



HandBook

“Foster the Participation of Young people”



Co-funded by
the European Union



This document was produced on the basis of consultations held by:





Co-funded by
the European Union



Sommario

Foster the Participation of Young people.....	3
<i>Section 1 – Introduction.....</i>	3
The right to be active in your community.....	3
Welcome Statement.....	3
<i>Mission Statement.....</i>	4
<i>Section 2 – Opportunities for young people to be involved.....</i>	4
Support for young people’s projects and initiatives.....	4
Youth participation in non-governmental organizations.....	6
How to volunteer.....	7
Institutional participation by young people in local and national affairs.....	8
★ The role of youth in the European construction.....	8
<i>Section 3 - Participation of Young people.....</i>	10
Active citizenship and challenges to the participation of the young people.....	10
Benefits for Young People.....	11
Benefits for Other Members of the Community.....	12
★ KEY ANNIVERSARIES AND EVENTS.....	12
<i>Section 4 - Determinants.....</i>	13
Age, generation and, participation.....	13
Gender and participation.....	14
<i>Section 5 – Conclusions.....</i>	14
Young people are using technology to organize and make their voices heard.....	14



Co-funded by
the European Union



Foster the Participation of Young people

Section 1 – Introduction

The right to be active in your community

The right to be heard. The right to vote. The expectation is that your voice matters and that your government should listen to you. The right to be active in your community – calling for change; holding governments accountable. These are basic rights that form the cornerstones of our society. These are the fundamental rights that so many take for granted. The rights that many are able to exercise without question are not labeled as having an intellectual disability. The United Convention on the Rights of the Child contains a set of “participation clauses” which are leading members of development agencies, municipal offices, and community organizations to incorporate children and youth into community planning. As with all human rights documents, there is a difference between the Convention’s right rhetoric and reality on the ground. Nevertheless, people who work with children and youth and us, through this project, believe that the Convention is contributing to a sea change in adults’ perception of young people.

Welcome Statement

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.



Co-funded by
the European Union



Mission Statement

Through the activities carried out within the project, the partners aim to develop transnational structured cooperation, online and offline, between different youth organizations and also to encourage young people to participate in the democratic process and in society with particular reference to under-represented groups.

Our final goal is to empower young people and youth organizations through the utilization of digital tools, new networking methodologies, and innovative non-formal learning strategies.

Section 2 – Opportunities for young people to be involved

Support for young people's projects and initiatives

Over the past few decades, there has been an increasing emphasis on young people's participation. This has been described as part of the two related global social trends of "democratization" and individualization. These trends have facilitated the contemporary understanding of young people as "persons in their own rights".

There are many ways to support young people's projects and initiatives depending on their individual needs. One way is to provide financial support, such as grants or donations. Other ways to support young people's projects include offering mentorship, providing access to resources and materials, and sharing knowledge and skills. It is also important to listen to young people and their ideas and provide advice and feedback as needed. Finally, advocating for youth causes is also a way to support young people's initiatives and help create positive change.

The voice of our youth will support young people to become active citizens, to be heard and valued within society at a local and national level, and to achieve positive tangible change.

RMSOS approach to young people's participation¹

¹ The charter's approach to participation is based on the five keywords: right, means, space, opportunity and support. It is based on the principle that meaningful youth participation can only take place when the right conditions have been created and all the actors involved in participatory work have been given the responsibility to ensure that these conditions are present.



Co-funded by
the European Union

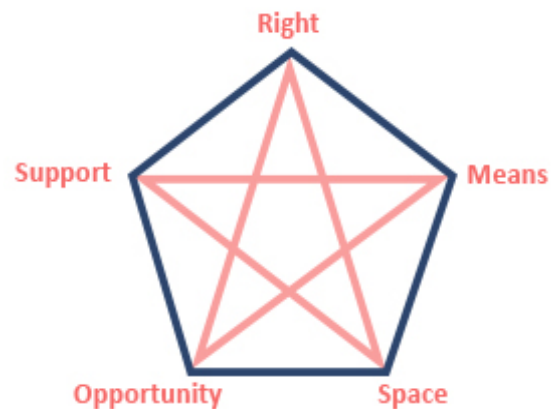


Through the workshops organized by each partner in Romania, Italy, Sweden and Spain, both the objectives of the project - objectives of the European Commission, but also the involvement of young people in the community from which they come - are promoted. Involvement is and will be stimulated by bringing the representatives of youth organizations together with political or public administration decision-makers, teachers, and representatives of environmental or youth NGOs so that the young participants in the workshop understand the importance of their actions, but also the multiple possibilities they have at their disposal.

For young people who want to get involved and be part of the change, the platform of the YEP project, Y-NET, is available, where they can find a hub where they can promote their projects and initiatives.

Also on the platform, young people have the opportunity to participate in discussions on various topics, such as:

- civic participation and involvement in the community
- adopting the principles of sustainability in everyday life
- the impact of digital transformation on the development of young people
- tips and tricks to check the news in the online environment if it is true or false (fake news current)
- the post-pandemic period and the identification of a job for young people
- tips and tricks on how to prepare a CV and how to present yourself at a job interview.
- what are the possibilities of young people's involvement in NGOs
- what activities can young people carry out to help the community (meditation of some children, volunteering at a children's home, help for a day for the elderly, volunteering at greening actions, etc.)



RMSOS approach to young people's participation



Co-funded by
the European Union



Youth participation in non-governmental organizations

An active non-governmental section is an essential element of any truly democratic society. Participation of young people in NGOs is important because they help citizens to be involved in, and influence, decisions, and actions on an ongoing basis.

In terms of youth participation in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), there are a number of ways that young people can get involved. For instance, they can volunteer their time, skills, and energy to help support the mission of the organization. They can also become members of the NGO, serve on its board, or take part in decision-making processes. Finally, young people can become ambassadors for the NGO, and help in spreading awareness about its mission and activities.

By participating in NGOs, youth can develop an understanding of the issues and challenges faced by their local and global communities, and become active citizens in their own societies. Through their involvement, youth can develop the skills and knowledge necessary to make meaningful contributions to the development of their communities. Also, another opportunity for young people is that they can work to create sustainable and equitable solutions to the world's problems. They can also develop valuable skills in problem-solving, advocacy, and networking. Through the knowledge and skills they gain, youth can become advocates for social change and play an active role in the development of their communities.

Youth can gain insight into the complexities of the world we live in, and develop an understanding of the global interconnectedness of our world, and they can participate in local/ national/ international organizations, like:

1. DoSomething.org: DoSomething.org is a global organization that engages young people in social change through campaigns and initiatives.
2. Global Leadership Adventures: Global Leadership Adventures provides international service-learning experiences for high school students to experience and engage in global cultures and communities.
3. Kids In Need Foundation: The Kids In Need Foundation provides basic school supplies and support to students in need.
4. Girls Inc.: Girls Inc. is a nonprofit organization that works to empower girls and young women with the skills and resources they need to succeed.
5. International Rescue Committee: The International Rescue Committee works to aid refugees and those affected by conflict, displacement, disease, and poverty.
6. Unite for Sight: Unite for Sight is an organization that works to reduce blindness and vision impairment in developing countries by providing quality eye care services.



Co-funded by
the European Union



7. Children's Defense Fund: The Children's Defense Fund is a nonpartisan advocacy organization that works to improve the lives of all children in the U.S. through education, health care, and other initiatives.

8. Plants for the Planet is a NGO funded by Felix Finkbeiner in 2007 when he was 7 years old, with the aim to plant 1 M trees in every country. Now they run 225 restoration projects in 50 different countries.

9. The Ocean Cleanup. Boyan Slan was 16 years old in 2016 when he came up with an idea: gather sea plastics where the currents concentrate them. He has developed a system to gather sea plastic and aims to capture 90% of all sea plastic by 2040.

These are only a few examples at the international level, but each of the young people who participated in our workshops and meetings can choose to work or volunteer in one of the invited organizations or others similar. Most of the time, it doesn't even matter the type of NGO or the actual activity, as long as you help a group/organization, as long as you contribute something to the development of the community.

How to volunteer

Here are the steps you can take to volunteer in your community:

- Decide which causes you care about.
- Identify the skills and knowledge you can offer.
- Create a volunteer resume.
- Determine how often you can volunteer.
- Research volunteer opportunities in your community.
- Consider using a volunteer site.
- Get all the relevant details for the volunteer position.
- Apply for the volunteer position.
- Follow up after you apply.
- Complete any required training.
- Begin with a limited commitment.
- Be professional.
- Regularly assess your volunteer experiences.



Co-funded by
the European Union



Institutional participation by young people in local and national affairs

Young people can participate in local and national affairs in several ways. They can join student-run organizations on their college or university campuses and advocate for social, political, and environmental causes. They can also get involved in local elections and campaigns by volunteering their time or resources to support the candidate or issue of their choice. Additionally, young people can attend public hearings and rallies to show support for a particular cause. They can also write letters to their elected representatives and sign online petitions to make their voices heard on important issues. Finally, young people can join non-profit organizations and work with them to bring about positive change.

There are many engaged young people across communities who want to contribute to improving municipalities, supporting members of the community, and actively participating in societal life. Young people make crucial contributions to our communities and are empowered by participating, evolving their ideas of citizenship, enhancing personal development and active involvement in society.

Local authorities should provide both formal and informal structures for youth participation through the provision of necessary space, and financial and material support.

During the organization of the workshops, representatives of the ministries, and local and national public administration are invited. Young people have the opportunity to come up with proposals, ideas, and initiatives so that they are heard by the authorities. Moreover, they have the opportunity to ask questions and clarify many of the unknowns regarding the functioning of the authorities, the possibility of accessing funds, or obtaining an internship in an institution.

Most of the time, the representatives of the authorities provide an email address so that all those interested can address them with other initiatives, even after the completion of the workshops.

The role of youth in the European construction

The role of youth in European construction is to provide the energy and enthusiasm needed to shape the continent's future. Young people are the ones who will be living in and leading European nations for the next several decades, and their ideas and perspectives can be invaluable to the process of integrating the European Union and promoting peace and prosperity. Youth can have a positive impact on European construction by advocating for policies and initiatives that support diversity, inclusion, and sustainability, and by working to

bridge cultural divides. They can also be a powerful voice in the fight against intolerance, hate speech, and xenophobia. Youth have a responsibility to be informed and engaged citizens, and to be active in their communities and in the political process. They can help to ensure that European integration is fair, equitable, and beneficial to all.

In recent years, the European Union has taken several steps to ensure that young people are actively involved in European decision-making processes. The European Commission has launched several initiatives to promote youth participation, such as the European Citizens' Initiative², the European Youth Dialogue³, and the Erasmus+ program⁴. Through these initiatives, young people can get involved in policy-making processes and make their voices heard.

The European Union also provides financial support to youth organisations and initiatives that promote youth engagement in European issues. This includes the Youth in Action program, which provides funding for projects that involve young people in European integration and in activities that promote European values.

In addition, the European Union has established a network of National Agencies⁵ for Erasmus+ which act as a bridge between the EU and young people. These agencies are responsible for providing information, advice and support to young people who want to get involved in European projects, such as the Erasmus+ program. The European Solidarity Corps is an EU initiative that creates opportunities for young people to volunteer or work on projects that benefit communities across Europe.

By empowering young people to take an active role in European construction, the European Union is ensuring that the future of Europe is shaped by the voices of its citizens.

At the level of the YEP project, an International Workshop is organized to which they are invited to participate together with the project managers from each partner country, and 2 representatives of the youth organizations from the 4 countries. The discussions will focus on advocacy and increasing the participation of young people in community life through various means, such as: registration in non-governmental organizations, participation in civic, ecological, and cultural actions, and awareness of young people on the importance of their involvement and the benefits.

² [Citizens' initiative \(europa.eu\)](https://european-citizens-initiative.europa.eu/)

³ [EU Youth Dialogue | European Youth Forum](https://european-youth-dialogue.europa.eu/)

⁴ [Home | Erasmus+ \(europa.eu\)](https://erasmus-plus.europa.eu/)

⁵ [National Agencies | Erasmus+ \(europa.eu\)](https://national-agencies.europa.eu/)



Co-funded by
the European Union



Section 3 - Participation of Young people

Active citizenship and challenges to the participation of the young people

Young people are increasingly becoming aware of their role in active citizenship, but there remain some barriers to their participation. Many young people lack the knowledge and understanding of the issues or feel that their voices will not be heard, preventing them from engaging in meaningful and effective ways. Furthermore, there is a lack of resources and opportunities for youth to become involved in civic life, such as access to training and support to develop the necessary skills. Finally, there is a general lack of trust in the political process, making it difficult for young people to invest their energy and enthusiasm in politics. To overcome these challenges, it is important to create an environment in which young people feel supported and empowered to participate in decision-making processes. This includes providing access to education and training, as well as resources and platforms which allow young people to engage with the political system. It is also important to create opportunities for young people to engage with their peers and with the wider community in order to develop the necessary skills to become active citizens. Finally, it is important to create spaces where young people can feel safe and respected, and where their ideas and opinions can be heard.

Increasing the participation of young people is a two-way street: they must be stimulated through various actions and measures, so as to increase their interest in voluntary actions, involvement and common responsibilities, but, at the same time, the authorities and the community, in general, must help in this direction, to create the framework necessary to stimulate young people.

Through the awareness actions that we create through the YEP project, we propose the following ideas to stimulate the growth of young people's interest in participation and involvement in community life.

1. Increase youth access to voting by educating young people about the importance of civic engagement, registering them to vote, and providing resources and support for them to do so.
2. Encourage young people to join local community groups and organizations, such as school boards, neighborhood associations, and political clubs.
3. Sponsor youth-led initiatives and campaigns that focus on local issues and civic engagement.
4. Organize interactive workshops and seminars at schools, libraries, and community centers that focus on civic engagement.



Co-funded by
the European Union



5. Highlight the importance of civic involvement by organizing and hosting public forums, debates, and other events.
6. Establish youth-led volunteer programs that focus on service and community development.
7. Offer internships and apprenticeships for young people in government and public policy organizations.
8. Create youth councils and advisory boards to give young people a voice in decisions that affect their lives.
9. Encourage young people to participate in local government meetings, such as city council meetings, to learn more about their community and have their voices heard.
10. Invite young people to join city-wide initiatives and activities, such as public art projects, festivals, and clean-up

These proposals will be promoted and disseminated so that they reach as many representatives of the local and national authorities as possible, but also the general public, each individual citizen can be an example for the young people around him.

Benefits for Young People

- Participate in a new and exciting activity
- Look at and understand their local community environment in new ways
- Learn about democracy and tolerance
- Develop a network of new friends, including community role models and resource people
- Develop new skills and knowledge
- Help create positive change in the local environment and other aspects of the community
- Develop a sense of environmental stewardship and civic responsibility
- Develop confidence in the ability to accomplish the goals
- Strengthen the self-esteem, identify, and sense of pride.



Co-funded by
the European Union



Benefits for Other Members of the Community

- Interact with young people in positive, constructive ways, helping to overcome the misperception and mistrust that often exist between generations
- Understand how young people in their community view the world, their community, and themselves
- Identify ways in which the quality of life of local young people can be improved
- Build a stronger sense of community and pride of place
- Appreciate the ideas and contributions of young people
- Invest time and energy in the future of the community.

KEY ANNIVERSARIES AND EVENTS

We suggest you to take into account the following European days to implement activities for young people, to promote Europe and how they can participate to its policies/strategies:

February - LGBT History Month

May 9 – Europe Day

May 29 - International Day of UN Peacekeeping Forces

June 5 - World Environment Day

August 12 - International Youth Day

September 21 - International Democracy Day

November 9 - International Freedom Day

December 10 - International Human Rights Day

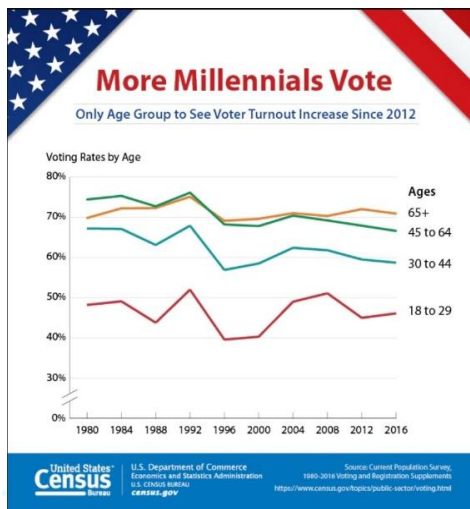




Section 4 - Determinants

Age, generation and, participation

Young people are generally considered to be between the ages of 16 and 24. This age group is often referred to as Generation Z or the iGeneration, and they are the most active in terms of participating in social and political issues. Young people in this age group are more likely to take part in activities such as volunteering, political campaigns, and social media activism. They are also more likely to be engaged in the job market and to have a greater influence on



consumer trends. In terms of political participation, Generation Z is more likely to take part in voting than other age groups, and they are more likely to express their political views online.

Age is a major factor determining the level of participation of young people in society. Generally, the younger generation is more likely to engage in activities that are seen as beneficial to their communities, such as volunteering and activism. Young people often have the energy, enthusiasm, and creativity to bring fresh ideas and perspectives to the table.

Generational differences can affect participation levels, as the members of different generations may approach the same activity differently. For example, Millennials are more likely to participate in online activities than Baby Boomers. However, this does not mean that all Millennials will participate in the same activities or that no Baby Boomers will participate in online activities.

Generational differences in civic participation are largely driven by the changing times and different levels of access to technology, resources, and support. For example, older generations are more likely to participate in traditional political activities such as voting, attending rallies, and joining political organizations, while younger generations are more likely to engage in online activities such as signing petitions, joining social media campaigns, and participating in virtual protests. Additionally, older generations tend to be more conservative in their political views and more likely to donate to political causes, while younger generations are more likely to support progressive causes and participate in social movements.



Co-funded by
the European Union



Gender and participation

The gender of a young person has a significant influence on their participation in the community. Research suggests that, in general, girls are more likely to participate in activities that are aimed at structural and social change, such as volunteering and advocacy, while boys are more likely to participate in activities that are more focused on individual achievements, such as sports or academic competitions. Additionally, studies have found that girls are more likely than boys to take part in activities that promote cultural, environmental, and economic development. The reasons for this gender divide in community participation may vary. For example, girls may be more likely to participate in activities related to social change because they are more likely to have been exposed to gender stereotypes that encourage them to take on more leadership roles. Additionally, girls may have greater access to resources and networks that allow them to get more involved in the community. In order to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to participate in their communities, it is important that organizations and initiatives design activities that are gender-inclusive and accessible to all. It is also important to create an environment in which young people feel comfortable and supported, regardless of their gender.

Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. However, data show that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide, and that achieving gender parity in political life is far off. In a statistic of unwomen.org, on 19 September 2022, there are 28 countries where 30 women serve as Heads of State and/or Government. At the current rate, gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years and just 13 countries have a woman Head of State, and 15 countries have a woman Head of Government⁶.

Section 5 – Conclusions

Young people are using technology to organize and make their voices heard.

The involvement of young people in social change can improve decision-making around the impact youth. Young people have always played an important role in social change. From the civil rights movement to environmental activism, youth have been at the forefront of movements for justice and progress. Today, young people are using technology and social media to organize and make their voices heard. Through social media, youth can spread awareness and mobilize their peers to make a difference in their communities. They can also

⁶ [Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation | What we do | UN Women – Headquarters](#)



Co-funded by
the European Union



connect with leaders in the field, learn more about social justice issues, and develop their own solutions.

Additionally, young people can use their voices to advocate for change, create campaigns, and inspire others to create social change, in many ways, including:

1. Writing letters and emails to elected leaders
2. Participating in rallies and protests
3. Organizing campaigns on social media and other digital platforms
4. Sharing their stories and experiences in the press
5. Creating artwork and posters to spread awareness
6. Volunteering for organizations that are working for change
7. Participating in student-led initiatives to change policy
8. Participating in voter registration drives
9. Supporting and promoting initiatives that will help create change
10. Participating in boycotts and other forms of economic activism.

They are also advocating for greater representation in government, fighting for economic justice, and speaking out against systemic racism and inequality. By getting involved in their communities, attending protests, and engaging in political activism, young people have the power to drive positive social change.



Co-funded by
the European Union



Grants and Resources for Youth and Adolescents

Youth Initiative Grant Program in the US⁷

Deadline: 1-Mar-23 The Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation (WFF) is seeking applications for its Youth Initiative Grant Program to support direct service programs that promote resilience, stability, and psycho-social health for youth ages 14 to 21 who have been traumatized by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Request for Proposals: Gender and Youth Activity (GAYA) Small Grant Program⁸

Do you have an idea or program to help integrate gender and [youth](#) more fully into development and emergency food security, resilience, and emergency response activities? If yes, then you can apply for Gender and Youth Activity (GAYA) Small Grant Program.

Grants to Improve the Affordability & Availability of Fruits & Vegetables for Healthy Diets⁹

Deadline: 10-Jan-23 The Horticulture Innovation Lab is currently soliciting full technical applications from regionally based organizations to conduct research to improve the affordability and availability of healthy diets (in particular consumption of horticulture crops) and making healthy diets

Call for Applications – Young Leaders Forum 2023 (Tanzania)¹⁰

Deadline: 10-Jan-23 The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is pleased to announce the call for the 2023 cohort of the Young Leaders Forum. The Young Leaders Forum [YLF] is a multidisciplinary program on social, economic and political challenges at the national, continental and global level

2023 Young Innovation Leaders Fellowship¹¹

Deadline: 31-Jan-23 Application for the 2023 Young Innovations Leaders (YLL) Fellowship is now open! Embrace the most amazing opportunity to become a social innovation leader. The Y.I.L Fellowship is a four-month challenging scholarship programme for young professionals.

⁷ [Youth Initiative Grant Program in the US - fundsforNGOs](#)

⁸ [Request for Proposals: Gender and Youth Activity \(GAYA\) Small Grant Program - fundsforNGOs](#)

⁹ [Grants to Improve the Affordability & Availability of Fruits & Vegetables for Healthy Diets - fundsforNGOs](#)

¹⁰ [Call for Applications - Young Leaders Forum 2023 \(Tanzania\) - fundsforNGOs](#)

¹¹ [2023 Young Innovation Leaders Fellowship - fundsforNGOs](#)



Co-funded by
the European Union



Public Affairs Section Grants Program (El Salvador)¹²

Deadline: 15-Mar-23 The U.S. Embassy San Salvador, Public Affairs Section, is seeking proposals for projects throughout the year in areas of mutual U.S.-Salvadoran interest, with a particular focus on improving security and creating economic opportunity.

Political participation is often misunderstood to be only about voting and political life. While this is important, political participation extends well beyond the ballot box. Political participation encompasses the work we do in calling for: inclusive education, support for our adult sons and daughters to live and be included in the community, mechanisms to secure the right to make decisions, and, measures to address the entrenched poverty people with intellectual disabilities and their families experience.



¹² [Public Affairs Section Grants Program \(El Salvador\) - fundsforNGOs](#)

