

AU-EU YOUTH LAB UPDATES

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**AU - EU
YOUTH
LAB**

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AU-EU YOUTH ACTION LAB LAUNCHES ITS 2ND CALL FOR PROPOSALS TO EMPOWER AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN YOUTH FOR IMPACTFUL SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES.

The AU-EU Youth Lab Programme through the Youth Action Lab component, is pleased to announce the launch of the second cohort of its youth grants, reaffirming its commitment to empowering young Africans to design and deliver transformative solutions for their communities.

The new call for proposals will offer a unique opportunity for youth-led organizations, social enterprises, and innovators to access catalytic funding and technical support.

Building on the success of Cohort 1, which reached youth innovators across the continent, Cohort 2 will continue to invest in bold ideas that create scalable impact. Youth organisations in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and European Union member states are encouraged to apply. Details and application guidelines can be found at <https://aueuyouth.com>

GRANTS AVAILABLE:

The Youth Action Lab offers a platform for youth-led organisations, innovators, entrepreneurs, and advocates to connect, share ideas, and influence policy decisions local, national, and international levels. Grantees will receive financial support, mentorship, and access to networks that can help amplify their impact.

The four types of grants available to support youth-led projects at different stages are:

Innovation Grants: €30,000–€40,000 for designing, testing, or scaling new solutions addressing global issues like climate resilience and youth participation.

Entrepreneurship Grants: €30,000 to support the responsible growth of youth-led social enterprises that combines its social or environmental mission with income-generating activities.

Representation Grants: €10,000 to amplify marginalized youth voices in policy discussions.

Cooperation Grants: €50,000 for partnerships between African and European organizations to foster cross-continental collaboration.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Eligible applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Youth-led organisations (age 18 to 35) where young people are the decision-makers.
- Legally registered in one of the 12 African countries or an EU member state.
- Propose projects with clear governance structures and social impact.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested youth organisations should:

- Read the Funding Manual (available in English, French, and Portuguese).
- Meet the eligibility criteria. (Ensure to carefully read the criteria for each category).
- Develop a project proposal as an individual organisation or in collaboration with others.

Submit the application by the respective deadlines.

For more on how to submit applications: <https://aueuyouth.com>

By participating in this potential strategic partnership, youth organisations can make their voices heard, build lasting impact in their communities, and influence policy at the highest levels.



AU-EU YOUTH LAB AT THE 3RD LIGHTUP IMPACT DAYS CONFERENCE

The 3rd Lightup Impact Days Conference (2025) gathered over 200 participants from across East Africa, featuring more than 100 youth-led grassroots organisations. Guided by the theme “Let Youth Lead: Driving Gender and Climate Justice,” the conference celebrated the leadership of young changemakers addressing gender inequality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and climate action.

The AU-EU Youth Lab’s participation reinforced its mission to connect, empower, and engage youth through strategic visibility, knowledge exchange, and local partnerships. By hosting an exhibition booth, joining intergenerational dialogues, and facilitating networking, the Lab positioned itself as a trusted bridge between donors and youth-led innovators.

The #AUEUYouthLab was on the ground in Nairobi, Kenya- engaging with youth-led organisations focused on the pivotal theme of the conference: ‘Let Youth Lead: Driving Gender and Climate Justice.’

We witnessed firsthand the power of this movement: young leaders are driving grassroots solutions for #ClimateInjustice and #GenderInequality, confirming that backing organisations closest to the problem is the solution.

The #AUEUYouthLab is proud to support this ongoing power shift and remain committed to fostering this environment, echoing our Programme’s core mission.

The second day of the recent #LightupImpactDays2025 conference provided an intensive, actionable focus on the -Let Youth Lead- theme, specifically concerning financial inclusion and policy advocacy.

The #AUEUYouthLab was proud to co-host the Keynote Dialogue, 'Power Shift: Centering Youth Leadership in Climate Finance and Policy Decisions.' Our representative, Lawrence Muli, joined other panelists to boldly challenge structural barriers that exclude youth from critical funding decisions.

Beyond the plenary, crucial discussions centered on Decolonizing Philanthropy, examining Domestic Resource Mobilisation and building Trust-Based Partnerships between funders and grassroots movements. The day then shifted from theory to action, with leaders participating in action labs and creative labs to develop practical mobilisation strategies for Gender, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and Climate advocacy.

This is confirmation that the youth are actively re-engineering the systems that govern development, moving beyond a simple call for inclusion.





AU-EU YOUTH LAB AT THE YSB EXPO IN ETHIOPIA: CHAMPIONING DIGITAL INNOVATION, YOUTH VOICES, AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPACT AT THE YOUTH SOUNDING BOARD EXPO.

On 19–20 September 2025, Addis Ababa hosted more than 100 young people who brought energy, creativity, and ambition as the Youth Sounding Board (YSB) Ethiopia hosted the Youth Skills and Business (YSB) Expo at the Goethe-Institut, AAU FBE Campus.

The Expo brought together 15 youth-led organisations, and a range of partners working at the nexus of innovation, policy, and social impact. Supported by the EU Delegation to Ethiopia and Team Europe, the event showcased how young people are designing digital solutions for pressing societal challenges—from climate action and good governance, to human rights, education, and health.

Why Participate?

The AU-EU Youth Lab was proud to participate with a dedicated booth and direct engagement throughout the two-day expo. The team connected with Ethiopian youth leaders, answered questions about the soon to be announced upcoming November grants, and shared opportunities within the Lab’s youth partnership activities.

Meeting YSB Ethiopia members was a highlight, offering the chance to hear directly from passionate young changemakers. Their contributions and reflections on the diversity and resilience of Ethiopia’s youth underscored why creating spaces like the Expo is critical.

In addition, the AU-EU Youth Lab also had the opportunity to host a masterclass session, where conversations centered on grant opportunities and connecting it to how digital innovation can accelerate impact in areas that matter most to young people. These exchanges enabled the young

voices to articulate the areas where they need some assistance, their visions of success in future, working around their challenges and was the continuation of a conversation on how best youth can contribute to local initiatives and continental frameworks like the AU's 1 Million Next Level and the EU's Youth Action Plan 2022–2027.





INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY 2025: EMPOWERING AFRICA'S YOUTH THROUGH THE AU-EU PARTNERSHIP

On August 12, 2025, the United Nations headquarters in Nairobi was filled with a refreshing energy as young leaders, policymakers, and global partners gathered to celebrate International Youth Day (IYD). Under the theme “Local Youth Actions for the SDGs and Beyond,” the event, co-hosted by UN-Habitat and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), highlighted the transformative power of youth in driving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Actively participating on this global stage was the AU-EU Youth partnership, an instrument amplifying the voices of Africa’s youth to enable them to effectively shape the continent’s future.

Africa’s Youth Surge is Catalysing Change

Africa is the world’s youngest continent, and the World Economic Forum, among other renowned sources state that over 70% of its population is under 30. This “youth bulge” is a force of innovation, resilience, and creativity. From tackling climate change to fostering peace, African youth are not just beneficiaries of global policies but active architects of solutions. They are a driving force in establishing change and progress.

IYD 2025 underscored their role in translating the SDGs into tangible community impact, leveraging local knowledge to address global challenges like urban governance, digital innovation, and conflict prevention. With 65% of SDG targets tied to local and regional governance, young people’s engagement with local authorities is critical. The Nairobi event linked this reality to the AU 1 Million Next Level initiative, Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations, positioning youth as the bridge between policy and action. For Africa, where the stakes of inclusion stand highest, empowering youth is not optional—it is urgent.

The AU-EU Youth Partnership

An interesting feature of IYD 2025 was the AU-EU Youth partnership, launched in 2024 as part of the 3rd AU-EU Youth Dialogue cycle. This platform has quickly become a cornerstone of Africa-Europe cooperation, channelling youth energy into policy influence and grassroots action. As highlighted in the May 2025 AU-EU Ministerial Joint Communiqué, the partnership drives progress across four strategic pillars:

- **Shared prosperity:** Promoting youth employment, entrepreneurship, and decent work (SDG 8).
- **Peace and security:** Engaging youth in conflict prevention and peacebuilding (SDG 16).
- **Migration and mobility:** Facilitating academic exchanges and skills transfers (SDG 4).

Green and digital transition: Harnessing youth innovation for climate action and digital leadership (SDGs 9, 13, 17).

The Lab's presence in Nairobi wasn't just symbolic—it was a call to action. By providing grants, advocacy tools, and platforms for youth-led organisations, the partnership empowers young Africans to turn ideas into impact. Working with the youth ensures that the continent's youth bulge becomes a dividend, not a challenge.

Breakout Sessions to Brainstorm Solutions

The AU-EU Youth partnership's breakout session, "Empowering Youth-Led SDGs Implementation," was filled with more than 35 enthusiastic youth. It was a vibrant mix of inspiration and practicality, showcasing what intergenerational and intercontinental collaboration can achieve. The overall IYD 2025 sessions featured:

Lightning talks: Youth-led organizations from Africa and representatives from Europe shared diverse experiences around community-driven actions and advocacy campaigns.

Working groups: Young participants co-created solutions, tackling barriers to scaling local initiatives.

Networking: Youth networked with development experts, and shared their view-points and plans.

Grant support: Practical guidance on accessing funding and technical support for SDG projects (2024–2027) was shared, empowering organisations to act.

The sessions ended with a bold call to action, urging youth to participate and shape the 2025 AU-EU Summit and its Youth Forum. It was a roadmap for ensuring youth voices are loud enough to influence global decision-making.

Why Engaging Youth Matters for Africa

The AU-EU Youth partnership impact is particularly relevant in Africa, where the youth bulge presents both opportunities and challenges. By working together with local governments and facilitating innovation exchanges, the Lab transforms youth agency into systemic change. Its platforms break down barriers, connecting grassroots leaders with policymakers. For instance, a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) member and selected grant recipients engaged directly with stakeholders in Nairobi, ensuring local realities inform national, regional and global strategies.

Such engagements matter because Africa's youth are not just the future, they are the present. With the next AU-EU Summit on the horizon, their role in shaping governance is critical. The AU-EU Youth partnership ensures that young Africans aren't just heard but are driving the development agenda.

Youth Engagement

IYD 2025 is a reminder that Africa's youth are ready to lead, equipped with the creativity and determination to localize the SDGs. The AU-EU Youth partnership is a testament of what is possible in communities when young people are given platforms, resources, and trust.

The challenge now lies with governments, institutions, and partners in matching this energy. Invest in skills, create enabling environments, and ensure youth voices shape policy. By 2030, with sustained support, Africa's youth, through instruments like the AU-EU Youth partnership, will redefine what's possible for the continent and beyond.



hello@aeuyouth.com
or visit aeuyouth.com

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