

Good Governance

**GUIDELINES FOR MEANINGFUL AND
INCLUSIVE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN
DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES**

Journey of
Youth
LEADERSHIP



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By children and young people, for children and young people

Child and youth participation is one of the main focuses of IFM-SEI. We are committed to creating and adapting spaces for engagement and leadership that are child and youth friendly and do not pose systemic barriers to participation and engagement in dialogue and decision-making processes. With this focus, IFM-SEI aims to promote active and meaningful participation of children and young people in our structures, activities and programmes, and ensure that our movement and member organisations are led by children and young people, not simply for or with them.

These guidelines were created by young people for young people who are actively participating and are taking on leading positions in their organisations. They were designed with current organisational structures in mind to inspire and encourage them to make changes and include more young people in their processes and give them the spaces and opportunities to develop and feel empowered.

In the guidelines, you will find the definitions of youth participation, youth leadership and good governance, as well as guidelines with tips on how to improve youth participation and concrete steps and examples on how to engage youth in leading positions in the organisation and its decision-making processes.

The guidelines were prepared from the materials and knowledge sharing that happened during the “Good Governance” training in the framework of the “Journey of Youth Leadership” project funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

Youth participation

As understood and developed by the participants of the project "Journey of Youth Leadership", youth participation empowers and involves young people in the decision-making processes at various structural levels. Their participation generates positive change. Youth is provided with opportunities and spaces to participate effectively and meaningfully in society. They are able to contribute, give their opinion, shape, influence, and decide on the issues that affect society as a whole and their lives in particular.

Effective youth participation gives young voices an open space to be heard and take action.

Youth leadership

Youth leadership should be developed in environments where the development of competencies is encouraged through hands-on participation and by recognising that youth experiences are transformed by the youth who participate in them. Therefore, it is a sum of experiences that emerge from acquiring knowledge, attitudes, and skills to reach leading positions and feel empowered to take leadership roles.

Good Governance

Good governance relates to the organisational structures and activities that promote transparent, inclusive, diverse and accountable youth organisations that encourage quality, meaningful and effective child and youth participation at all levels of organisational culture. This includes taking into account the diversity of young people, listening to and engaging the voices of marginalised young people in the decision-making process, and responding actively to the needs of young people.

The principles of good governance can be adapted and applied to youth organisations:

- 1. Transparency:** every decision taken and implemented should be accessed by everyone, especially those who are directly affected by the decision.
- 2. Accountability:** responsibility towards young people and membership to improve the quality of society by addressing the challenges they face.
- 3. Rule of Law:** implementing good governance by following the governing documents and ensuring that the governing documents reflect inclusive policies.

4. Equity and Inclusiveness: ensuring justice for the community and offering spaces and opportunities for everyone to be able to participate.

5. Effectiveness and Efficiency: a decision should meet community needs and address their expectations and experience.

6. Participation: everyone has the spaces and opportunities to voice their opinions and contribute to the activities' development, implementation, evaluation and follow-up.

7. Consensus-oriented: any decision-making process should be participatory and consensus-seeking, and if a decision cannot accommodate everyone's wishes, it should at least not harm anyone.

8. Co-operation: openness to cooperate with other social partners and civil society organisations to increase the expertise of the organisations.

Let's get started!

1. Ensure that a mechanism of constant feedback is implemented.



- Create a mechanism to ensure that people in leading positions get feedback from their members and that the feedback is read and considered.

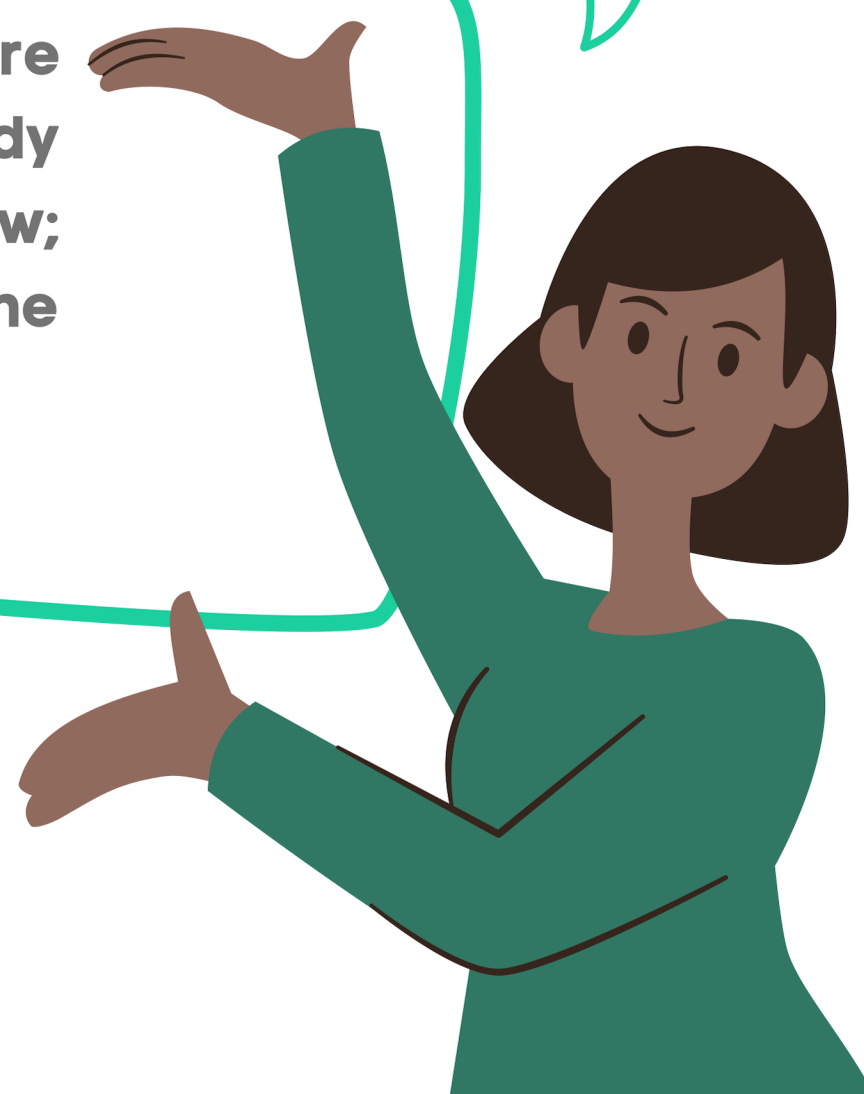
- As one of the feedback mechanisms, you can evaluate immediately after every activity.

- Give members, especially young people and children opportunity to express their opinion and satisfaction with the organisation's work (projects, activities) and its structures (boards, president, secretary-general...).

- Examples of feedback: check-ins, reflection groups, debriefing, evaluation and surveys.

- Create a safe space so everybody feels safe and open to sharing and receiving feedback.

Constant feedback is an excellent opportunity for young people who are taking on leading positions or already occupy one to learn and grow; consequently, with them also, the organisation grows.



2. Give young people voting rights in the organisational structure.



- Change the constitution/statute/legally binding documents that established your organisation in order so that young people and children are eligible to vote in the official bodies of the organisation.
- Statute/Constitution of the organisation has in one of its articles specified that young persons with limited legal capacity (so have not yet come of age 16+) can vote their representatives in organisational structures/bodies.
- Encourage the participation of young people to exercise their rights in the organisation.



By including youth that is younger than 18, the organisation is more inclusive. Organisations encourage youth participation in younger generations by giving voting rights to those younger than 18. They can, therefore, keep the existing young members and get new young people involved in the organisation and its activities.

3. Ensure that proper training is provided for the youth, especially for young people who are taking on leading positions.



- Create trainings related to children and youth participation to educate them on active participation and how to actively participate in the organisation and society.
- Create additional workshops for youth interested in taking on leading positions for them to learn about the competencies they need and actively gain them.
- Create trainings similar to the training on Good Governance that IFM-SEI organised with partner organisations under the Journey of Youth Leadership project to explore what can an organisation do to facilitate the inclusion of children and young people in civic society organisations.



Young people taking the leadership positions will feel more empowered and confident in their role if they know their strengths and are able to identify competencies they would still like to develop, and have the opportunities to do so.



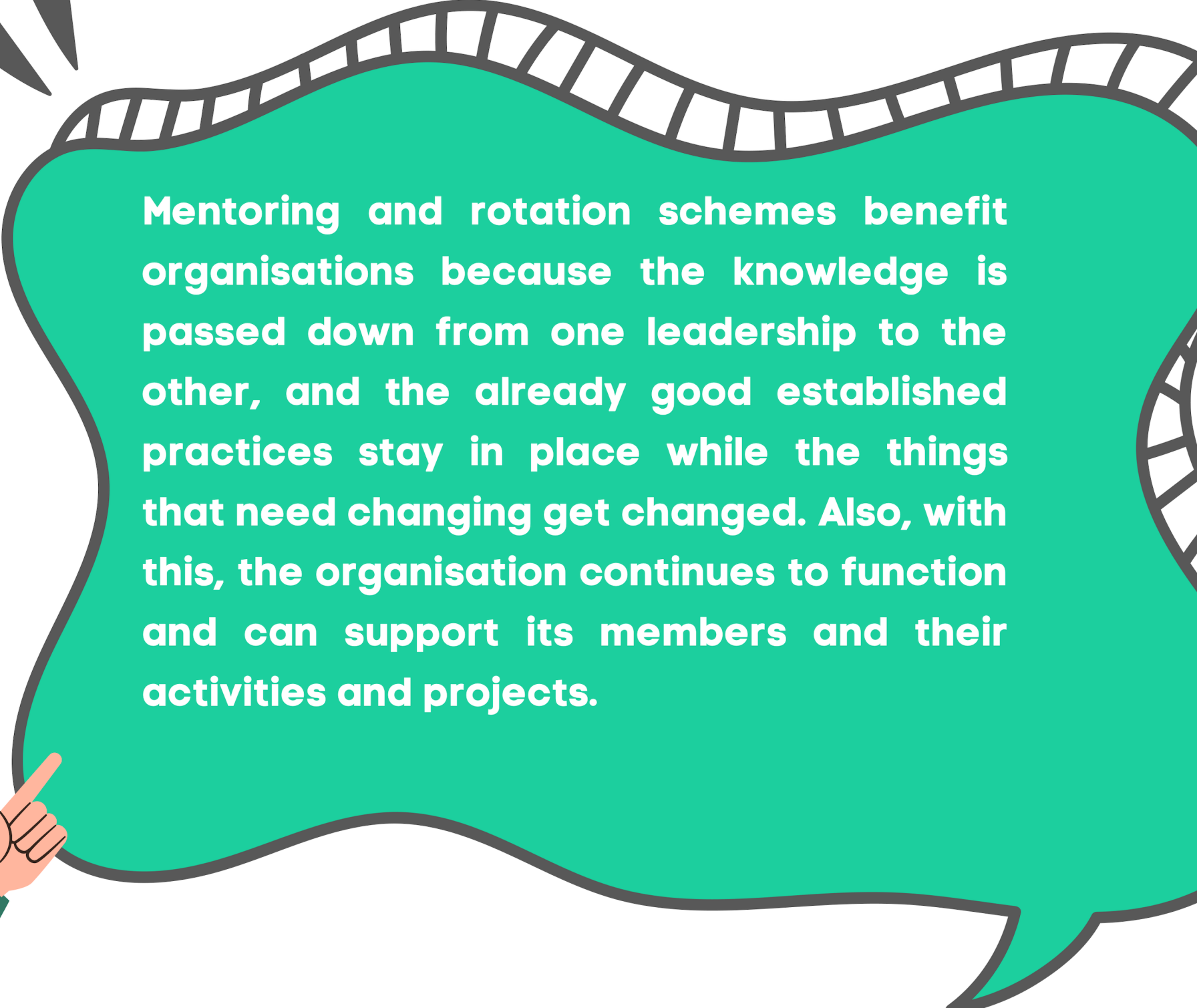
4. Establish a mentoring scheme.



- Establish a mentoring scheme, which will ensure that the knowledge is passed on from more experienced members to less experienced members who will, in the future, take over leading positions in the organisation.

- Create a rotating scheme for young people who, in the future, want to take on leading roles. With this scheme, future youth leaders will have an opportunity to see different structures of their organisation and therefore be able to take leading positions with knowledge of how the main structures of the organisation function.

- Former president/chairperson/secretary general of the organisation mentoring current president/chairperson/secretary general of the organisation for them to improve the knowledge and skills that they already have.



Mentoring and rotation schemes benefit organisations because the knowledge is passed down from one leadership to the other, and the already good established practices stay in place while the things that need changing get changed. Also, with this, the organisation continues to function and can support its members and their activities and projects.



5. Produce a handover document or a toolkit.



- Create a document that will have all the essential information a new and upcoming youth worker in different positions should possess to make their youth work and, with that, active and meaningful participation more accessible.
- Create another specific document for future youth leaders to make their educational and handover processes easier.
- Other things the organisations can do in this regard is to have proper handover meetings between the old and new boards (depending on the organisation's structure).
- They can also organise a team building where old board members can share experiences, skills, tips and tricks with new board members (depending on the organisation's structure).
- To make this process more digital, the documents should also be available in digital form, or they can be produced in the form of videos.
- Educational videos with basic information about youth participation can also be used to hand over the necessary information.



Having a strategy in place that doesn't always rely on individuals but gathers the experience of former volunteers, can support the newcomers in their path towards leadership. This way they can always go back to the document to recheck things or add their own experience for future successors.

6. Work and annual plans aimed at issues children and youth are interested in and facing.



- To make your organisation more appealing to children and youth, create work and annual plans aimed at the interests and issues that children and youth are more inclined to work on and consequently participate in. To achieve that, let them actively participate in the drafting process of the plans. This can be reached with them giving input on previous activities and point out the issues they are interested in exploring more or have encountered them.
- Before starting the drafting plans, gather information from the previous point from youth and children to make the drafting process easier. This can be done by asking youth and children questions about their interests and issues they are facing and then trying to incorporate them into the plans.



The potential this has for the organisations is that children and youth will be more engaged to do things with the organisation and feel included in the organisation's processes. This can lead to said youth being encouraged to take on leadership roles in the future.



7. Give opportunities to young people to take on volunteer positions in the organisation's structures.



- Create positions in your structures/bodies that volunteers can occupy to encourage them to stay active in the organisation and gain new knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- Organisations create a call for volunteers in their various national and regional structures. The call should be open for all members younger than 23. Volunteers would work on shorter projects during their volunteer position, help logistically with the organisational structure, and get to know how the structure works.
- There can also be bilateral agreements between the organisations to send their volunteers abroad to another organisation (preferably another continent or region) so that they can learn about another IFM-SEI member organisation and bring the knowledge back home to their organisation and contribute to the host organisation, with the knowledge they got from the sending organisation.



Providing space and opportunities for volunteers to take more responsibility gradually will empower volunteers to be more motivated and willing to take on leading positions in the organisations and feel like they are actively contributing towards the life of an organisation.



8. Engage more youth in your structures.



- Bodies of the organisations are encouraged to change their rules and documents to promote and give space to younger generations to be elected to said bodies and try to employ younger people.
- With that in mind, we appeal to the organisation that they have a certain number of elected youth younger than 21.
- We also appeal to organisations to employ younger people, so people under the age of 30, specifically under the age of 25.
- Empower young people to reach for these positions by making them more accessible and inclusive.



Providing opportunities for employment for young people in the organisation also brings a different perspective to your activities and encourages young people to develop their professional paths.

9. Know when to give space to younger generations.



- With this, we mean that older generations are willing to give space to younger generations to develop new skills, gain new knowledge and allow them to grow.
- Another thing we also mean with this guideline is that older generations know when to step down and give space to younger generations to take the lead. With this in mind, we encourage older generations to be the support younger generations will need while they are learning and finding their footing.
- Age limit, that you cannot occupy any leading positions after a certain age (35), automatically giving space to younger leaders.



Providing space for young people but still being there to support and offer guidance when requested is an excellent example of intergenerational cooperation that can improve attitudes, behaviours and quality of life for children, youth and older adults.



10. Use youth-friendly language.



- Already existing documents should be rewritten to youth-friendly language, meaning having the core documents written in a way that is understood by younger generations and complex concepts explained and accompanied with examples.

- Any new documents that will be adopted should be written with that guideline in mind. While transcribing or writing the papers, consult with the youth and allow them to question the wording of the documents.

- Youth-friendly language means that all people understand the information being shared.

How to do that:

- use shorter sentences and clear language,
- explain acronyms, for example, IFM-SEI as International Falcon Movement – Socialist Educational International,
- use examples to explain complex ideas and concepts,
- steer clear of jargon.



Writing documents in a youth-friendly and accessible language ensures that we don't assume that young people have experience with the topic. This way, everyone can engage and give their opinion on activities or topics you work on.



11. Be mindful of the time of the activities and meetings.



- Plan activities during the evenings on the weekdays or during the weekends, when children and young people have more free time.
- Schedule the meetings with participants' input.
- Plan extra time to follow the lead of whatever path children and young people take.
- Be clear with instructions and be patient if the activities go differently than intended.

Making sure that your activities and meetings are accessible to young people and children can increase the engagement of young people and children and enrich the organisation's life by removing the structural barriers.



Through all your work, don't forget one essential thing - **cultivate respect for children and youth, and value young people's voices.**

And most importantly, **be flexible and trust young people!**



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