

Position Paper

**Sustainable and Future-Proof Recommendations
for EYCA's Actions and Partnerships**

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Section 0 – Introduction, Explanation & Welcome

Dear EYCA Board, Office, and members,

On behalf of the Youth Panel, we are pleased to share this **Position Paper: Sustainable and Future Proof Recommendations for EYCA’s Actions and Partnerships**.

The aim of this paper is to provide clear, youth-driven recommendations on how EYCA can further embed **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles** into its work, ensuring that the organisation remains both **sustainable and impactful** in the years to come.

This paper builds upon:

- the **legacy of the previous Youth Panel**, including the Traffic Light System;
- EYCA’s **Strategy 2025–2030**; and
- concrete examples from national Programmememes that demonstrate how ESG can be implemented at local, European, and global levels.

We have structured this paper into four sections:

1. A summary backbone (Section 1)
2. Three pillars of recommendations (Section 2)
3. Closing remarks (Section 3)
4. An annex revisiting the Youth Panel’s Traffic Light System (Section 4)

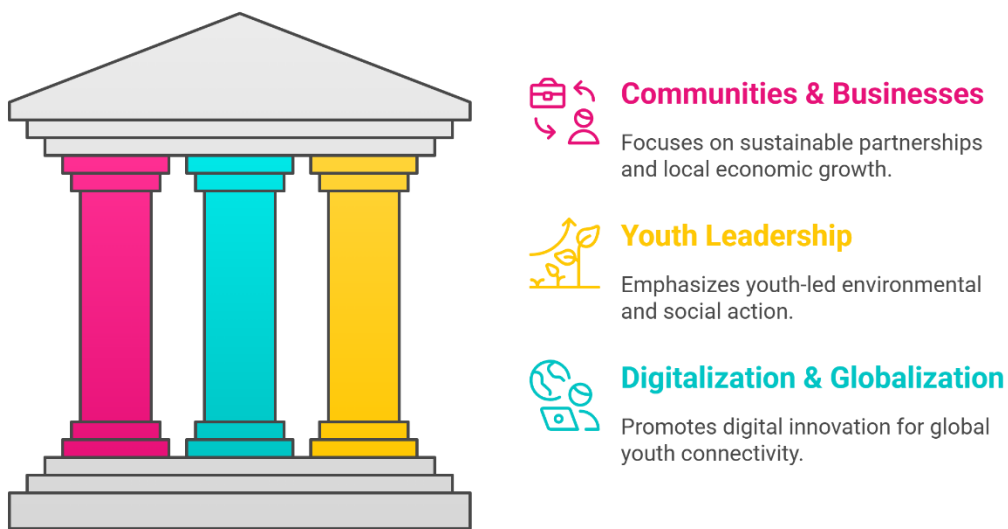
Our recommendations are intended to serve as **practical, future-proof actions** that the Board can adopt and scale across the network.

Mallik and Vincent,
on behalf of the Youth Panel

Section 1 – Backbone

The Youth Panel proposes three interconnected pillars as the foundation of EYCA’s ESG framework. Together, they provide a **clear, future-proof direction** for how EYCA can align its activities with sustainability principles, empower young people, and strengthen its global relevance.

EYCA's ESG Framework



- **Communities & Businesses** – EYCA supports local economies by fostering sustainable partnerships, inclusive discounts, and ethical collaboration that drive resilience and eco-friendly consumption.
- **Youth Leadership** – EYCA empowers young people to lead voluntary environmental and social actions, ensuring transparency, measurable impact, and participatory governance across the network.
- **Digitalisation & Globalization** – EYCA reduces its ecological footprint through digital innovation while connecting young people across borders to advance sustainability and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Together, these pillars form a **balanced and impactful framework** that addresses environmental, social, and governance priorities, while staying true to EYCA’s mission of empowering youth across Europe and beyond.

Section 2 – Recommendations of the Youth Panel

A. Supporting Sustainable Communities – Local Economies and Inclusive Partnerships

Action:

EYCA strengthens local communities and economies by fostering partnerships with businesses committed to sustainability and social responsibility. Priority is given to local actors, small businesses, and social enterprises that contribute to the circular economy and reduce carbon footprints. In addition to broad partnerships, EYCA remains committed to showcasing specific impactful collaborations, such as with Vodafone (Recycling) and regional public transportation and social enterprises in Greece (promoting cycling). These concrete examples exemplify how localized actions contribute to wider sustainability and inclusion goals. Discounts are offered to encourage eco-responsible behaviours such as sustainable mobility, responsible consumption, and use of local products. Vulnerable groups, including unemployed youth and people with disabilities, are given targeted discounts to ensure equal access to opportunities. EYCA also supports community-led initiatives, such as food redistribution and collaborations with NGOs, to amplify its social impact.

To further strengthen this pillar and ensure lasting impact, the Youth Panel recommends that EYCA and its members implement the following concrete measures, designed to support local development and reinforce the organisation’s sustainability goals:

- Publish an **annual report** mapping all partnerships and discounts to their contributions to the **UN SDGs** (e.g. Vodafone recycling → SDG 12 Responsible Consumption).
- Allocate at least **20% of new partnerships annually** to local SMEs and social enterprises aligned with **SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth**.
- Ensure each national EYCA programme establishes **at least one inclusive partnership per year** targeting vulnerable youth, contributing to **SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities**.
- Develop a **partnership assessment framework** (inspired by the Youth Panel’s Traffic Light System) to evaluate environmental and social responsibility before formalising agreements.
- Create a **“Local Impact Spotlight” campaign** that showcases inspiring sustainable partnerships from across EYCA countries.

Why it matters:

This pillar integrates the ESG criteria of *Support for the Local Economy, Inclusion and Diversity*, and *Social Responsibility*. By aligning partnerships with EYCA’s values and applying transparent standards inspired by the Youth Panel’s Traffic Light System, EYCA ensures that all collaborations are both ethical and impactful. In doing so, EYCA positions

itself not only as a youth card provider but also as a driver of sustainable consumption, equity, and community resilience across Europe.

This pillar targets the following SDGs:

- SDG 8 – Decent Work & Economic Growth
- SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production

B. Empowering Youth Leadership – Transparency, Governance and Measurable Impact

Action:

EYCA embeds evaluation, transparency, and youth empowerment at the heart of its ESG approach. Inspired by the Youth Panel’s legacy, the organisation will use a Traffic Light benchmark to evaluate projects and partnerships, ensuring clarity on what meets sustainability standards and what requires improvement. Voluntary actions, such as reforestation, beach cleanups, and food waste reduction, will increasingly be designed and led by young people, creating opportunities for youth to shape and implement ESG initiatives. Youth-led voluntary environmental and social actions will be distinctly prioritized as a separate focus within governance efforts, ensuring that young people’s agency is visible and celebrated through campaigns highlighting specific measurable activities such as trees planted, waste collected, meals provided, paper saved and published within the annual ESG reports that document progress, challenges, and next steps.

To advance this commitment and embed youth participation at every level, the Youth Panel recommends the following key actions, aimed at promoting transparent governance, measurable progress, and genuine youth empowerment across the network:

- Require each national EYCA member to implement **one youth-led environmental or social action per year**, aligned with **SDG 13 Climate Action** or **SDG 16 Strong Institutions**.
- Publish an **annual Youth Impact Report** highlighting measurable results of voluntary actions (e.g. trees planted, waste collected, meals provided, paper saved).
- Institutionalise a **Traffic Light System** in annual partnership evaluations and make results available to members for transparency.
- Organise an **annual Youth ESG Forum** (online or hybrid) to bring together young people from across Europe to share results, lessons learned, and new ideas.
- Provide **training and a toolkit** for Youth Panel members and national coordinators on transparent governance and impact measurement.

Why it matters:

This pillar addresses the ESG criteria of *Evaluation and Continuous Improvement*, *Transparency and Ethics*, and *Responsible Governance*. By actively involving young people in governance through the Youth Panel and other structures, EYCA ensures that its sustainability strategy is not only credible but also co-created with those it serves. This participatory model strengthens accountability, empowers young leaders, and ensures EYCA remains aligned with the concerns and aspirations of Europe's youth.

This pillar targets the following SDGs:

- SDG 13 – Climate Action
- SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

C. Accelerating Digital Innovation – Eco-Communication and Global Sustainability

Action:

EYCA reduces its ecological footprint and strengthens connectivity by transitioning to an exclusively digital European Youth Card. This digitalisation reduces paper use, saves resources, and enhances accessibility for young people, including those with disabilities. (Alongside digital transition, EYCA continues to emphasise internal eco-friendly practices, such as significant reductions in printing and the adoption of workplace recycling, which form a critical part of the organisation's comprehensive environmental commitment.) At the same time, EYCA expands its sustainability agenda globally by aligning all international partnerships with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Initiatives include negotiating eco-friendly mobility discounts, supporting cross-border voluntary actions, and building partnerships with youth organisations worldwide to share learning and foster solidarity. The global dimension of EYCA's ESG engagement is a strategic priority. International partnerships and cross-border youth collaborations will be distinctly communicated and promoted as flagship efforts reflecting EYCA's global leadership in sustainability and youth empowerment.

To realise the full potential of EYCA's digital and global transformation, the Youth Panel recommends the following steps, which will help integrate innovation with environmental responsibility and international collaboration:

- Introduce a **shared toolkit for national members** on accessible and eco-friendly digital communication, linked to **SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**.
- Organise an **annual online intercultural dialogue session** on climate and social issues, open to cardholders across all EYCA countries (**SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals**).

- Monitor and publish **annual data on paper saved, CO₂ reduced, and resources conserved** through digitalisation efforts (**SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production**).
- Partner with international mobility providers to create **sustainable travel discounts** (rail, bus, bike-sharing, etc.) to promote eco-friendly youth travel.
- Launch a **Digital Accessibility Audit** across all EYCA platforms to ensure inclusivity for youth with disabilities or limited digital access.

Why it matters:

This pillar directly supports the ESG criteria of *Eco-Friendly Communication*, *Encourage Digital Sobriety*, and *Multiplier Effect and Synergies*. By combining digital innovation with a global sustainability vision, EYCA ensures the Youth Card remains both environmentally responsible and internationally relevant. This approach reflects EYCA's strategic priority of global reach, positioning the organisation as a leader in connecting young people across borders for collective climate and social action.

This pillar targets the following SDGs:

- SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production
- SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

Section 3 – Closing Remarks

In closing, the Youth Panel reaffirms its commitment to supporting EYCA in becoming a **leader in sustainable youth engagement**. The recommendations presented here are designed to be practical, measurable, and scalable across the network.

The essential messages we want to highlight are:

- EYCA must **support local communities** through inclusive and sustainable partnerships.
- EYCA should empower **youth-led action and governance**, ensuring measurable impact and accountability.
- EYCA has the opportunity to lead in **digital sustainability and global cooperation**, making the European Youth Card a symbol of climate responsibility and international solidarity.

Together, these three pillars provide a **future-proof framework** that builds on EYCA's strategy and the legacy of the Youth Panel. We trust the Board and members will take these recommendations forward in shaping EYCA's sustainable future.

Section 4 – Annex

The **Traffic Light System**, created by the 2021-2022 Youth Panel and refined by the 2023–2024 Youth Panel, is a simple and effective tool to evaluate the sustainability and ethical alignment of EYCA's partnerships and actions.

- **Green** – fully aligned with EYCA values and ESG criteria (partnership/action to be supported and showcased).
- **Orange** – partially aligned, requires improvement or stricter monitoring.
- **Red** – not aligned, should be avoided or terminated.

This system allows for a **quick visual assessment** and ensures EYCA avoids partnerships that risk greenwashing. The current Youth Panel recommends implementing the use of a Traffic Light System in evaluating **partnerships, discounts, and events**, and reporting annually on outcomes.

Annex – Position Paper of the first Youth Panel

YOUTH PANEL PROPOSAL

**Introduction of a ‘Traffic Light-System’ for
EYCA’s Actions and Partnerships.**

25 January 2022

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1. General Framework

Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility are gaining importance within (international) organisations. This increased attention is mutually beneficial for both organisations and societies.

As an international youth-oriented organisation, the EYCA has also the responsibility to pioneer in climate action and Corporate Social Responsible issues such as Human Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals, the European Youth Goals and Climate Change. More specific, long term targets such as climate-neutrality can translate this general commitment into more specific targets.

In order to facilitate the change and the set objectives in the organisation in relation to Climate Change, the EYCA Youth Panel proposes a ‘Traffic Light-System’ that creates a ‘benchmark’ for actions and partnerships which lead to a more socially responsible organisation and helps to achieve a minimum standard for actions and partnerships in this regard. In addition to the ‘Traffic Light-System’ a ‘Checklist for Meetings and Events’ is proposed that aims to guide the EYCA on how future meetings and events can be more friendly for people and the planet.

2. Relevance of the proposal for the work of EYCA

EYCA gathers over six million youngsters around Europe and social impact is the essence of its work. Those young people are not only using discounts, they are also taking part in several initiatives promoted by the Member Organisations which aim at increasing active citizenship leading to a more sustainable, interconnected, peaceful and democratic Europe. While organising these initiatives and while establishing new partnerships, EYCA is probably already following some criteria. Nevertheless, we feel that it would be useful to write it down and to make sure that not just some, but all are being followed.

By creating general “Traffic Light-Criteria” regarding partnerships and seminar events, the EYCA will have permanent guiding standards and a system that could guarantee it is working in a more sustainable and inclusive way. Also, EYCA will act as a primary example close to the cardholders, will show young people that topics that are very important to them and essential for the world are also one of EYCA's priorities. Through developing something new, something like this, we will grow as an association, we will challenge our boundaries and capacity to be closer to young people’s concerns, be better at what we do and show that by taking a step forward we can take our bad habits step back. Or, as our motto says – “Do more. Be more”

3. The Proposal: Creating a ‘Traffic Light-System’

At this moment the Proposal puts forward several general principles that will govern the green-, yellow-, and red criteria. The described principles will form the basis of a dialogue between the EYCA Office, the Board and the EYCA Youth Panel with the ultimate objective to co-create more specific criteria in the future.

However, the EYCA Youth Panel finds it important to set the future criteria based on the following objectives. The EYCA, and its initiatives and partnerships, should aim to be part of the response that the world and young people are demanding: to be a climate neutral organisation by 2030.

Green Criteria

Projects that comply with the principles (or criteria) under this section meet the standard of creating a sustainable and ethical organisation, and therefore get a “GREEN” light.

The general principles governing this section of the proposal are linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Every project should contribute to the achievement of the relevant SDG such as SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and strong Institutions), SDG 17 (Partnership for the goals).

ACTIONS	PARTNERSHIPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions should contribute to the overall achievement of the SDGs. Therefore, a motivation should be provided for how an action contributes to the achievement of one or more of the SDGs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners and Partnerships should integrate the goals of the SDGs in their functioning. A (proven) plan or a plan of action articulates this intention.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions should aim for climate-friendly governance and actively align towards a climate neutral organisation by 2030. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners and Partnerships should aim climate neutrality, and implement actions that facilitate this objective.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions should contribute to the overall achievement of the European Youth Goals. Therefore, a motivation should be provided for how an action takes the European Youth Goals into account. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners and Partnerships should integrate the European Youth Goals in their functioning, and report on this matter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions should be established by involving all relevant stakeholders into the preparation and establishment of it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners and Partnerships should aim at involving relevant actors in decision making in a transparent way.

Orange Criteria

Projects under this section do not successfully achieve the set standard(s) under the first section ‘Green criteria’. However, the incompatibility of the project with the first section isn’t that severe, and allows to achieve the mentioned standard by taking flanking measures.

ACTIONS	PARTNERSHIPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions should find a balance between financial profits and non-financial profits. The latter should always be taken into account. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners and Partnerships that solely aim for financial profits, should also take non-financial objectives into account. (e.g. contribution to social objectives, the climate)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions that are implemented from a top-to-bottom way, should involve stakeholders by taking necessary measures. (e.g. plan of action) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners and Partnerships that do not involve relevant stakeholders, should propose a plan of action on how to improve the involvement of stakeholders.

Red Criteria

Projects that fall under the scope of this section do not successfully achieve the standard(s) under the first section and are not eligible for flanking measures due to their severe violation of the principles in the first section. Projects that receive a “RED” light shouldn’t be further developed by the EYCA organisation.

ACTIONS	PARTNERSHIPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions cannot only be based on financial objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners and Partnerships cannot solely aim for financial profits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions cannot maintain or enhance a situation that harms the climate and the objective to become a climate-neutral organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners and Partnerships cannot operate or collaborate in an environment that fosters negative impacts on climate change. (e.g. fossil fuels)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions cannot have a negative impact on established human rights, or contribute to the violation of it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners cannot base its operations on violations of human rights. (e.g. forced labour, child labour)

3.1. Checklist for Actions and Partnerships

In addition to the ‘Traffic Light-criteria’ we propose a checklist that aims to reduce the impact of events, activities and projects of EYCA on people and planet.

A preliminary template of the checklist is attached in ‘Annex I’.

This Youth Panel Proposal is presented by the following Members of the EYCA Youth Panel:

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ANNEX I: Checklist for Meetings and Events

This checklist was inspired by all the facts and figures that are available today more than ever, but it is mostly based on the „[Green Toolbox](#)“¹ manual made by International Young Naturefriends. Using these guidelines, we could be saving money, creating new habits, learning to appreciate nature, therefore act to be climate friendly and focus on new opportunities that this approach could bring to us as an organisation.

Our experience so far has shown us that not all of our members work in the same conditions and they don't always share the same opportunities. Some of them already do more than it is listed here, and some of them are yet to reach the majority of what is proposed. Therefore this checklist is very general, so that it can be useful and reachable to every EYCA member.

While organising an event, make sure you do everything you can before to reduce the impact, so there is less mess to clean up afterwards.

TRAVEL POLICIES FOR EYCA INITIATIVES	YES	NO
Encourage using public transport whenever possible		
Avoid flying as much as possible, encourage members and participants to use trains and show them the advantages of it		
Encourage carpooling		
Use Interrail tickets		
When in person meeting is not really necessary, continue to encourage and to take the most of online meetings		

FOOD AND COFFEE BREAKS	YES	NO
Use seasonal food – for example, no tomatoes in Norway in December		
Let the participants serve themselves		
Recycle food - save it for the next day or pack it for take – away		
Buy only what you will eat		
Ask the venue where you organize an activity or a restaurant where you host guests to provide tap water during meals		
Encourage participants to bring their reusable water bottles / designate one glass for you to drink water each day or refill a water bottle / use reusable mugs. This will reduce the number of glasses you have to wash and save some water too		

¹ some of the ideas on this checklist are copied from the “Green Toolbox” manual

Use cloth towels or cloth-roll dispensers in washrooms instead of paper towels. If not, then buy tissue that contains high level of recycled content		
Support restaurants that source their food sustainably and base their menus on local and organic produce		
Buy tea, coffee and snacks for a coffee break in bulk, to minimize packaging		
Use cloth napkins instead of paper napkins		
Don't serve meals and snacks with disposable plates, always use reusable dishes		
Packaging is hard to avoid, but uses „lesser evil“ whenever you can, separate and dispose it properly		

VENUE AND ACCOMMODATION	YES	NO
Encourage outdoor activities as much as you can – dispose waste properly, leave what you find and respect wildlife		
Try to find venues in green areas		
Use seminar rooms with natural light		
During the cold weather heat your building to a maximum 21 °C when occupied and 16 °C when unoccupied. Start heating only when people arrive and set back the temperature one hour before leaving the building. In the summer, cool the building only when it's occupied and to no lower than 24 °C. At night, use outdoor air for cooling		
Turn off lights when not needed		

OTHER	YES	NO
Avoid disposable products		
Buy green products – refillable highlighters, pens and printer toners, use digital done transfer		
If you prepare gift bags for your participants, include locally made products as much as you can and use renewable and recyclable materials – cotton (sustainably farmed), bamboo, wooden products...		
Go electronic instead of using hard copies - use the phone as much as you can, bring a laptop to meetings		