

The European Rural Landscape

empowering young
rural developers



Overview



- 01 Understanding the Layers: From local Councils/Municipalities to the European Union
- 02 Ways for youth to be involved



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01

Understanding the Layers: From local Councils/Municipalities to the European Union



Governance (how a group, community, or country is managed at the highest level) impacts young people's lives, from the grassroots level to broader EU policy.

Each layer plays a distinctive role in shaping our lives, influencing everything from local development initiatives to comprehensive EU-wide policies. As young rural developers, we need to have an understanding of who does what!

LAYER 4: European Union
LAYER 3: National Government:
LAYER 2: Regional Government
LAYER 1: Local Council/Municipality



Understanding the Layers: From local councils/municipalities to European Union

In this section, we have compiled a clear and sequential understanding of how policies are developed and implemented at different levels, affecting rural areas.

Layer 1: What is a Local Council?

Local councils, also known as municipalities, are the first level of government directly responsible for administering a particular geographic area. These councils are crucial in rural development as they provide the closest form of governance to the community and address specific local needs and priorities.

In rural settings, local councils work to ensure sustainable development that aligns with their communities' unique characteristics and requirements. They act as the primary point of contact between residents and the broader governmental structures, making them integral to the implementation of policies tailored to rural enhancement. **So, what do they actually do?**



Understanding the Layers: From local councils/municipalities to European Union

Layer 1: What does a Local Council do?

Local councils have a wide array of responsibilities that directly impact the lives of residents in their jurisdiction. Here's a breakdown of these duties:

- **Local Planning and Development: Zoning and Land Use:** Local councils regulate land use to ensure that development aligns with community needs and environmental sustainability. This involves planning for residential areas, agricultural zones, and commercial spaces.
- **Development Approvals:** They review and approve construction and development projects, ensuring they meet local regulations and planning guidelines.
- **Infrastructure: Maintenance and Construction:** Local councils are responsible for the maintenance and construction of local infrastructure such as roads, bridges, public buildings, and recreational facilities.
- **Utilities Management:** They often oversee or coordinate with other agencies on utilities like water, waste management, and sometimes energy provision.



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Layer 1: What does a Local Council do?

- **Community Services: Education and Schools:** While the degree of involvement varies, local councils might be involved in funding, maintaining, or managing educational facilities, particularly in rural areas.
- **Health and Social Services:** Councils may provide or support local health services, elderly care, youth programs, and family support services to enhance the well-being of their community.
- **Emergency Services:** They are typically involved in providing or coordinating local emergency services, including fire brigades and sometimes local policing.
- **Economic Development:** Supporting Local Businesses: Local councils often have initiatives to support small businesses and attract investments to stimulate local economic growth.
- **Employment Initiatives:** They may run or support programmes aimed at increasing employment opportunities within the community, crucial in rural areas for retaining population.



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Layer 1: What does a Local Council do?

- **Environmental Management: Conservation Initiatives:** Councils play a key role in managing and protecting local natural resources, including parks, rivers, and forests.
- **Sustainability Projects:** They often initiate sustainability projects aimed at reducing environmental impact, such as promoting renewable energy sources or waste reduction programmes.

Why are Local Councils important to young people?

Understanding the multifaceted role of local councils is essential for young people in rural areas, as these bodies significantly influence their daily lives and long-term prospects. By engaging with and understanding the function of their local council, young people can better advocate for their needs and influence local decision-making.



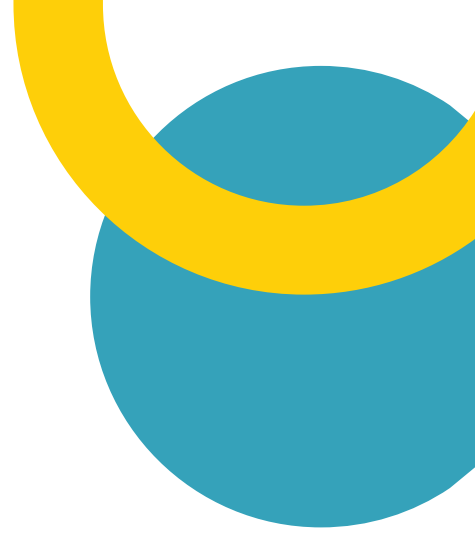
Understanding the Layers: From local councils/municipalities to European Union

Layer 2: What about Regional Governments?

This layer serves as a bridge between local municipalities and the national government, playing a critical role in coordinating policies and resources across multiple localities within a region.

What is Regional Government?

Regional governments represent a middle tier of governance, which may encompass several municipalities within a geographical area larger than a city but smaller than a nation. These governments address issues that surpass the scope of local councils but are more localised than those handled at the national level. Their role is particularly pronounced in federated states or countries with a high degree of administrative decentralisation.



Understanding the Layers: From local councils/municipalities to European Union

Typical Responsibilities of Regional Governments

- **Regional Planning and Development (Spatial Planning):** Regional governments often oversee spatial planning to ensure a coherent approach to land use and development across multiple municipalities, which is crucial for infrastructure projects like regional transport and utility networks.
- **Regional Economic Strategies:** They develop strategies to boost regional economic growth, often focusing on enhancing competitiveness, innovation, and attracting investment.
- **Infrastructure and Transportation: Major Infrastructure Projects:** Regional governments typically manage larger infrastructure projects that affect multiple localities, such as regional road networks, public transport systems, and major utilities.
- **Transport Coordination:** In some cases, they ensure that public transport services are well-coordinated across the region, facilitating efficient movement of goods and people.



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Typical Responsibilities of Regional Governments

- **Legislative Functions: Law Making:** In many regions, regional governments have legislative powers that allow them to enact laws and regulations tailored to the regional context.
- **Budget Allocation:** They are often responsible for allocating the budget provided by the national government or generated through regional taxes to various developmental projects and services.

Why are Regional Governments important to young people?

By understanding regional governance young people can better understand the complexity and interconnectedness of policy-making and governance. It shows the scale at which different issues are addressed to effectively manage rural development and regional growth.



Understanding the Layers: From local councils/municipalities to European Union

Layer 2 National Governments, understanding their broad and impactful role

National governments shape the conditions and policies that affect the lives of all citizens. They provide essential services, regulate key areas of the economy, and ensure national security and public order.

Lawmaking: National governments are responsible for creating and passing laws that apply to the whole country. These laws can cover everything from healthcare and education to financial regulations, traffic regulations and national security.

Economic Policy: Governments control national economic policy, which includes taxation, government budgeting, and public expenditure. They decide how to spend public money, funding everything from infrastructure projects like roads and bridges to public services such as healthcare and education. They provide financial support to local councils through grants and subsidies, which are vital for carrying out various local projects and services.



Understanding the Layers: From local councils/municipalities to European Union

Public Services

Education: National governments often set educational standards and may fund public education at various levels, from primary schools to universities.

Healthcare: They may provide healthcare services, regulate private healthcare, and implement public health policies.

Social Services Welfare Programmes: Governments typically administer welfare programs, including unemployment benefits, pensions, and other social security measures.

Housing, Rural and Urban Development: They may also be involved in housing policies and urban planning to ensure sustainable development and address housing shortages



Understanding the Layers: From local councils/municipalities to European Union

Layer 4 The European Union, understanding it's broad and impactful role

The European Union (EU) is a unique political and economic union between 27 European countries that was established in the aftermath of World War II to foster economic cooperation and prevent further wars between neighbors. Over the decades, the EU has grown to become one of the world's most powerful economic areas and a significant player in global affairs.

But what does it actually mean for young people ?

Understanding the role of the EU is particularly significant for young people as it affects various aspects of their future, from education and job opportunities to mobility and political engagement.

Let's look at some specific examples...



Understanding the Layers: From local councils/municipalities to European Union

Education and Mobility

DiscoverEU is an initiative under the Erasmus+ programme that offers 18-year-olds in the European Union the opportunity to explore Europe, primarily through rail travel.

This initiative emphasises learning experiences and includes special provisions for young people with fewer opportunities, offering them additional support.

Activities organised by Erasmus+ National Agencies enhance the educational aspect of these travels, such as providing pre-departure information packs and organizing meetups across Europe.

Find out more:

For more detailed information, you can visit the [DiscoverEU page](#).



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Education and Mobility

Erasmus+ Programme: The EU offers opportunities like the Erasmus+ programme, which allows students to study abroad in different EU countries. This enhances their educational experience through exposure to diverse cultures and languages and helps build a network of international contacts.

Key Features of Erasmus+:

- **Mobility:** Erasmus+ offers significant opportunities for young people to study, train, or volunteer abroad, enhancing both personal and professional development.
- **Participation Options:** Whether you're interested in higher education, vocational training, or other educational pursuits, Erasmus+ has options that might fit your needs.

Find out more:

[What is Erasmus+? - Erasmus+\(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/erasmus-plus/what-is-erasmus-plus)

[Opportunities for individuals - Erasmus+ \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/erasmus-plus/opportunities-for-individuals)



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Healthcare Access

Through the EU health card, young people can access healthcare services in any EU country, providing security and support as they travel or move abroad.

Job Opportunities and Worker Rights

- **Single Market:** The single market makes it easier for young people to find job opportunities across all EU countries without worrying about work permits. This increases their job prospects and the potential for career development in a variety of industries.
- **Labour Rights:** The EU has strong labour laws that protect workers, including young employees, ensuring fair working conditions, minimum wage standards, and protection against workplace discrimination.



Understanding the Layers: From local councils/municipalities to European Union

Rural Youth in the EU

The EU acknowledges the unique challenges faced by young people in rural areas, such as limited access to services and employment opportunities.

One significant initiative is the **Rural Pact**, which aims to empower rural youth by providing a platform for dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. This platform supports the implementation of concrete initiatives to create inclusive, vibrant, and resilient rural communities. It addresses the need for quality education, healthcare, and digital connectivity, and supports youth in developing skills relevant to local job markets and entrepreneurship .

[Youth in rural areas - Empowering the next generation | Rural Pact Community Platform \(europa.eu\)](#)



Understanding the Layers: From local councils/municipalities to European Union

Another key project is Rural Youth in action from local to the European level (**RURBEST22**) is to empower, engage and connect rural youth from Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Spain, and Sweden. The participants formed an international network, exchange good practices, and got a chance to influence rural policies of The European Union ([Rural Pact Platform](#)) .

Additionally, the **RuralYouthFuture** project addressed the challenges of youth unemployment in rural areas exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative brings together various stakeholders to discover sustainable solutions that empower young individuals, focusing on digital skills and new employment models to revitalize rural regions ([Interreg Europe](#)) .





02

How youth can get involved



Youth in the Mix: Two case studies of young Europeans influencing decision-making

1. EU youth dialogue: a link between youth and decision makers.
2. CIHEAM White Paper: youth present their aspirations for a more sustainable future



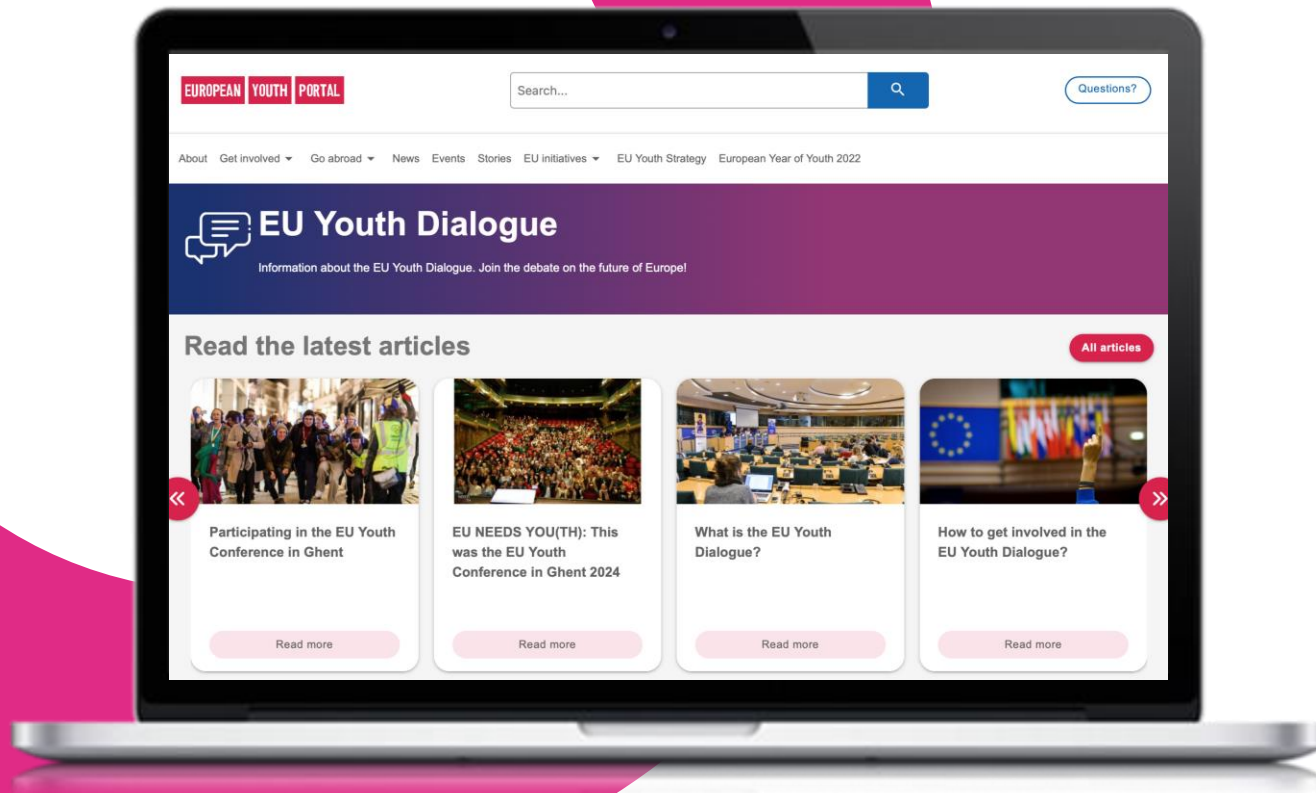
Opinions matter, especially those of youth. Source of image:
<https://www.cmpartners.com/negotiators-pause/dialogue-survival-skill/>



About the EU Youth Dialogue

- Online portal rich in information for young people and young stakeholders.
- Addresses youth working within the community and policy.
- Has an appealing “Get involved” section.
- Mobility is at the centre of initiatives.
- Enables youth to participate in the decision making process.

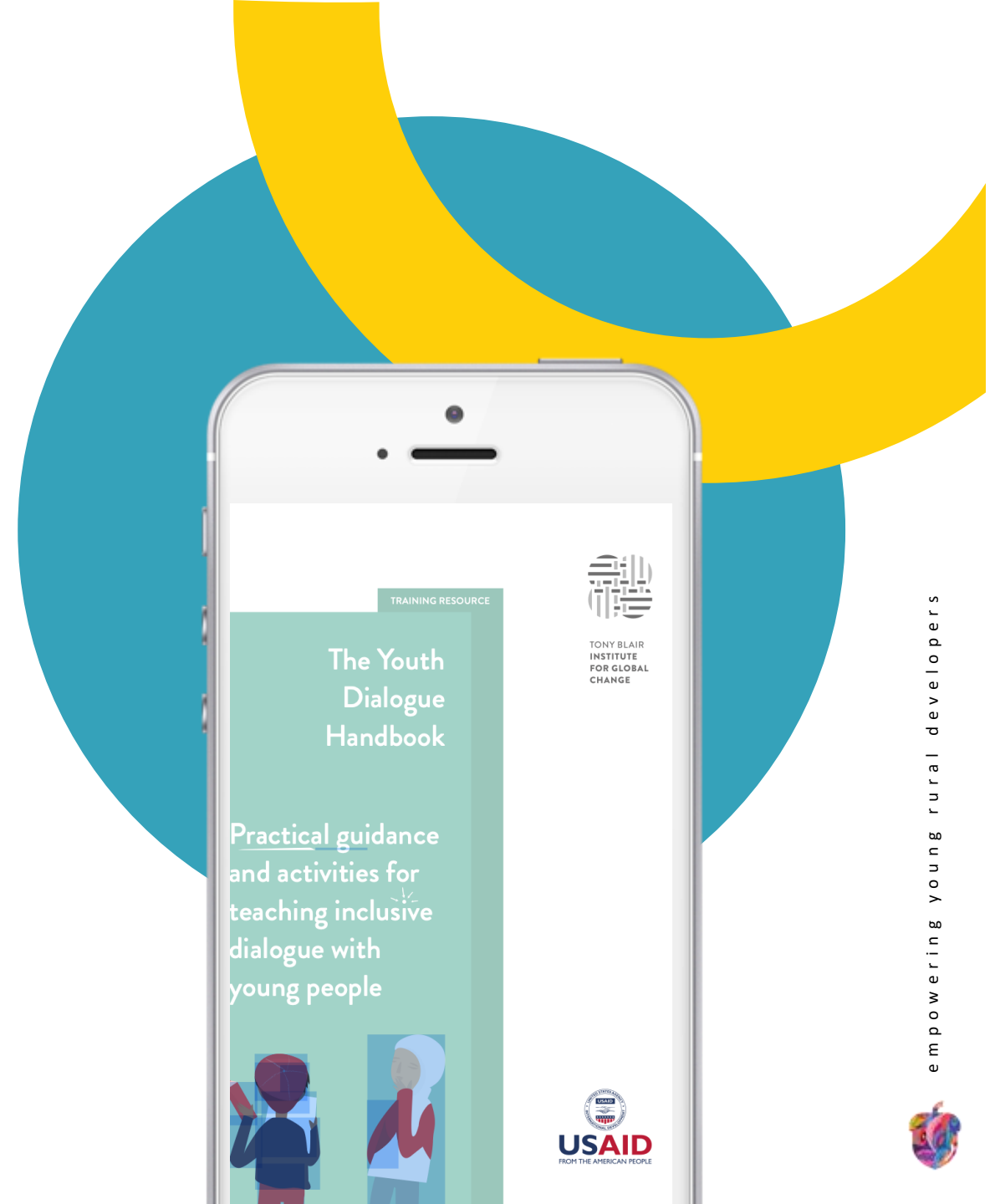
https://youth.europa.eu/eu-youth-dialogue_en



Read more: The Youth Dialogue Handbook

A practical guide for teaching inclusive dialogue with young people.

<https://generation.global/assets/resources/youth-handbook-english.pdf>



2. EU Youth Dialogue

It builds on the achievements of past dialogue processes, with the aim of including more decision-makers and young people, especially those with fewer opportunities in decision-making processes and in the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy.

The EU Youth Dialogue is organised into 18-month work cycles.

Each cycle focuses on a different thematic priority (set by the Council of Youth Ministers).



1. Youth White Paper to Call for More Sustainable and Inclusive Food Systems

Young people from the 13 CIHEAM member countries worked together on the publication of a White Paper in which they presented their visions and proposed recommendations for the future of Mediterranean agri-food systems.



Source: <https://www.ciheam.org/agendas/youth-white-paper-to-call-for-more-sustainable-and-inclusive-food-systems/>



Importance of CIHEAM White Paper

- Was setup to address current food crisis (climate related, rise in food prices).
- Future agri-food systems were discussed during a gathering in France, by a group of high-level participants from various countries and different realities.
- A three day process to achieve proposed solutions was organised by CIHEAM.
- Representatives from Mediterranean institutions debated with youth as part of the process.
- Debated themes were: sustainability and inclusion of food systems, management of current crisis, as well as technical and financial adaptations
- A White Paper was drawn and shared with decision makers in many institutions around the Med through CIHEAM.



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**Thank you for
your attention!**