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## Young people's participation in democratic life:

### The disconnection between public administration and youth is the main challenge

Youth Empowerment and Participation-YEP is an Erasmus+ project which aims at giving European socially marginalized youth increased opportunities to participate and shape society. We will do so by laying the foundations for transnational cooperation, educating young community leaders and developing digital communication tools and platforms. The background is that many young people in today's Europe are left out of society due to exclusion, difficulties in entering the labor market and intergenerational poverty.

This applies not least to young migrants and other young people in structural exclusion. Today's generation of young people is the first in several generations to be poorer than the parent generation and they also face unprecedented challenges in terms of climate change.

Between September and November 2022, each of the partners organized the workshops for YEP - Empowerment and Participations, with representatives of youth organizations, but also representatives of other institutions and organizations, so as to cover the 4 major themes of the project:

- Digitization / digital transformation
- Green practices and sustainability principles
- Young people's participation in democratic and civic life
- The post-Covid period and the impact on young people.

### Sinergie (Italy)

Sinergie implemented its online consultations on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of November. They were realized in two different days: the first day was on digital and sustainability; the second one on social inclusion and civic participation. We invited some public representatives, a ngo representative, young students and activists. Our meetings followed the methodology of the debate: we asked questions and we gave 2/3 minutes to each participant to answer. Through this approach we had the possibility to investigate a single issue from different points of view. In many cases, they corresponded.



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### **Solidaritet for Ungdomens Framtid (Sweden)**

SUF organized the round table on October 22, and 12<sup>th</sup> of November and it had 2 objectives, namely: encourage young people with an immigrant background to participate in the social and political life of Sweden; involve young people in the promotion of environmental protection and the practice of ecological transport. On November 12, 2022, Solidaritet för Ungdomens Framtid organized a workshop on the theme: “Digital transformation and its importance for young people”. On November 19, 2022, a second workshop was organized on the theme “The role of young people in the fight against climate change” with the aim of sparking the minds of young people to engage themselves and participate in influencing the authorities to strengthen measures aiming at reducing greenhouse-effect gas.

### **In Varietate Concordia (Romania)**

IVC organized 2 workshops on 25<sup>th</sup> of October and 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, each of the workshops had 2 themes, with different guests, experts in their field of activity. As the methodology approached, it was to offer the guest the opportunity of a short presentation on the topic chosen from his field of expertise, so that then each of the participants could ask questions and have a discussion and exchange of ideas.

### **Artifex (Spain)**

Artifex implemented its online consultations on 16-17<sup>th</sup> of November. They covered two areas: one on sustainability and adaptation to IA, robotization, algorithms; the second on inclusion and participation. We invited public servants, ngo’s, young students and activists. Our meeting reconfirmed well known causes and issues, but also opened inevitable new angles in a rapidly changing world.

### **Conclusions**

The conclusions of these consultations with young people showed us that, the disconnection between public administration and youth is perhaps the main challenge to be faced in the following years. It is not clever insisting in using the same strategies to try to obtain different results, so the next conclusion has been the need to identify and use alternative tools to engage participation. Also, it is very important to emphasize that young people are not motivated enough to get involved in the current activities of the community they belong to



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and many of the participants do not have enough information regarding access to information of public interest, they do not know how to access or whom to contact for information belonging to a public institution.

Whether it is a matter of sustainability and digital culture, for which the awareness of students - but also of those responsible belonging to institutions - needs to be increased, or whether it is a matter of greater inclusion in national and European political life (for which a breaking down of the barriers that still divide 'youth' and 'experience' is needed in equal measure), it turns out to be absolutely certain how the need to be seen as no less 'a class apart,' estranged from a society of adults, needs to be fostered. In this way, young people can truly participate in the development of the future of what is not only the organization of their countries, but also the development of the European context.



