following stage of drafting. In principle, this allows the formulation of measures to mitigate any potentially negative consequences of the legislation for young people. Furthermore, the analysis of the impact is based on evidence in all four cases. Quantitative and qualitative information is collected using various methods (e.g. a review of secondary sources, gathering of information from other ministries, ad hoc data collection when possible) that support the analysis. Public reports summarising the conclusions of the youth checks are drafted and submitted to government scrutiny in all four cases. Moreover, while the specific procedures vary from country to country, all four youth checks undergo periodic evaluations of their scope, methodology and process.

One last common feature is to be underlined: in all four countries, the participation of young people is not required. While, in some cases, the ministry can organise informal consultations, young people's representatives are not systematically involved.

In addition to the similarities described above, several differences can be noted. Germany is the only case in which the youth check is conducted by a body outside the government administration. In the other three cases, it is the ministry responsible for the policy in question that manages the process. Furthermore, only in Austria does the youth check require that an assessment of the impact of legislation on young people be conducted systematically within 5 years of its implementation, in order to assess the effective consequences of the legislation for the situation of young people. The extent to which youth checks are applied systematically also represents a main difference. While in France the youth check is automatically conducted on any new piece of legislation, in the other countries what is systematic is the obligation for the ministry responsible to consider whether a youth check is needed. Last but not least, the use of criteria and indicators for the assessment of the impact of a piece of legislation on young people is common only to Germany and Austria.

Policies that do not directly target young people, or that are not part of the conventional youth policy field, can still have a significant impact on young people's lives. The assessment of the effects of policy initiatives on young people can potentially enhance trust among younger generations, enabling young people to be seen as relevant and significant during the policymaking process. It also supports sound policymaking by ensuring that intended and unintended consequences of legislation are anticipated and that mitigating measures are provided for in the event of adverse effects.

In this context, there are several considerations regarding the value of YIA and of the youth checks.

**Policies can benefit** from the inclusion of YIA processes in two main respects. Firstly, the comprehensiveness of policies can be fostered by considering aspects relating to young people as an important constituent of society. Addressing potential challenges before application can make policies more effective in their impact and implementation. Secondly, support from stakeholders can increase. Including a youth perspective can enhance the potential of legislation to represent the interests of a significant part of society, to make adjustments that avoid negative effects and to reinforce the representativity and legitimacy of policy measures.

YIA and the youth checks can also have the advantage of **enhancing the visibility of youth issues** across policy fields. By providing for the consideration of youth aspects in the policymaking process, impact assessment mechanisms can make various services in the government administration aware of the situation of young people and how draft legislation may affect them. Youth policy thus becomes more prominent in the policymaking process and streamlined across different policy fields.

In parallel, **youth policy can be enriched in its scope and content** by deeper knowledge of the effects of regulations on aspects of young people's lives that could be otherwise overlooked. Information received by assessing the impact of legislation from other policy fields can inform measures in the context of youth policymaking. Moreover, **awareness of youth issues can be fostered among policymakers and the general public**. When the results of the impact assessment are made public, the salience of the situation of young people can gain increased attention in the public policy discourse.

Nonetheless, YIA mechanisms and the youth checks bring indirect advantages in the context of youth participation. First, they increase **transparency and accountability**. They shed light on the policies that are being drafted, whether they include a youth perspective and how policymakers intend to take young people's interests into consideration. This has been highlighted as an important aspect for youth organisations, as they need to be aware of the policy developments that affect young people.

Moreover, YIA instruments, and particularly youth checks, can be considered mechanisms for **capacity building and civic education**. They reveal the dynamics of policymaking, the main actors involved and the institutional processes, and so reinforce young people's knowledge of political decision-making.

In addition, the recognition of young people as a key political constituency, the interests and needs of which are different from those of others, is essential in raising awareness of youth issues and making the policymaking process more responsive to youth demands. This, in turn, can contribute to fostering young citizens' interest in political activity.

This paper represents a first attempt at mapping YIA across European countries and at comparing the youth checks of the four countries where they exist.

Further research is needed to shed light on additional aspects. A detailed analysis of other forms of YIA across European countries would be a relevant step in developing a complete overview of how it takes place in practice. Moreover, collecting data on concrete examples of pieces of legislation that have been assessed would illustrate the actual implementation of the instruments of YIA and the youth checks. This could go hand in hand with an investigation of the realm of application of youth checks. While this paper has mentioned them in general terms, a more in-depth analysis would offer a comprehensive overview of the policies that are actually assessed. In addition, the administrative costs of introducing and running a youth check represent an additional topic for future research.

The debate on the opportunity of YIA and the youth checks has spread to several other countries in Europe, which are assessing the possibility of and the procedures for introducing similar instruments. Mutual learning among countries appears crucial for the effective implementation of youth checks where they are not yet in place. The comparison of the different procedures and the identification of relevant features can inspire the development of further systems of YIA in policymaking and, ultimately, foster the awareness of young Europeans of political debates and their interest in political participation.

## Annex – Overview of the features of youth checks

	Belgium (Flemish Community)	Germany	France	Austria
Introduced in (year)	2008	2017	2016	2013
Age group considered	0–25	12–27	16–25	0–30

SCOPE				
Policy fields	All			
Fields in youth policy	All			
Dimensions of young people's lives considered	All	Areas of life: family, leisure, education and work, environment and health, politics and society, digital world	Non-discrimination in access to services and social rights; employment and autonomy; ensuring equality among young people and upholding intergenerational justice	Protection, promotion of health, development and self-realisation of children and young adults; caring for and maintenance of children and young people; securing the future of children and young adults
Type of legislation on which youth checks are conducted	Legislation initiated by the government and requiring approval by the parliament	Legislation initiated by the government	Legislation initiated by the government	Legislation initiated by the government

METHODOLOGY				
Evidence based	Literature review, existing data and statistics, research reports	Literature review. If data are not available: surveys, focus groups, interviews with experts	The information provided in the answers of each ministry usually comes from research reports	Evaluations of existing data and statistics, survey results, research reports
Predefined indicators and criteria	None	11 impact dimensions <sup>(15)</sup>	None	Number of young people impacted by the legislation, level of resources and duration of impact
Type of information collected	Quantitative and qualitative			

PROCEDURE				
Application of the youth checks	Decision by the competent ministry	Decision by the ComYC	Systematic	Decision by the competent ministry
Institution responsible	The ministry that initiates a draft bill	The ComYC	The ministry that initiates a draft bill	Ministries and the budgeting managing body responsible for initiating the legislation

<sup>(15)</sup> Participation opportunities; education conditions and opportunities; health effects; individual rights; financial effects; media access and use; mobility; protection against discrimination/stigmatisation; protection against violence; self-determination/independence; social relationships.

	Belgium (Flemish Community)	Germany	France	Austria
<b>Institution responsible is part of the government administration</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Initiator</b>	The ministry that initiates a draft bill	The ComYC	General Secretariat of the Government, under the Office of the Prime Minister	The ministry that initiates a draft bill
<b>Stage in the lawmaking process</b>	Ex-ante assessment and drafting of legislation			
<b>Actors involved</b>	Ministries and potentially other actors (representatives of young people, stakeholders, experts) if consulted by the relevant ministry	Experts and researchers within the ComYC	Ministries initiating the legislation	All bodies entrusted with the preparation of the enactment of federal laws: the members of the federal government (ministries) or the budget-managing body
<b>Consultation of young people</b>	Possible (Youth Council)	Limited to events where young people provide feedback on ComYC's work or a specific piece of planned legislation	Possible but informally	No
<b>Ex post monitoring mechanisms on the implementation of legislation</b>	No	No	No (but each year the Advisory Council on Youth Policies assesses the implementation of the youth check and proposes improvements)	Systematic (regulatory and other projects must be evaluated internally no later than 5 years after they enter into force)

RESULTS				
<b>Results of the youth checks</b>	Description of the objectives, the target group and sub-target groups of children and young people and of the intended effects of the draft legislation on their situation in the absence of the proposed legislation; alternatives to the legislative proposal	Neutral and objective description of the intended effects and unintended effects of proposed legislation on young people's lives	Description of impact on young people	Objectives, measures and effects of laws
<b>Results are public</b>	Yes			
<b>Mitigating measures</b>	To be formulated by the competent ministry			

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