



EUROPEAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT

Education in the EYP

**Explanatory document on the educational work of the
European Youth Parliament**



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1. INTRODUCTION

„To inspire and empower young Europeans to become active citizens“.

The mission statement of the European Youth Parliament (EYP) is underpinned by one key purpose: education. At 500 events each year, through countless activities and thanks to the involvement of over 2000 volunteers, the EYP seeks to inspire and empower through peer-to-peer education.

The EYP is growing rapidly across Europe. Not only do we organise more and more events, but the kind of events are changing. With more events, different formats, different target audiences and participants, the ways in which we educate our participants – and they educate themselves – have become more diverse. Nonetheless, the core aims and methods of our educational work remain. This document lays out our target group and our educational aims and methods.

“Education in the EYP” is intended not as a set of rules, but as a guideline for all those interested in taking part in, or executing, EYP events. It may be of particular interest to National Committees who are considering new formats for their work, or explaining the EYPs educational aims and methods to external partners. In particular, this summary of the EYP’s educational work may be offered to teachers or other representatives of formal education to show the principles which underline our educational work.

Education in the EYP was originally authored by the Governing Body in 2015, but it is not meant to be the final word on these issues, and should be updated periodically. The up-to-date version of Education in the EYP is available at the Alumni Platform and can be freely shared among active volunteers of the EYP.



2. OUR TARGET GROUP

Our target group can also be found in our mission statement: young Europeans. Though definitions of youth vary, this broadly means people between the ages of 16 and 25, although the vast majority of our participants are in the last years of secondary education or beginning university. Whilst the majority of our participants will go on to university, the EYP's mission is to reach *all* young Europeans, without limitation through education or background. Reaching young people who would not easily find or have access to educational opportunities is a key goal in the current International Strategy of the EYP.

Within the organisation, we have separate groups of participants at whom our educational activities are aimed. At different stages and in different roles, the educational value and effect of EYP is, to some extent, a different one. For these purposes, participants may be divided into three groups:

- **Delegates:** Whilst almost all participants begin as delegates, the vast majority never hold another role, and only take part in 1-2 events. Explicit discussion of our educational aims and especially methods mostly focuses on them, firstly because our time with them is limited, so priorities must be carefully set when deciding what to offer them, and secondly because their educational experience is tied more closely to conscious methodological decisions, whilst all other participants mostly learn through the experience of providing opportunities for delegates.
- **Active volunteers:** Many participants go on to take roles of responsibility, for example in leadership roles at sessions, travelling further afield and learning many more soft skills (for example in communication or leadership) than delegates. Most training events within our organisation are aimed at this group, both to offer them stimulating learning experiences and to better equip them to support delegates.
- **Decision-makers:** The most time-consuming volunteering roles are those involved in the practical running of the organisation, either on a national (e.g. National Committee Boards) or international (e.g. Councils, Governing Body) level. These roles offer a wealth of further skills, not least due to the great responsibility they involve.



2. OUR AIMS: SKILLS, ATTITUDES AND UNDERSTANDING

First and foremost, our educational aim is empowerment. We don't only seek to inspire our participants to become open-minded, tolerant and active citizens but also support them in gaining the skills, knowledge and confidence to do so. Empowerment is about unlocking a sense of one's own power, and we seek to make our participants understand what they are capable of by giving them the chance to do extraordinary things. The EYP experience is about the action and reflection of young people themselves, and like chairs at our events, the EYP as an organisation merely facilitates this transformative process.

In pursuing our mission to inspire and empower, the education we offer is a tool, aimed clearly at developing abilities which will help participants become active citizens. In practice, this means helping our participants to understand the world around them and gain the skills they need to be able to have a positive impact on it. To achieve this, the EYP uses a mixture of non-formal and informal learning. Our events are all conceived as non-formal learning experiences, offering educational experiences different to those in formal education, whilst all participants gain a wide range of competences via informal learning throughout their participation.

In the following, our aims are divided into skills, attitudes and understanding. Whilst the lines between these categories are far from firm, this provides a useful framework to think about different aims we have for our participants.

Drawing on the different categories of participant, and their very varied experiences, the EYP Competence Framework sets out the different competences in each area which we hope to develop in each participant, and expect from them in certain roles within the organisation.

3.1. Skills

The greatest educational benefits of participation in the EYP on any level are skills and personal development. These largely take the form of informal learning; offered as an intentional by-product of our methods and event formats. The skills and attitudes which participants gain vary widely, thanks to the wide array of tasks participants can take on. Some are obvious, and quite specific (for example concrete experience with digital publishing, writing press releases or budgeting). The majority can be seen as transversal skills; skills which are applicable in many different fields, such as communication, leadership, critical thinking, initiative or creativity. The non-formal learning environment the EYP offers and, in particular, experienced-based learning, allows participants to develop skills they might not within formal education.

Delegates	Active Volunteers (e.g. Chairs, Journalists)	Decision-makers (e.g. Organisers)
Emotional intelligence Creativity Flexibility Language Skills	Writing skills Creativity Language skills Ability to work under pressure	Project management Team management Training Developing people



Active listening	Communication & interaction Research Organisational skills Team management Training Developing people Self-awareness Planning	Ability to work under pressure Problem solving Lateral thinking Communication and interaction Ability to plan and implement
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3.2. Attitudes

Again returning to the EYP’s mission statement, we aim to inspire and empower young Europeans to become open-minded, tolerant and active citizens. Next to their empowerment through skills and understanding, we foster certain attitudes in our participants.

As an independent and non-partisan organisation, these attitudes are not political, and can be held by people with a wide array of different views. Through the EYP experience, participants should become more open-minded through the confrontation with different cultures and perspectives, more tolerant through greater understanding of those who disagree with them, and more active citizens as they experience the rewards of volunteering and the sense of purpose which participation in civil society can give.

When given the chance to take on responsibility within the EYP, participants also learn to take responsibility, behave reliably, and use a constructive approach in dealing with problems.

Delegates	Active Volunteers (e.g. Chairs, Journalists)	Decision-makers (e.g. Organisers)
Open-mindedness Responsibility and reliability Initiative Constructive approach Cultural sensitivity Interest in civic engagement	Open-mindedness Innovative approach Responsibility and reliability Initiative Constructive approach Cultural sensitivity Commitment to developing the organisation Sovereignty	Open-mindedness Responsibility and reliability Initiative Constructive approach Cultural sensitivity Flexibility Commitment to developing the organisation

3.3. Understanding

There are strong arguments to be made for increasing the level of factual knowledge on any of the areas we educate in – we certainly aim to do so. However, there are many other organisations who offer, for example, excellent courses on EU institutions, not to mention the provisions in citizenship and politics courses within formal educational institutions. Within the EYP, we seek to offer a deeper level of understanding by letting participants live political processes.



With our activities, we aim to promote:

Understanding of a specific topic within European politics

The committee-based work in EYP fosters learning about one specific political issue, although most events offer opportunities to engage with other topics, for example during the plenary debates of the General Assembly. Next to the far greater depth of discussion that focussing on a single topic allows, looking at single, concrete problem may make access to politics easier for less politically aware or confident young people. By showing them one particular issue and helping them through the process of forming and debating an opinion, we empower them to repeat this process. This specific topic knowledge is not necessarily directly applicable in other spheres, and may be quickly forgotten; but the effects of the process are lasting.

Understanding of European institutions and the mechanisms of European politics

With 39 National Committees, the EYP goes far beyond the borders of the European Union, and far beyond EU politics we aim to discuss transnational political issues with European relevance. We hope for our participants all to have a basic understanding of European political institutions and the mechanisms of European politics, but this is tailored to the ability of the group and the context of the event. As described above, the primary aim is for participants to understand the dynamics of a specific issue, and to learn by discussing it, rather than necessarily technical knowledge. For example, at a shorter event, we may only aim for participants to understand that domestic political decision-making affects decisions on the European level, whilst at a longer event, we would discuss constitutional and institutional reasons for this. Our active alumni (Groups 2 and 3) are expected to have deeper understanding and knowledge in order to judge an appropriate level.

Understanding of Europe(ans)

In order to foster intercultural understanding, socialising and cultural experiences are key elements of EYP. By engaging with other young people from different social and cultural backgrounds, participants should gain a greater understanding of the richness and diversity of European society. In an increasingly globalised world, EYP thus offers a forum to gain international experience which formal education often cannot.

Delegates	Active Volunteers (e.g. Chairs, Journalists)	Decision-makers (e.g. Organisers)
Engagement with the topic	Academic understanding of European issues Technical skills Theoretical understanding of group dynamics Understanding of the EYP and its work	Knowledge of project and NGO management Technical skills Understanding the EYP and its work



4. OUR MEANS

In this section, our means are divided into our methodology, the principles upon which we base our work, and methods, the concrete formats with which this methodology is applied.

4.1. The EYP Methodology

What makes an EYP event an EYP event? Most EYP events take the form of sessions, which have Teambuilding, Committee Work, General Assembly and a social/cultural programme, but other formats are possible and regularly used by our 39 National Committees. Beyond shared educational aims, the EYP also has a clear methodological focus, which is integral to gaining the competences we aim for through participation. As a non-formal educational programme, we distinguish our methods from learning an institutional classroom context. Learning occurs through the participants experience, rather than in a formal transition of knowledge or skills from one person to another.

Whilst not every EYP event fulfils each criterion, the following are the methodological building blocks of our work:

- **Experience-based learning:** In the EYP, learning occurs mainly through experiences. We aim to minimise frontal, lecture-style teaching at all times.
- **Interactivity:** EYP events are interactive, and involve active participation from both those giving and receiving knowledge/training/skills
- **Internationality:** We aim for our participants both to meet people from different places, and encourage them to travel abroad.
- **Peer-to-peer learning:** EYP events are organised and run by young people. This is integral to EYP's educational work, because the act of organising EYP experiences for others is in itself an educational experience and empowering to young people.
- **Consensus-based:** Debating and discussion in EYP is consensus-based. We avoid confrontation and seek consensus within a Committee Work structure, at least. This does not preclude ideological conflicts and debates, but the aim is to develop ideas and solutions together.
- **No role-play:** The vast majority of our events are conducted in a parliamentary format, but participants always represent and debate their own views. Despite our name, we do not seek to exactly simulate the European Parliament.

4.2. The EYP Method

Whilst there are many event formats used across the network, our namesake, the parliamentary format, is a common denominator of almost all of these. For the EYP, the word “parliament” does not directly refer to a legis-



lative body or have strong (party-)political connotations. Most of our events follow a parliamentary format, but the EYP does not seek to strictly stimulate the European Parliament or any other real-world legislature, and the EYP's parliamentary format is very flexible. The priority is or at least should always be on the content, not the procedures. Above all, we consider a parliament a forum for citizens to come together and share opinions, debate and seek consensus on important issues (the word itself comes from the French word *parler*, "to speak"). Importantly, our participants advocate their own opinions rather than the views of any one state or political party.

Using a parliamentary format helps acquaint our participants with parliamentary debate, so whilst we do not seek to replicate or simulate any specific assembly, experiencing formalised debates can make them easier to understand and follow. The parliamentary format also offers a natural combination of work in small committees who develop ideas together as a close-knit group (Committee Work within an EYP session), as well as plenary debate of these ideas (General Assembly).

The parliamentary format is complemented by two further session elements used at EYP sessions: Teambuilding and a cultural programme. To maximise the learning experience and exchange with other participants, participants are taken through various exercises and games to get to know one another and develop as a team. When working in an extremely international environment, and with students who may be nervous about the experience, teambuilding is crucial to facilitate a relaxed, trusting and open environment which allows all of the participants to get the most from the experience.

The cultural programme can take many forms, varying to suit the length and nature of the event, but most EYP events include an opportunity for participants to either experience local culture or share elements of national culture, for example bringing and sharing national culinary specialities. Though comparatively little time is dedicated to this session element, it is an important part of the intercultural learning sought in EYP.



4. COMPLEMENTING FORMAL EDUCATION

The EYP is a schools-based programme, since most of our participants are of school age and participate via a school delegation, often accompanied and supported by a teacher. The extent of EYP's interaction with schools is anchored in National Committee cultures and structures, as well as national school systems. The EYP experience is very much complementary to formal education, and we welcome and rely on teachers as key recruiters and supporters. Professional educators are represented and consulted in the EYP both through a quota seat for teachers in the Governing Body and through the educational council.

Teachers accompany their pupils through the EYP experience, in a way once described, by a teacher, as being „like flying an airplane; you're there for the take-off and landing, and in the middle you do nothing unless something goes wrong“. This nicely illustrates the value of teachers who prepare their delegates, and help them wrap-up after an event, but also willingly place their trust in the organisation during the event, enabling peer-to-peer learning.

Ever more teachers are bringing elements of the EYP learning experience into the classroom with in-school events. For an event to truly be an EYP event, and also carry the EYP name, it must however be organised by, or in close cooperation with, the relevant National Committee, and must still be planned and executed as a peer-to-peer learning project.

The EYP is open to students from all types of school and our mission to inspire and empower young Europeans by no means excludes any particular group. The majority of our participants will go on to study, but the EYP welcomes participants from vocational schools or other backgrounds, even though very few participate at the moment.



4. CONCLUSION

This document is not a rulebook, and the EYP's educational work will always be marked by the organisation's size and great decentralisation. Innovation is continuous and development of the EYP's work is driven by the 39 (at the time of writing) National Committees. In explaining and defining our educational aims and methods, this document is intended to help those interested in our work, whether National Committees, members, teachers or partners, understand the core of the EYP (a wider perspective of this is also offered in "Understanding the EYP").

A clear understanding of our aims and methods is particularly important for those who develop our work. It is the foundation of conscious, purpose-driven development of our educational methodology and methods. It can be used either as a source of reflection, of inspiration or as a checklist when evaluating new plans. It is however not infallible, and comments, ideas and criticisms can always be sent to the Governing Body at gb@eypp.org.

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