

Outcome Document

Youth-led workshop | European Youth Event 2025 (EYE25)

Youth and Future Generations: Ensuring Intergenerational Solidarity and Justice

Executive Summary

A Youth Core Group of six young leaders from across the world co-created a youth-led workshop entitled *Youth and Future Generations: Ensuring Intergenerational Solidarity and Justice*. The youth-led workshop was facilitated by the United Nations in Brussels¹ and took place on June 14th in Strasbourg, during the European Youth Event 2025.

The workshop brought together more than a hundred young people for an inspiring and action-driven dialogue on shaping a fairer future, and included opening remarks by Felipe Paullier, *Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs* and Camilla Brückner, *Director of the UN/UNDP Office in Brussels and Representative of the UN System in the EU*.

Within the framework of key Global and European policies, including the EU Political Guidelines 2024-2029 and the UN's Pact for the Future, the session emphasized the urgency of embedding intergenerational fairness into decision-making. Through three breakout rooms discussions led by the Youth Core Group members, participants explored strategies to strengthen our collective preparedness for future crises while ensuring the voices of youth are central in policymaking.

The proposed document was elaborated by the Youth Core Group members and reflects the discussions and proposals generated together with other young participants. It aims to contribute to the ongoing process of shaping the EU Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness.

Please note that this document is the result of a youth-led process and does not represent the official position of the United Nations agencies involved.

Workshop Overview

The workshop opened with a welcoming segment, during which the moderator introduced the objectives, format, and co-organizers, placing special emphasis on the role of the **Youth Core Group** in shaping the session. Participants then heard opening remarks from **Felipe Paullier**, the UN Assistant Secretary-General on Youth (via video message), and **Camilla Brückner**, Director of the UN Office in Brussels and Representative of the UN System to the EU. These remarks reinforced the critical role of young people in policy spaces and the shared responsibility of current generations to consider the needs of future ones.

¹ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations University (UNU-MERIT), United Nations Youth Office (UNYO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Following the opening, participants joined **three thematic breakout sessions**, each co-led by two youth representatives and supported by corresponding UN agencies:

People & Power (with support of OHCHR and UNU): Focused on rights, inclusion, and youth participation in governance.

Planet & Preparedness (with support of UNEP and UNYO): Examined resilience strategies and the prevention of climate and health crises.

Digital & Daily Life (with support of ITU and FAO): Explored equity and inclusion in the digital sphere, as well as its intersections with health and lifestyle.

Each breakout room was designed to foster collaborative discussion, allowing participants to identify gaps, share lived experiences, and propose concrete actions. Discussions were youth-moderated to ensure a bottom-up, inclusive approach.

The workshop concluded with a **plenary sharing session**, where key insights from each breakout group were presented, followed by an open Q&A. The session ended with a summary of next steps and a call for continued collaboration in integrating youth perspectives into the current process on the elaboration of the EU Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness, currently being drafted by the European Commission.

Policy Recommendations

Breakout room 1. People & Power: Rights, Representation, and Inclusion

Recommendation: Shift from Control to Support: Let Us Build Real Autonomy

Policies affecting young people and persons with disabilities must move away from over-controlling, risk-averse models and instead build supportive structures that enable decision-making power. This includes youth-targeted housing and income support not tied to employment, banning unpaid internships, and promoting supported decision-making models over guardianship, and deinstitutionalisation in line with the UNCRPD as too many young people with disabilities are excluded from participating in society and politics. This means:

- Strengthening youth housing and income support that aren't tied to having a job.
- Banning unpaid internships or, at the very least, guaranteeing basic protections (housing eligibility, social security) for part-time and temporary work.
- Supporting decision-making instead of guardianship, in line with the UNCRPD which the EU ratified in 2011. Making sure young people with disabilities are not deprived of the right to vote.
- Ensuring faster responses in times of crisis — for example, for war-displaced young people who lose independence overnight.
- Engaging youth and people with disabilities at all stages of policy-making, including implementation and evaluation, so policies don't just "look good on paper."

The group kept coming back to one point: **autonomy is not a luxury**. As one person said, "Autonomy is not just a disability issue, it's a shared concern for all youth, especially those in vulnerable circumstances."

The reality came out in small but powerful comments:

- “The first thing I would give up is going out with friends. You feel cut off before you even feel poor.”
- “We’re expected to work for free or live with our parents. If you don’t have that safety net, you’re stuck.”
- “You can lose your independence overnight, war, health, anything. But systems don’t move fast enough.”

There was frustration at how systems meant to “protect” often **end up removing choice**: “They decide for you instead of helping you decide for yourself.”

This is why participants insisted that **those affected must be part of carrying out these policies**. “If we aren’t in the room when they’re carried out, they fail.”

This recommendation fits closely with the EU Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness, which has already underlined the need to “empower all generations and build systems that adapt to new vulnerabilities”.

Breakout room 2. Planet & Preparedness: Resilience, Health, and Climate Intersections

This breakout session focused on strategies to prevent and respond to future climate and health crises. Participants emphasized the urgent need for systemic preparedness policies rooted in interconnection, between human, animal, and environmental health. Drawing on the “One Health” framework, participants explored the drivers of disease outbreaks and vulnerabilities exposed by recent pandemics and climate disasters. Central to the discussion were: resilient infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, health equity, and meaningful youth participation.

Key takeaways:

- The need for a comprehensive, EU-wide “One Health” policy that addresses risks like antibiotic resistance and pandemic preparedness.
- The need to integrate mental health and trauma support as core elements of crisis preparedness.
- A call for universal access to affordable, clean energy infrastructure, particularly in vulnerable and rural areas.
- The importance of international solidarity: participants stressed that preparedness must include support for the Global South in climate resilience and vaccine equity.

Recommendation 1: Make Mental Health a Core Pillar of Crisis Preparedness

Integrate universal access to mental health care and psychosocial support into EU crisis preparedness frameworks, including for both climate disasters and pandemics. This should include support in schools during and after crises, public awareness campaigns, and free psychological services, including trauma-informed and specialised care.

Participants shared how recent crises, from COVID-19 to floods, heatwaves, and wildfires, have caused severe emotional distress, especially for youth and the most vulnerable. Themes included academic anxiety, social isolation, job loss, domestic violence, and even suicide. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after major crises was identified as a recurring issue that is often overlooked. **“We saw students**

drop out, lose motivation, some even talked about suicide. The emotional toll of crises doesn't end when the news cycle moves on" one participant shared. Free access to specialised psychological care is therefore essential, not just during emergencies, but long after the headlines fade. Preparedness isn't only physical, mental resilience must be built into all policy frameworks.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen Pandemic Preparedness Through a Binding One Health Policy

Develop a legally binding EU-wide One Health framework addressing the root causes of disease outbreaks: intensive farming, antibiotic resistance, and biodiversity loss. The policy should fund research, training for farmers and educators, public awareness efforts, and cross-sectoral coordination.

Participants identified industrial agriculture and poor animal welfare as major risk factors for future pandemics. Antibiotic resistance was flagged as an urgent and under-recognized threat. They stressed the need for global cooperation and solidarity, especially in vaccine research, production, and distribution. Preparedness must go beyond EU borders: pandemic prevention is a global responsibility.

Recommendation 3: Build Climate-Resilient Infrastructure and Energy Access - Just Energy Transition

Invest in resilient infrastructure and clean energy access, with a focus on vulnerable communities and rural areas. Ensure every country has the capacity to produce affordable green energy and support local adaptation efforts through EU cohesion and recovery funds. Encourage countries in the Global South to "leapfrog": there is no need to follow the same polluting path as the Global North has. As one participant put it, *"Every country, even the poorest, should be able to produce its own clean energy. Otherwise, the transition won't be just"*.

As climate impacts worsen, communities without access to clean energy or disaster-resilient systems are left behind. Participants emphasized that climate justice must include global solidarity: the EU must support the Global South in building climate-resilient infrastructure and ensuring energy justice through just transition.

Breakout room 3. Digital Inclusion & Healthy Diet

The Digital Inclusion & Healthy Diet breakout session was designed not only to encourage discussions on these two themes but also to explore how they impact people from different generations and social backgrounds in specific ways, and what can be done to reduce those gaps and inequalities. The session was structured into three phases to foster empathy, dialogue, and creative thinking. **1) Role reversal activity:** Participants were asked to step into the shoes of individuals from different generations. They identified the strengths and weaknesses those individuals might face in relation to digital inclusion and healthy diets. **2) Debate:** Returning to their own perspectives, participants engaged in debates around specific prompts, focusing on the inequalities these themes can create. They identified which issues resonated with them most strongly. **3) Policy Proposals:** In the final phase, participants suggested practical policy measures that the EU could realistically implement to tackle the issues identified.

During the session, participants identified the main challenges faced by each generation:

- **Generation Z** (born 1997–2012) struggles with significant online peer pressure and the impact of social media misinformation. They are often exposed to misleading or unhealthy content related to food, which negatively affects their perceptions and behaviors around nutrition and health. They also face limited opportunities for civic participation.

- **Millennials** (born 1981–1996) feel left behind despite generally appreciating technology. They face issues related to fragmented identity, lack of trust, and gaps in digital literacy.
- **Generation X** (born 1965–1980) has a moderate understanding of technology but remains skeptical about online content. They need clearer pathways for civic engagement and face challenges with misinformation and financial constraints. When it comes to food, they often deal with financial limitations, lack of information on food quality, and uncertainty about choosing between local supermarkets and large retail chains.
- **Baby Boomers** (born 1946–1964) generally struggle to adapt to new technology. They are concerned about the future and often find digital platforms difficult to access, including basic online services for dietary advice or food ordering.
- In addition, **vulnerable groups**, especially those in peripheral areas, are disproportionately excluded from both digital inclusion and access to healthy food options.

Key Takeaways:

The discussion highlighted the critical need to ensure affordable and universal access to both healthy food and digital resources. Participants emphasized that geographical disparities and emerging forms of inequality, particularly those related to pricing, significantly impact accessibility.

- Older generations often struggle with digital technology, while younger generations are heavily influenced by social media, which can promote toxic and unhealthy food habits.
- **Education** is essential to bridge digital literacy gaps and reduce inequalities, empowering individuals to make informed and healthy lifestyle choices.
- **Misinformation**, especially related to food and digital platforms and increasingly amplified by AI, was identified as a major concern. This underscores the need for reliable, transparent information and stronger regulation.

Participants also stressed the importance of:

- Promoting healthy diets, reducing food waste, and encouraging sustainable waste management practices.
- Supporting local and healthy food production through dedicated EU funding.
- Fostering intergenerational understanding, especially in light of the burdens that bureaucratic digitisation places on older and vulnerable populations.
- Enforcing existing laws, improving internet accessibility (including options for free access), and implementing taxes on unhealthy products to promote greater public health and equity.

Key policy proposals focused on promoting inclusive digital access and literacy across generations, while promoting and ensuring equitable access to healthy food and nutrition.

Recommendation 1: Widespread access and Education

- Establish digital volunteer training centers and public available cyber spaces equipped with essential digital tools.
- Set up help centers to support individuals in navigating online bureaucratic processes.
- Ensure that every family has access to at least one digital device, with support mechanisms in place for those who cannot afford one.
- Promote device recycling and refurbishment initiatives, enabling old but functional devices to be reused for digital training and learning. This could be aligned with community-based

intergenerational digital education programs, where young people help teach digital skills to older generations.

- Invest in inclusive digital infrastructure and tools, especially targeting marginalized youth and older adults who often lack digital skills.

Recommendation 2: Intergenerational Dialogue and Mentorships Program through Youth-led initiatives

Participants emphasized the need to bridge intergenerational divides by combining digital innovation with traditional food knowledge, promoting mutual learning across age groups.

- Youth-led initiatives that foster intergenerational dialogue were seen as essential.
- Proposed programs include mentorship schemes where young people support older individuals in becoming more comfortable with technology, while also benefiting themselves from offline social interaction and deeper community ties.
- In return, older generations can serve as mentors to youth, sharing traditional food knowledge, healthy eating habits, and sustainable food practices, creating a two-way exchange of skills, experiences, and values.

Participants also suggested that these programs could be integrated into school curricula, helping to establish meaningful, long-term connections between generations and reinforcing the value of both digital competence and cultural heritage.

Recommendation 3: Expanding Mobility and Education Programs Across Generations

Participants called for the expansion of existing mobility and education programs, such as Erasmus+, to include all age groups, not just students or young professionals. This includes:

- Increasing the scope and funding of such programs to foster lifelong learning and cross-generational exchange.
- Supporting local knowledge transfer, particularly in areas related to food, health, and digital skills.
- Promoting linguistic inclusion by ensuring digital platforms and tools are user-friendly and available in local languages, enabling broader participation from marginalised communities.

The overarching goal is to equip citizens with practical digital skills that strengthen democratic participation and social inclusion, rather than merely enhance competitiveness in the job market.

Recommendation 4: Ensuring Affordable Healthy Food and Combating Misinformation Through Education

Participants called for policies to ensure that everyone, particularly vulnerable communities, can make informed and affordable choices for a healthy diet. This includes:

- funding for educational campaigns, especially among youth, on nutrition and critical consumption.
- raising awareness of AI-driven and online food misinformation.
- promote media literacy focused on food content
- combatting toxic trends on social media
- encouraging healthy food choices through transparent, regulated, and reliable information systems.

Recommendation 5: Promoting Equitable Access to Healthy and Sustainable Food

Participants stressed that individuals must have a real opportunity to choose healthy diets and access a wide variety of nutritious foods, regardless of their geographic or economic circumstances. Policy recommendations included:

- Public investment in the availability of diverse and healthy food options at the local level
- Implementing measures for regulating products, supporting healthy produce, and taxing unhealthy products to foster long-term public health
- Concrete actions to reduce food waste and improve both the management and environmental health of waste systems.

Recommendation 6: International Cooperation with the Global South

Participants highlighted the need for the EU to also address global disparities through enhanced international cooperation, particularly with countries in the Global South. Proposals included:

- Investing in shared digital infrastructure projects, including expanding reliable electricity and internet access, distributing digital devices, and providing targeted training programs.
- Strengthening digital capacities and promoting equitable technology transfer can foster sustainable development, reduce global inequalities, and empower communities by facilitating greater digital and social inclusion. Such cooperation aligns with the EU's values of solidarity and global responsibility, enhancing its role as a leader in promoting sustainable growth and social equity on an international scale.

Recommendation 7: Support youth-led digital campaigns to promote healthy and sustainable food practices

Finally, participants recommended supporting youth-led digital campaigns that promote healthy and sustainable food habits, with a particular emphasis on reducing food waste and strengthening local food systems. These initiatives should include educational and engaging content, outreach through digital platforms and interactive activities. Funding should be made available through existing EU programmes such as Erasmus+. Partnerships between youth organisations, schools, and local stakeholders should be encouraged to maximise impact and outreach.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Breakout Room 1

Many young people feel that current support systems are outdated and overly risk-averse, often making decisions on their behalf rather than empowering them to make informed choices for themselves.

This sense of disempowerment is intensified by unequal access to family fallback options. While some are fortunate to move back home, others find it a deeply stigmatizing necessity, with cultural backgrounds heavily influencing the perceived acceptability of such arrangements.

Financial precarity exacerbates social isolation long before it is officially recognized as poverty, and many describe losing friendships as the first sign of hardship.

For young people with disabilities tools like direct payments, which allow them to hire personal assistants, can be crucial in maintaining independence and participating in social life without relying on family or friends.

However, vulnerability can shift rapidly, highlighting the need for more responsive, inclusive policies. A meaningful next step would be to co-create pilot policies with young persons with disabilities not only involved in the design process, but also actively participating in the testing and evaluation phases, ensuring solutions are truly reflective of lived experience.

Breakout Room 2

There was strong agreement that preparedness policies must move beyond crisis response and address the root causes of both pandemics and the climate crisis. This includes ending fossil fuel dependence, transforming industrial agriculture, and investing in long-term resilience.

Mental health was repeatedly raised as a critical gap, especially the lack of trauma-informed care during and after crises. Participants strongly supported the One Health approach but stressed it must be made legally binding and backed with investment in education, training, and public awareness. There was clear recognition that preparedness must be global. The EU has a responsibility to support the Global South through vaccine equity, climate adaptation funding, and “leapfrogging” to clean energy. While climate and pandemic risks are interconnected, participants emphasized the need for distinct, tailored policies to address each.

Some participants emphasized individual lifestyle changes and community-level action. Others focused more on systemic policy shifts and holding powerful actors accountable, including fossil fuel companies and industrial agri-business. These views were seen as complementary rather than contradictory.

Next steps should focus on integrating these recommendations into the EU Intergenerational Fairness Strategy, with a clear focus on ending fossil fuel subsidies and extraction, and supporting transitions to clean energy and resilient systems and advocating for permanent youth participation in EU preparedness policymaking, including in emergency task forces, planning groups, and strategy evaluations.

Breakout Room 3

The session revealed how digital exclusion and unequal access to healthy food intersect across generations, deepening existing inequalities.

While younger generations are affected by misinformation and harmful trends online, older ones often struggle with digital tools and platforms. Participants stressed the need for inclusive policies that ensure both digital access and food equity, with particular attention to affordability, education, and intergenerational collaboration.

It was understood by the facilitators how much the participants valued the way this workshop included them and made them feel truly heard by having them create policy proposals that could be solutions to issues that resonate with them personally and with their generation as a whole and having them reach the people who have the ability to make them a reality.

Next steps should focus on advancing digital and food literacy, supporting youth-led initiatives, enabling intergenerational mentorship, and ensuring equitable access through EU funding. All the policies proposed could play a key role in reducing inequalities and promoting intergenerational fairness.

Annexes

1) [Youth Core Group members](#)

Breakout room 1

Nicolas Joncour, *Disability rights activist*, ENIL Youth Network

Maria Nathalia Ramirez, *PhD Fellow*, UNU-MERIT Maastricht

Breakout room 2

Benjamin Van Bunderen Robberechts, *Climate and Children's Rights Activist*, Climate Justice for Rosa

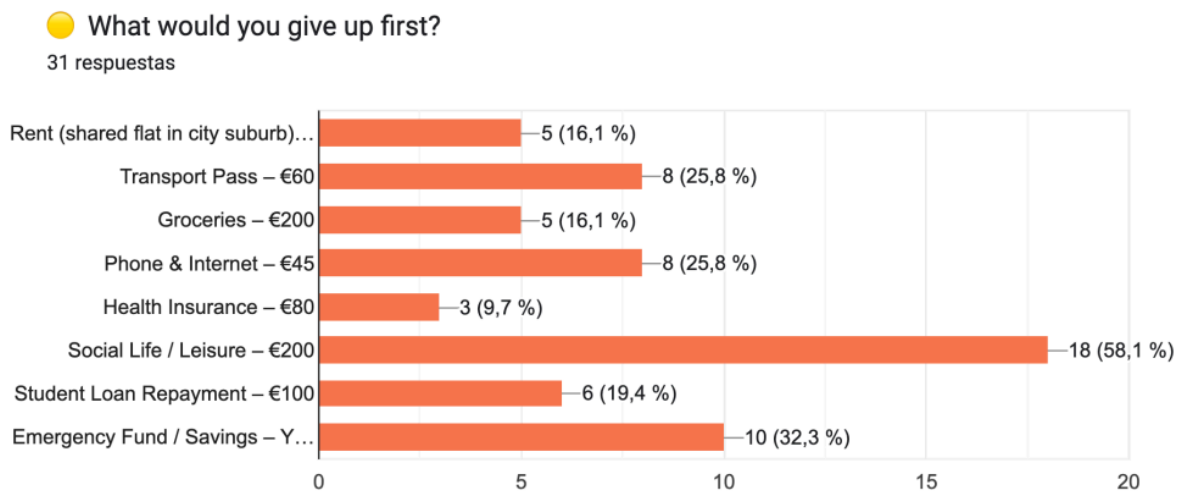
Joyce Masvaya, *President & Founder*, Biodefenders Africa Network

Breakout room 3

Francisca Caruso, *Head of Human Resources*, ESN Lisboa; *ITU - Generation Connect Youth Envoy*

Giacomo Marsoner, *Co-founder*, World Food Forum Italy Youth Chapter

2) [Data from breakout room 1 activity "Living But Not Thriving" – Budgeting for Survival](#)



Source: author's elaboration

The results of the activity paint a clear and sobering picture: **social life is the first thing young people sacrifice when money is tight**. More than half of the participants (58.1%) said they would cut spending on leisure and friendships before anything else. As one participant put it during the discussion, *“You stop going out before you stop eating. You're isolated.”*

This choice reveals how financial precarity doesn't just limit material needs, it erodes participation in community and friendships, making social connection feel like a luxury.