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## Youth Sounding Boards (YSB) to the EU Delegations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

### Terms of Reference

#### 1. Background and Purpose

Central Asia, comprising Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, is one of the **youngest regions globally**, with youth representing a substantial and growing demographic. According to the United Nations, over half of Central Asia's population is under 30 years of age. Specifically, children and young people below 30 years of age constitute around 70% of Tajikistan's population, about 60% in the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan, approximately 50% in Turkmenistan, and roughly 45% in Kazakhstan. This significant demographic presents immense potential for social innovation, economic growth, and regional development, while also highlighting the need for inclusive governance and **active youth participation**.

Recognizing this critical potential, international frameworks have prioritized youth engagement, particularly the [Youth Action Plan in EU external action](#) (2022-2027), which emphasizes youth empowerment, meaningful participation, inclusion, gender equality, and peacebuilding. This Action Plan aligns with global commitments such as the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the [UN Youth 2030 Strategy](#), underlining the importance of youth in governance and sustainable development efforts worldwide. Such frameworks highlight the necessity of including **young people as strategic partners** in shaping inclusive, resilient, and equitable societies.

The Youth Sounding Board (YSB) is a **mechanism** established by the European Union Delegations (EUDs) in each country in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, that directly aligns with these frameworks. EU Civil Society Facility for Central Asia (CSF) Project team supports EU Delegations in Central Asia in setting up and managing YSBs. The YSB provides a voluntary, inclusive platform for young people across Central Asia to share perspectives, engage constructively with peers, and provide advice regarding **policies** that impact their lives and communities. YSB members also actively participate in a regional youth working group, sharing their ideas in regional meetings. Additionally, selected YSB representatives have the opportunity to present joint recommendations, action plans, and outcomes at the annual EU-Central Asia Civil Society Forums (a gathering of civil society and youth representatives from all five states of the region). This ensures a continuous and dynamic feedback loop between national-level youth boards and regional dialogues, guaranteeing that **youth perspectives** are consistently **represented** and **integrated** into Central Asia's development processes.



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## 2. Objectives

- **Advisory Role:** Provide strategic advice on the priorities of youth to be reflected in the EU Delegations' programming and help shape recommendations for EU engagement at national and regional levels.
- **Capacity Building:** Enhance leadership, advocacy, and engagement skills among youth through targeted training, mentorship, and collaborative exchanges.
- **Representation:** Make EU action in the Central Asian countries more relevant: nearly all policy decisions have an impact on youth and the national YSBs will help make EU action more relevant, participatory and effective to youth.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Advisory Function:** Offer regular practical suggestions and participate actively in policy discussions.
- **Representation & Coordination:** Serve as national representatives in the national YSB and contribute to the regional working group on youth engagement (to be established separately); participate in four quarterly national meetings (online/hybrid) and one annual regional coordination meeting.
- **Communication:** Engage with Civil Society/Youth Focal points from EU Delegations to facilitate the exchange of ideas and to support the preparation of consolidated reports for the Annual Civil Society Forum.
- **Documentation:** Record meeting outcomes and provide structured feedback to enhance ongoing capacity-building initiatives and policy dialogues.

## 4. Benefits of Participation

**Direct Impact:** Contribute to shaping EU policies that affect youth communities at national and regional levels.

**Professional Development:** Enhance leadership, advocacy, and engagement skills through hands-on policy engagement with the EU and targeted training.

**Networking Opportunities:** Build connections with peers, policymakers, and EU representatives, expanding professional and social networks across Central Asia.

**Visibility and Recognition:** Gain recognition as leaders in youth empowerment and policy advocacy, opening doors to further opportunities in civil society and governance.

## 5. Eligibility and Selection Criteria

### General Criteria for All Applicants



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- **Age and Residency:**

Must be between 18 and 30 years old and either hold citizenship or be a resident of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, or Uzbekistan. *For Turkmen applicants, the upper age limit is 35 years old.* All motivated young people are welcome to apply, including those with less experience. Candidates with disabilities, and in situations of vulnerability (including migration background, statelessness, residence in remote areas, etc.) or from minority groups are **encouraged to apply**.

YSB members with special needs will be supported accordingly throughout their mandate so they can fully engage in the activities of the YSB.

- **Experience:**

A minimum of 1 year in youth engagement, advocacy, civil society work, or policy-related initiatives.

- **Commitment:**

Availability for a minimum of 25 full days per year, which includes meetings, preparatory work, and follow-up activities.

- **Language Proficiency:**

Proficiency in Central Asian state languages and Russian language are required. A good command of English is desirable and would be an advantage.

- **Diversity and Inclusivity:**

Demonstrated commitment to representing diverse backgrounds, including vulnerable or historically underrepresented communities.

Besides general criteria, **individual applicants in their own capacity – activists, volunteers** (not affiliated with formal entities such as registered CSOs) will be selected based on:

- Demonstrated experience in youth participation and empowerment.
- Proven skills and experience in outreach and engagement, including work with youth organizations and reaching vulnerable groups.
- Strong communication and language skills, with familiarity in both traditional and social media.
- Clear creativity and motivation, offering innovative ideas for YSB activities.

For **organizational nominees**:



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- A solid track record in boosting youth participation and influencing policy through consultations and advocacy.
- Established outreach capacity through networks and membership to effectively reach vulnerable youth.

## 6. Term and Commitment

### Duration:

- Members serve voluntarily for **two years**. We will have regular check-ins to support you so that you can participate meaningfully and grow in your role.

### Time Commitment:

- Members must participate in at least four national quarterly YSB meetings annually, one regional meeting, and any related preparatory or follow-up activities.

## 7. Meetings, Coordination, and Reporting

- **Frequency:** National YSBs meet quarterly (via online/hybrid formats), and a joint annual regional meeting offline. National meetings can be called by the EUD or by the YSB.
- **Coordination:** Meetings are co-facilitated by the CSF Project team and the EU Delegations' designated Civil Society/Youth Focal Points, who will help guide discussions according to agreed agendas, promote inclusivity, and document outcomes for follow-up. The CSF Project team together with the National EUDs will organize an induction meeting to introduce the YSB concept to the members, refine its objectives and functions with input from the members and develop an annual calendar/plan.
- **Reporting:** The CSF Project team together with the respective EU Delegations and National YSBs will be responsible for the administration of the YSB activities, including taking minutes of meetings with the help of YSB members, developing meeting agenda and logistics. Clear, concise reports summarizing discussions and recommendations will be prepared and shared with the thematic working group on youth engagement and relevant EU Delegations. Optional creative reporting formats could be used, e.g. videos, zines, digital storytelling, or infographics. Quarterly reports may be submitted in narrative, visual, or hybrid formats to encourage accessibility and youth ownership.
- **Participation** in the Youth Sounding Board is **voluntary**; members will only be entitled to transportation, accommodation and lunch expenses reimbursement for physical events.

## 8. Evaluation and Review

### Performance:



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- YSB members will be given the opportunity to reflect on and discuss their individual contribution.

### Feedback Mechanisms:

- Regular two-way feedback between YSB members and the EUDs, and the CSF Project team will be encouraged, promoting mutual learning and continuous improvement.
- The Terms of Reference may be updated during the project lifecycle to better align with evolving needs and priorities.

### Consent

I, .....

[Name and Surname], confirm that:

1. I have read and understood the National YSB Terms of References, Code of conduct and Confidentiality Agreement and commit myself to respecting them.

2. I accept to be a National Youth Sounding Board member.

Please tick the box if you agree :

☐ I consent to the use of my name for communication purposes in the context of the YSB.

☐ I consent to the use of my picture in photographs and videos published for communication purposes in the context of the YSB.

SIGNED at [place].....on ..... [day/month/year]

.....

Full name [capital letters] and signature of the Youth Sounding Board member