

Module 5

VibeElevate ACTIVITY

# VIBES

Visionary Initiatives for a Balanced and  
Eco-conscious Society for Youth

Youth Policy & Systems of Influence

● Project Number: 2024-1-EL02-KA151-YOU-000230819

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# Understanding the Purpose of Youth Policy

Youth policies exist to ensure that young people have equal access to opportunities, rights, and support systems that allow them to thrive. They address issues such as education, employment, participation, mental health, and social inclusion. Youth policy is not simply a collection of rules, it is a framework for empowering young people and ensuring that governments take youth needs seriously. For youth workers, understanding youth policy means understanding the larger system that shapes the lives of the young people they support.

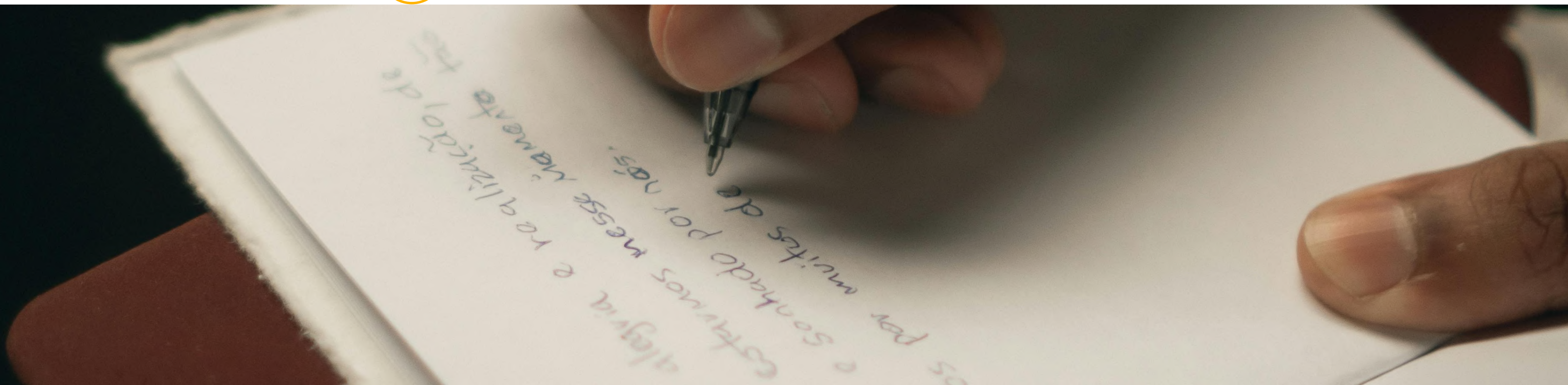




# European Youth Policy: A Shared Vision



At the European level, youth policy is shaped by the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027, which focuses on three key pillars: Engage, Connect, and Empower. This strategy promotes youth participation in democratic life, fosters youth mobility, and supports youth work as a powerful educational practice. It provides long-term guidance for Member States and serves as a reference point for developing policies that respond to the realities of young people today. Youth workers benefit from knowing this framework because it informs funding programmes, priorities, and opportunities for international cooperation.



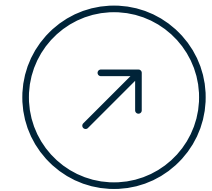
# The EU Youth Goals as Policy Anchors



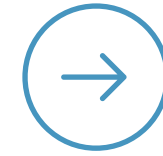
The EU Youth Goals are central to European youth policy and represent the concerns and aspirations of young people across Europe. Goals such as Quality Learning, Mental Health, Sustainable Green Europe, and Space and Participation for All offer clear policy directions. Youth workers can use these goals to align their projects with European priorities, advocate for young people's rights, and frame their work in a broader European context. Understanding the Youth Goals strengthens the relevance and impact of local youth initiatives.



# National Youth Policies: Reflecting Local Realities



Each country has its own national youth policy, shaped by its cultural, social, and economic realities. These policies outline national priorities such as youth employment, civic engagement, regional development, or social cohesion. While European policy provides overarching guidance, national policies determine how youth work is funded, regulated, and recognised within each country. Youth workers must understand their national policy landscape to navigate opportunities, advocate effectively, and connect their work with governmental priorities.



# Regional and Local Youth Policies

Youth policy is not only made at national and European levels. Regions, municipalities, and local authorities also develop youth strategies, create youth councils, and fund local projects. Local youth policies often have the most direct impact on young people's daily lives. Understanding the local context helps youth workers connect their initiatives to existing community structures and influence changes that benefit their specific youth groups.



# Non-Governmental Influence on Youth Policy

Every powerful story has a clear structure that guides the listener through emotions and ideas. A strong story usually contains an engaging beginning that captures attention, a middle section where the challenge or conflict unfolds, and a meaningful ending that brings resolution or insight. This structure mirrors the natural way people process experiences and helps listeners connect emotionally. Youth workers who master story structure can communicate more clearly and effectively.





# Mapping Stakeholders in Youth Policy

Mapping youth policy means identifying all the stakeholders who shape it: government ministries, local municipalities, youth councils, NGOs, schools, social services, and international bodies. Once youth workers identify these actors, they can better understand how power flows through the system. This mapping helps them connect the dots between local experiences and broader political structures, enabling them to advocate more effectively on behalf of young people.





# Understanding Decision-Making Structures

Youth workers must understand how decisions are made within governance systems. Decision-making structures vary across countries, but they usually involve legislative bodies, government ministries, municipal councils, advisory committees, and youth forums. Knowing how these structures function helps youth workers identify the right entry points for advocacy. Understanding the timeline of policy processes—such as consultations, drafting, budget cycles, and voting procedures—enables them to act strategically.





# Formal vs. Informal Decision- Making Processes


Policy decisions are influenced by both formal and informal processes. Formal structures involve laws, regulations, and official procedures. Informal processes include political negotiations, public opinion, social campaigns, and community pressure. Youth workers must understand both dimensions. While formal processes provide the legal framework, informal influence often determines whether a policy is embraced, resisted, or modified.





# Youth Participation in Policy- Making

Young people have the right to participate in shaping policies that affect their lives. Many countries support youth councils, advisory boards, and participatory structures that give young people a voice. Youth workers play a key role in preparing youth to participate meaningfully by developing their leadership, critical thinking, and communication skills. When youth are included in policy discussions, the resulting decisions are more relevant, equitable, and sustainable.



Policy



# The Role of Youth Workers as Connectors

Youth workers act as bridges between young people, institutions, and policymakers. They translate young people's needs and concerns into language that decision-makers understand, while also helping youth understand the policy environment. This connector role allows youth workers to create meaningful dialogue between the grassroots and the policy level. They ensure that policies reflect real experiences rather than assumptions or stereotypes.







# Evidence-Based Policy Influence

Policy influence is stronger when supported by evidence. Youth workers can collect data through observations, surveys, focus groups, and case studies that illustrate the challenges young people face. This evidence helps policymakers understand the urgency of issues such as unemployment, discrimination, or mental health. When youth workers present concrete data along with stories, their advocacy becomes more compelling and harder to dismiss.





# Using Storytelling to Influence Policy

Personal stories humanise policy debates. While data shows the scale of a problem, stories reveal the human experiences behind the numbers. Youth workers can support young people in sharing their experiences with professionals and policymakers through testimonies, public speaking events, or creative formats like theatre, videos, or exhibitions. Storytelling creates emotional impact and helps decision-makers understand why change is necessary.





# Building Alliances for Policy Influence

A strong speaking voice creates clarity and authority. Youth workers should pay attention to volume, pace, tone, and pauses. Speaking too quickly can confuse listeners, while monotone speech can bore them. Varying tone brings life to the message. Strategic pauses emphasize key ideas and allow young people time to reflect. Mastering vocal expression enhances the emotional and motivational impact of communication.



# Participating in Consultations and Public Hearings

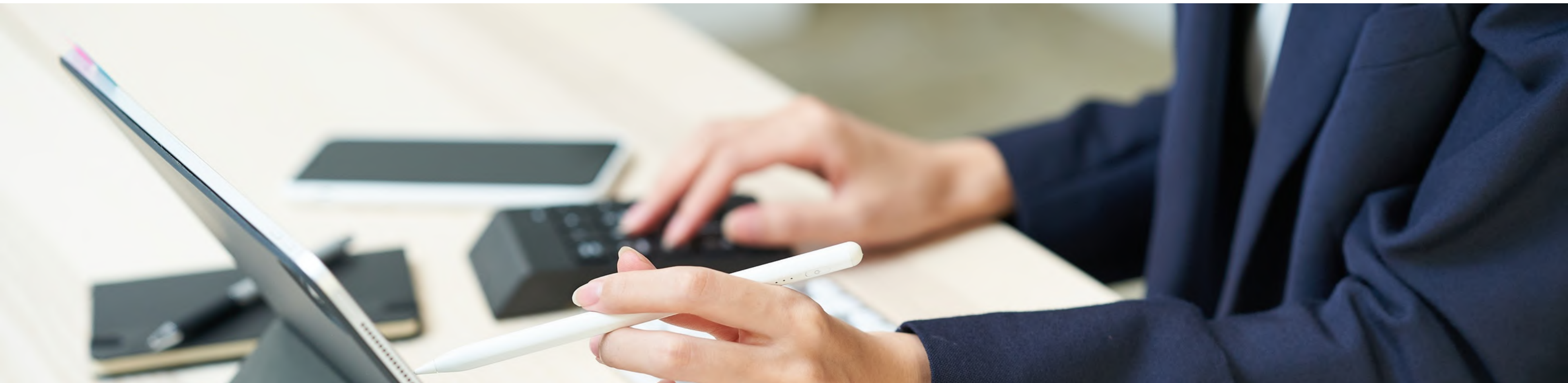
Governments often hold public consultations or hearings when drafting policies. These moments offer valuable opportunities for youth workers and young people to share their insights. Submitting written recommendations, attending hearings, or speaking at public events ensures that the youth perspective is included in policy discussions. Participating in consultations also shows policymakers that youth workers are engaged, informed, and committed.





# Leveraging Digital Tools for Policy Influence

Digital platforms such as social media, online petitions, webinars, and digital forums provide new spaces for youth workers to promote policy change. Digital advocacy reaches wider audiences, engages young people more easily, and increases the visibility of important issues. Youth workers can use digital tools to organise campaigns, share youth stories, and mobilise support for policy reforms. Digital influence is especially important in a world where policymakers often monitor public opinion online.





# Engaging the Media to Amplify Youth Issues

Media coverage can significantly influence policy decisions. Youth workers can collaborate with journalists, local radio, online platforms, and youth-led media initiatives to highlight issues affecting young people. When stories of youth challenges or successes reach the public sphere, they generate interest, empathy, and pressure for action. Media exposure can put youth issues on the political agenda and accelerate policy change.





# Empowering Youth to Become Policy Influencers

Ultimately, the goal is to empower young people themselves to become active participants in policy-making. Youth workers can support this by teaching civic education, leadership, advocacy, and communication skills. When young people understand how systems work, they become more confident in expressing their views and shaping their future. Empowered youth become community leaders, activists, and decision-makers who continue the cycle of positive change long after the project ends.





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