



**COOKBOOK OF  
MEANINGFUL  
YOUTH POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION**

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# Introduction

The Cookbook builds on the previous work of Ondřej Bárta (Bárta, Boldt, Lavizzari 2021), in which two main components of meaningful youth political participation were identified:

## 1. Aims of youth political participation related to:

- A The **right** of young people to participate in public and political processes.
- B The **empowerment** of young people to make changes in the world around them.
- C The **efficiency** young people can bring to various policies.
- D The real-life experience which can **develop** participatory skills in young people.

## 2. Democratic environments in which the youth political participation takes place:

- A **DIRECT DEMOCRACY** of voting on concrete policies.
- B **REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY** of electing politicians who decide on policies.
- C **PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY** of creating concrete policies to be implemented.
- D **DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY** of seeking the most reasonable policies through debates.
- E **COUNTER-DEMOCRACY** of keeping the official democratic institutions in check by mechanisms of popular control, protest, and denunciation.

**This Cookbook pushes this theory of meaningful youth political participation towards practical applications by collecting and analysing real-life examples of meaningful youth political participation with respect to the key two aspects described above, the aims and the democratic environments.** The Cookbook is divided into the following sections:

### Section 1: **INGREDIENTS**

- A **Providing real-life practice examples** for each of the theoretical terms that is presented in this Cookbook and related to meaningful youth political participation.

### Section 2: **RECIPES**

- A **Presenting results of survey mapping** into (I) awareness and (II) existence of various youth political participation tools, as well as (III) direct experience of youth organizations with these tools, and (IV) identifying good practice examples.



- 5 B **Presenting selected good practice examples** as case studies to showcase how the interplay between the aims of youth political participation tools, and democratic environments in which they take place, can lead to establishing meaningful youth political participation opportunities.

This Cookbook is suitable for anyone interested in the domain of meaningful youth political participation, for anyone who seeks inspiration in practical applications of various participatory tools, and for anyone who would like to deepen their insights into the domains of designing, preparation, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of various meaningful youth political participation tools.

Good practice examples are one of the main tools of this publication, but it needs to be noted that not all of the examples are long-term functioning, and unfortunately not all links and other online sources quoted in this Cookbook will stay available forever. Should you find some links not working or some examples no longer operational, try using general web search to look for the most up-to-date information and follow-up reports, news articles, or blogposts which might refer to the youth political participation tools you are interested in. Nevertheless, obsolete links do not prevent the examples from being inspirational or from serving as food for thought when designing youth participation mechanisms elsewhere, and that is the key purpose of these examples: To illustrate the terms used in this publication and to inspire you to act in your own local contexts.

Good practice examples also serve as a useful reminder that lots exists in the youth political participation domain already, and sometimes it is easier and more effective to use and adjust tools already tried elsewhere, than to attempt to design completely new tools from the scratch. Good practices listed in the first section capitalize on the global knowledge, while the second section summarizes case studies from the European context.

As you have already noticed by now, this publication is mainly focusing on the form of youth political participation. This means that I deal with the following question: How to design a youth political participation mechanism so that it can be considered meaningful, regardless of its content or topic? **There is, however, one content-related aspect which I believe should be taken into account in all youth political participation opportunities, no matter what concrete aims they have and in which democratic environments they operate: SUSTAINABILITY.** All actions taken through youth political participation need to be sustainable in order to be considered meaningful. The general understanding of sustainability is to meet our own needs without compromising the needs of the future generations (see Bárta, Ples 2021 for more details on sustainability and its dimensions), and it is necessary to apply this principle in all youth political participation causes. Meaningful youth political participation should be sustainable in the domains of the environment as well as the relationships, culture, and all other areas in which changes are called for.

- 6 To help better understand the meaning of the sustainability in the context of meaningful youth political participation, the Seven Generations Principle (also sometimes called Seventh Generation Principle) can be used to illustrate this well (Clarkson, Morrissette, Régallet 1992; Argyrou, Hummels 2019; Horn-Miller 2013). **The Seven Generations Principle is a concept stemming from the traditions of First Nations in North America (also called Native Americans) and in general asks all policies to be prepared with respect to their impact on seven generations in the future.** In short, all decisions taken today should be made while keeping in mind the wellbeing of all our descendants who come as long as two centuries after us. This wellbeing is not only based on the environmental concerns, but also should take into account any other impacts the current decisions might have. This is similar to the social sustainability dimension: cultural and social concerns should also be taken into account, contributing to creating a just world in which our progeny can live at least as comfortably as we can now.

Last but not least, it is important to say that the many good practice examples described in this Cookbook come from two important sources: an online portal [Participedia.net](https://participedia.net), and case studies conducted within the Erasmus+ funded project *How to Score a Youth Goal*.

[Participedia.net](https://participedia.net) is the source of examples in the first section of this book, and the online portal describes itself as a “*global network and crowdsourcing platform for researchers, educators, practitioners, policymakers, activists, and anyone interested in public participation and democratic innovations*”. In practice, it means that the platform is collecting examples of political participation practices from all over the world. It also allows users to filter these examples by using a map (geographical location) or a set of various other criteria, and even by using a key word search, when looking for examples of political participation practices. [Participedia.net](https://participedia.net) does not only focus on youth political participation, and not all practices are in line with the definition of political participation used in this publication, so the listed examples should be read through carefully. Overall, however, it is a great source of real-life examples on what political participation can look like. While references to literature are formatted in line with common practice (i.e., stating authors and year of publication in the text, and list of full bibliography records at the end of this publication), in case of examples from [Participedia.net](https://participedia.net), full links are provided in each case, so that the reader can easily get from this book to further details online.

Case studies were conducted in spring, summer, and autumn of 2022, focusing on different youth political participation practices, and based on online interviews with representatives of various youth organizations and also on subsequent document analysis. There are 10 case studies in total, covering a wide range of practices, functioning on different levels of government (from local to European), and representing six different national realities, and including also one example from the European level. Each of the case studies showcases a very different approach to meaningful youth political participation, be it in the form of projects, structures, mechanisms, initiatives, or events.

## What is youth political participation?

The Cookbook deals with youth political participation, and since one of the most frequent confusions around the political participation itself is misinterpretation of what it really means, it is necessary to first define it here, at the very beginning of the Cookbook.

The Cookbook understands youth political participation in line with the definitions summarized by Bárta (Bárta in Bárta, Boldt, Lavizzari 2021):

*Youth political participation is any activity, event, or tool based on voluntary activity of an individual young citizen and enabling young people to aim at the political sphere of public life.*

In order to better understand what this definition covers, it is best to break the definition down to its main components: Activity of an individual; Voluntary nature of the activity; Citizenship perspective; and Political aims (van Deth 2001).

### *Activity of an individual young person.*

**What is it?** This simply means that young people need to be actively involved in political participation processes. They need to be engaged and the results of the political participation processes must depend on this engagement. The engagement can differ: from consultation processes, through deliberation, and participatory processes, decision-making, or even protesting against some decisions.

**What is it not?** Passive consumption of any kind is not youth political participation. While it is definitely a plus when young people read about political matters, it cannot be considered a political participation process, because it does not include activity of a young person towards influencing the political domain. Similarly, any events where young people are present only as an audience, cannot be considered to be political participation mechanisms, because young people are not actively influencing any outcomes of such events.

### *Voluntary nature of the youth activity.*

**What is it?** Voluntary activities are such where young people decide that they want to take part of their own free will. Young people can initiate such activities on their own. Political participation activities can also be offered to young people, and they can either take part, or decide not to participate with no ramifications for their future life. This is important because if there are negative consequences for the young people in case



- 8 they opt out, the activity cannot be considered voluntary, and hence also cannot be considered to represent political participation mechanisms. Young people also need to be free to engage in the activity and to stop engaging in it at any time if they no longer wish to continue.

**What is it not?** Mandatory activities of any kind cannot be considered as political participation processes. Hence any school parliaments or consultative processes in which young people must take part are not political participation processes, but rather educational or support activities benefiting a particular entity, such as a school or a municipality. It should be noted that there are countries which currently hold elections as compulsory events (e.g., some regions of Austria, Belgium, and others), nevertheless, in these cases, there still is a lively debate on how this practice aligns with the democratic tradition (IDEA 2022).

*Young people acting in their capacity as citizens.*

**What is it?** Young people can have many roles in current society, they can be businesspeople, they can be policymakers, and so on. But youth political participation mechanisms stand on the activity of citizens who act in their capacity as part of the wider society, and with the benefit of the wider society in mind.

**What is it not?** Young politicians, for example, who participate in political processes, are not engaged in youth political participation, but in politics. This is an important distinction, since the youth political participation comes from citizens, and any activity which is implemented by policymakers or politicians then falls into “doing politics” category which differs in many ways (access to power, decision-making, influence, but also obligations to citizens, etc.). Similarly, it is important to distinguish activities by businesspeople from political participation, as these, again, have other goals in mind than public welfare or public interests. Generally, anyone who is pursuing private interests instead of the public ones, does not act in the capacity of a citizen, and hence does not contribute to political participation.

*Young people aiming at influencing the political sphere.*

**What is it?** Influencing the political decisions is the ultimate goal of every youth political participation activity or mechanism. It means that the aim of these activities is to set the overall direction in which the whole society represented by a democratic state is going. It means practicing the basic right of every democratic citizen: Participate with the aim of affecting decisions and policies that influence and benefit the whole society or its part(s).

**What is it not?** As an example, youth engaging in volunteering activities that help excluded communities is a valuable process and even more valuable experience to the young people, but it is not a political participation mechanism, but rather a de-

- 9 velopmental aid or a policy implementation mechanism. The ultimate goal of youth participation is not to substitute the role of state, but to influence the way the state is taking care of the public domain.

It is now apparent, that **youth political participation is a term describing only a certain set of activities**, not all activities which happen in the public sphere, and not all activities which are “participatory” in nature. This is, once again, quite crucial, since it helps us talk about very concrete mechanisms, and not lose the foci of the debates in other public activities, such as volunteering, policy implementation, or other domains where young people can also be active. It also clarifies that while certain processes for young people may be “participative”, they can simply be educational opportunities, or other mechanisms which eventually have nothing to do with political participation domain.

It is also important to say that **all four aspects of youth political participation must be fulfilled in order for the process, event, or tool to be labelled as youth political participation**. This is especially important in activities which also aim at developing young people’s skills, as will be shown in later chapters, but it is a key condition in all debates on youth political participation: If the mechanism does not include all four aspects, it is simply not a political participation mechanism.

Moreover, **it is the young people who need to be actively involved in order for the activity, event, or mechanism to be called youth political participation**. This may seem trivial, but when considering various political participation tools, it is key they offer young people space to take part, not only their representatives or experts on the given domain. While youth representatives and experts are valuable actors in their own right, they can only complement the youth political participation processes, but they must not take over the roles of young people. Depending on the nature of the political participation tool, young people can be leading the processes (e.g., in youth-led movements, etc.), or the processes can be set up for them to take active roles within (e.g., in consultation-or deliberation-based tools, etc.).



## How to use the cookbook of meaningful youth political participation?

Now that we know what the youth political participation is, we can focus on the most pressing matter: Identifying **MEANINGFUL** youth political participation tools. How do we do that? As suggested in my earlier work (Bárta, Boldt, Lavizzari 2021), it is best based on an intersection of aims and democratic environments. How does the Cookbook help in this?

First, check the **INGREDIENTS**, as the aims and democratic environments are described in this section together with real-life examples of meaningful youth political participation tools. **This will give you an insight into the key components of the meaningful youth political participation** in practical terms, so you can take them into account when designing, preparing, implementing, evaluating, or disseminating your own youth political participation tools! The examples in this section can not only help you understand the different aims and democratic environments but can be inspirational in their own right!

Secondly, check the **RECIPES**, because:

- **You will see how to combine aims and democratic environments** to identify and design meaningful youth political participation tools in practice!
- You may find out that some of the **detailed examples** listed in the case study section are the exact tools you have been looking for, and you can get inspired, or even implement them in your local contexts!
- You may also find **some aspects of the concrete examples** to be exactly what you need to improve your own existing youth participation tools!



# Section 1. Ingredients of meaningful youth political participation



This section presents the basic ingredients of meaningful youth political participation: aims and democratic environments. **Aims refer to the underlying general goals of the meaningful youth political participation** and are based on my previous work (Bárta, Boldt, Lavizzari 2021), and also the work of Farthing (2012). **Environments specify democratic traditions and paradigms in which any political participation mechanisms can exist.** Both of these components (ingredients!) are crucial if we want to consider meaningfulness of youth political participation: Aims and environments need to align to enable achieving the aims, and any processes within the participation mechanisms need to be designed in line with this alignment of aims and democratic environments.

## 12 Section 1. A Aims of meaningful youth political participation

**Aims of youth political participation refer to the underlying reasons for the concrete political participation mechanism to exist.** There are four wide categories of aims which overarch any concrete meaningful youth political participation aims:

- **RIGHTS-BASED AIMS** – Providing young people with access to youth political participation opportunities.
- **EMPOWERMENT AIMS** – Providing young people with power to make policy decisions.
- **EFFICIENCY AIMS** – Providing young people with voice to improve public policies.
- **DEVELOPMENT AIMS** – Providing young people with real-life learning and development opportunities.

**Each of these wide categories, as mentioned above, is an umbrella term which can accommodate a myriad of concrete youth political participation aims.** While the rights-based aims generally seek to enable young people to access to participation mechanisms, concretely, a school youth council can aim to give young people opportunities to participate in decision-making within their school district, or a nation-wide decision to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 can aim to provide a wider youth population with access to representative democracy mechanisms (voting) on the national level.

In order to bring the general categories of aims to life as much as possible and using this opportunity to describe additional good practice examples, each aim described below features (A) a general description and (B) examples of practices in which the concrete aims fall under the given general category.

Before diving into the details of aims, it needs to be stressed that **all aims need to be connected to the area of political participation**, i.e., to aim at changes in the public domain and/or influencing decisions that affect public domain. When describing a participatory budgeting mechanism, for instance, it would be incomplete to only talk about developing skills and engagement levels of the target communities. It is necessary, of course, to be explicit about the participatory budgeting main goals, which is to provide young people with access to decision-making on budgetary issues.



## Example of an educational tool which cannot be considered a political participation mechanism: **City shapers: CityHive's metro Vancouver youth civic education program**

*“The program explored the roles of both traditional (e.g. voting, running for office) and less traditional/more informal examples (e.g. engaging in online discussions, community activism) of civic engagement and change-making. By developing a sense of agency at the neighbourhood/community level and a deeper understanding of how government works through participating in a cohort model, participants learned how to become more active in their communities and government decision-making.*

(...)

*CityHive programs are rooted in a Knowledge to Action framework, and value a dialogical approach to learning. **The process begins by providing all participants with a comprehensive overview of the subject matter.** For City Shapers, this involved a deep dive into the program theme through the lens of local action and civic institutions (municipal government and decision-makers). City staff, elected officials, academics, and community organizers were invited in to share their expertise with the cohort as guest speakers and thought leaders. **Halfway through the program, the participants formed project groups to address some of the gaps and challenges they were witnessing and learning about. These projects allowed them to flex their civic engagement muscle and learn what it takes to bring an idea to fruition in their local communities.***

*The results of the (evaluation) research included:*

- *Participants grew their confidence in developing their networks and engaging in change-making. (...)*
- *Participants found the guest speakers and working with peers created the strongest impacts. (...)*
- *Some participants found the program too theoretical or wanted more formal civic education components. (...)*
- *Many participants gained a better understanding of policy processes and strategies for talking to decision-makers. (...)*
- *Impacts on participant opinions on democracy were mixed and mostly focused on civic engagement. (...)” (Participedia.net)*

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/7371>

## 14 RIGHTS-BASED AIMS

**Youth political participation mechanisms with rights-based aims strive to guarantee young people with access to political participation mechanisms, as is their right (hence rights-based).** Broadly speaking, rights-based aims can be identified in all youth participation mechanisms as all youth participation mechanisms provide young people with access to their right to participate. In a narrower sense, the rights-based aims can be identified especially in case of specific participation mechanisms tailored to or made namely for young people, since these are widening the space for political participation of young people.

Rights-based aims can also be seen in case young people strive to establish specific political participation tools, since the process of establishing such tools is definitely a valuable political participation opportunity in itself, albeit perhaps a one-off activity or campaign, rather than a regular political participation mechanism.

**Rights-based aims enable young people to fulfil their right to participate in public matters by:**

- Providing access to existent political participation mechanisms.
- Widening access to existent political participation mechanisms.
- Creating and establishing new youth political participation mechanisms.



## Example 1: The U.S. campaign for a presidential youth council

*"The Campaign for a Presidential Youth Council is a non-partisan, privately funded, youth-led initiative to establish an advisory board of students aged 16 to 24 years to the American president and Congress. The purpose for establishing a Presidential Youth Council is to collect and share issues and concerns that are relevant to youth under 24 years of age. If established, the members of the council would strive to develop solutions to problems they care about, and they would provide recommendations to the federal government aimed at improving government efficiency."* (Participedia.net)

*"For too long, the views of youth have been absent from the federal policymaking process. Young Americans are constitutionally barred from being elected federal officials, and there is not a single American under the age of 24 on a Presidential Advisory Committee. We believe that this does two things. First, it produces inefficient and ineffective policy outcomes that could easily be remedied. Second, it dissuades young Americans from being civically engaged. Only 29% of young people believe they have a say in what the government does. That is a massive problem. Right now, we need young Americans to embrace their role in ensuring that the challenges of today do not become the challenges of tomorrow. That will not happen if the federal government does not give young Americans a seat at the table in the federal policymaking process."* (The campaign for a presidential youth council. A seat at the table)

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/4193>

THE CAMPAIGN FOR A PRESIDENTIAL YOUTH COUNCIL. A SEAT AT THE TABLE <http://www.presidentialyouthcouncil.org/>

## Example 2: The Robin Hood project: Establishing participatory budgeting in Melville, Australia

*"Prior to the introduction of the Robin Hood Project, funding was allocated by locally elected representatives who chose to fund projects in areas they felt were most deserving. The policy was facilitated by the Melville Youth Advisory Council who had the aim of 'encouraging community ownership of the decision-making process'. The policy was created as elected officials do not always make the decisions that accu-*

- 16 *rately represent the views of the citizens and citizens wanted to help improve the poorer areas of Melville hence the name of the policy being The Robin Hood project. It is highly likely that were it not for the Robin Hood project, many of the same project would have been allocated funds under the old system as elected representatives act rationally in the interests of their citizens.”*

“The Cast from the City of Melville.

*Robin Hood: Community Development Officer – Youth  
Merry Men/Sorcerers Apprentices: The Youth Advisory Council (YAC)*

(...)

*Robin, his Merry Men and the Sorcerer.*

*In a forest clearing, Robin set his Merry Men four goals:*

- *Encourage the community to focus on what they thought was important.*
- *Support the creativity of community owned project ideas.*
- *Build a greater relationship between the community and the City.*
- *Include local traders, local community groups and local people.”*

(Project Robin Hood Booklet)

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/5542>

**PROJECT ROBIN HOOD BOOKLET** [https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ehq-production-australia/ca317758e15eb5ba3e950f06aa3d9a9ed11e7218/documents/attachments/000/012/437/original/Project\\_Robin\\_Hood\\_Booklet.pdf?1398918096](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ehq-production-australia/ca317758e15eb5ba3e950f06aa3d9a9ed11e7218/documents/attachments/000/012/437/original/Project_Robin_Hood_Booklet.pdf?1398918096)

## Example 3: “Mi senado” or “My senate”

“My Senate” is a digital program created by the Colombian Congress for citizen participation regarding bills within the Congress. This digital program is an app you can download on your smartphone. This app also allows for citizens to do in depth research on the Congress members.

The problems that originated in Colombia had to do with lack of citizen participation and knowledge within the Colombian government. *The purpose of “My Senate” is to give Colombian citizens complete access and transparency into governmental decisions. It also allows citizens to have a voice regarding the bills on the agenda. The*

17 *program's purpose is also to hold Congress accountable.*" (Participedia.net)

*"My Senate is mechanism of digital participation promoted by the Colombian Congress with the objective of knowing the opinion of the citizens on the bills that are discussed. This app can be downloaded in smartphones. It was implemented within the framework of the commitments of the Open and Transparent Congress Action Plan. In addition to having a section that allows citizens to express their agreement or disagreement with a certain bill, they can also attend the plenary sessions live or browse them in the archive, access the agenda of legislative activities and the list of projects that are being discussed, and familiarize themselves with the profile of all the Senators."* (Latinno: My Senate)

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/8173>

**LATINNO: MY SENATE** <https://latinno.net/en/case/5208/>

**GOOGLEPLAY: MI SENADO** <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=gov.senado.app&hl=en&gl=US>

**APPLESTORE: MI SENADO** <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/mi-senado/id1473999707>



## 18 EMPOWERMENT AIMS

**Youth political participation mechanisms with empowerment aims strive to enable young people to make changes to the world around them by sharing power with young people and involving them in decision-making processes.**

Empowerment aims can be implemented by ensuring young people have a seat at the table in political structures (e.g., by introducing quotas for youth representatives), or by creating specific bodies for young people within the traditional democratic structures (e.g., youth commissions or councils in city administration, or student bodies in educational institutions). Empowerment aims can also be represented by one-off events or processes, such as citizens' initiatives, or even strikes and peaceful protests.

**Empowerment aims enable young people to influence public matters by:**

- Being regularly present in political and decision-making structures.
- Engaging in specific youth-based structures with decision-making powers.
- Initiating processes influencing policy domain.



## 19 Example 1: Youth participatory budgeting in Cluj-Napoca, Romania

*“The objective of the discussed project was to improve three aspects of youth participation in the local civic life, in the city of Cluj-Napoca, Romania in 2015. **The first criteria focused on the participation of young people as part of informal groups. The second aspect targeted their direct contribution to the community life. The last proposal was aimed at increasing young people’s participation in decision making by using a ‘direct, participatory, democratic process’.**”* (Participedia.net)

*“The project proposed by PONT Group, in partnership with SHARE Federation, the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca is entitled Participatory Budgeting of Youth in Cluj 2015, European Youth Capital [EYC 2015]. **The Participatory Budgeting (PB) aims the inclusion of the citizens in the democratic process of consultation and decision-taking, with the goal of establishing optimal ways of spending (some part) of the public budget.** The goal of the project is to conduct a process of participatory budgeting based on the inclusion of the young people; on the base of this process the City Cluj-Napoca will subsidize the implementation of the most agreed on (voted) projects under the EYC 2015. The strategic objective is to create a portfolio of 250 small projects proposed by the young people, addressed to the local community (especially the peripheral areas of Cluj-Napoca); these projects will contribute to the active participation of the inhabitants in the life of the community, will include the inhabitants in proactive activities, will happen in public and community spaces, being assured free access to the inhabitants, without a financial barrier (a ticket).”* (EEA Grants: Participatory Budgeting for Youth)

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/5556>

**EEA GRANTS: PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING FOR YOUTH** <https://eeagrants.org/archive/2009-2014/projects/RO09-0097>

## Example 2: Citizens’ initiative to raise the minimum wage in Arkansas, 2018

*“The minimum wage in Arkansas was \$8.50, \$1.25 above the federal minimum wage. Many Arkansans, however, felt this minimum wage was not sufficient to keep families in Arkansas out of poverty and did not keep up with inflation. **To combat these low wages, attorney David Couch of Arkansans for a Fair Wage filed an initiative to increase the minimum wage in Arkansas.** The popular name of the initiative was “An Act to Increase the Arkansas Minimum Wage”.*

- 20 In Arkansas, the requirements to have an initiated act appear on the ballot are stated in the Arkansas State Constitution. **For an initiative to be placed on the ballot, it must receive the number of valid signatures that are equal to 8% of the total votes cast in the last gubernatorial election. Signatures must be collected in such a way that the number of valid signatures collected in at least 15 counties equals 4% of the total number of votes cast in that county in the last gubernatorial election.** Every registered voter in Arkansas can sign in support of an initiative, however, they can only sign representing the county they are registered to vote in. This meant that the total number of signatures needed to get an initiated act on the ballot was 67,887. The signatures had to be submitted 4 months prior to the election (July 6, 2018) and published in a statewide publication at least 30 before the election.” (Participedia.net)

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/8172>

BALLOTPEDIA: ARKANSAS ISSUE 5, MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE INITIATIVE (2018)

[https://ballotpedia.org/Arkansas\\_Issue\\_5\\_Minimum\\_Wage\\_Increase\\_Initiative\\_\(2018\)#cite\\_note-ops-20](https://ballotpedia.org/Arkansas_Issue_5_Minimum_Wage_Increase_Initiative_(2018)#cite_note-ops-20)

2018 VOTER GUIDE ARKANSAS BALLOT ISSUES GENERAL ELECTION (NOV. 6, 2018)

<https://www.uaex.uada.edu/business-communities/voter-education/docs/Arkansas2018BallotIssueVoterGuide.pdf>

## Example 3: Colombian community action boards (JACs)

“*Juntas de Acción Comunal (JACs) are aimed to help community members in Colombia meet, plan, and discuss ways to develop their community.* These boards can take place in neighbourhoods, cities, residential complexes, or any local level.

(...)

The purpose of JACs is to involve Colombia community members in the planning and development of their community. JACs work to promote progress and overall well-being in neighbourhoods, cities, and local communities. **If there is an empty building in the community, it is up to the local JAC to decide what to do with the building, as opposed to government intervention.** This allows community members to feel a sense of belonging and input in their communities.” (Participedia.net)

“The Community Action Boards (Span. JAC) in Colombia originated in the 1950s in a small village where the community decided to organize for the purposes of building a communal school. This idea was later institutionalized by Law 19 of 1958, after which about 70 rules were generated with respect to various laws, decrees, resolutions and regulations. This normative process culminated with Law 743 of 2002 and Regulator-



- 21 *ry Decree 2350 of 2003. In this last Law the communal organization was shaped by the Communal Action Boards as civic, social and community organizations of local management, non-profit, of a solidary nature, with legal capacity and private property rights, voluntarily integrated by the residents of a place that combine efforts and resources to pursue integral and sustainable development. **The goal is for its members to plan the development of their community through the generation of autonomous community processes for the identification, formulation, execution, administration and evaluation of community development plans, programs and projects.** JACs can be constituted at all local levels, including residential complexes, neighborhoods, urban divisions, hamlets, sidewalks and cities, from a minimum number of affiliates residing in the corresponding territory. The community organization in the country has about 50 000 JACs with legal status and 4 million affiliates, in addition to indirect influence in their areas of activity. Initially, seventy percent of the JACs were rural and thirty percent urban. The territorial coverage of the JAC has a presence in all the departmental entities of the country, paths in the rural sector and neighborhoods in the urban sectors.” (Latinno: Community Action Boards)*

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/5729>

LATINNO: COMMUNITY ACTION BOARDS <https://latinno.net/en/case/5111>

## Example 4: European citizens' initiative

*“The European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) is one of the EU’s political innovations aimed at fostering more direct and participatory democracy. Citizen initiatives give residents across the EU the direct ability to propose legislation and influence matters that concern the entire continent. Initiatives that garner 1 million signatures across a wide range of Member States are considered for implementation by the European Commission.” (Participedia.net)*

*“Get a greater say in the policies that affect your lives. The European Citizens' Initiative is a unique way for you to help shape the EU by calling on the European Commission to propose new laws. Once an initiative has reached 1 million signatures, the Commission will decide on what action to take.” (European Union: European Citizens' Initiative)*

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/4344>

EUROPEAN UNION: EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE <https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/en>

THE ECI CAMPAIGN & THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE E.V. <https://citizens-initiative.eu/>

## EFFICIENCY AIMS

**Youth political participation mechanisms with efficiency aims strive to enable young people to create more informed policies and practices.** Youth political participation activities with efficiency aims see young people as experts on challenges they face and try to channel this expertise in the best way possible to help policies tackle these challenges.

Efficiency aims are typically implemented by different advisory structures or consultation processes in which young people can share their expertise on different matters either continuously, or at given points in time, or even ad hoc.

**Efficiency aims enable young people to help tackle social challenges and influence policies by:**

- Providing expertise based on their direct experiences and views as young people.
- Taking active part in monitoring and evaluation of various policies.
- Establishing or utilizing mechanisms supporting accountability of policymakers.



## Example 1: South Australia's youth action plan

*“As part of considering and improving the effectiveness of services available to youth, South Australia’s Department of Human Services initiated a Youth Panel to better understand what issues matter to young South Australians and how best to meet those needs.*”

*The SA government sought input from young people about how to address issues that significantly matter to them. The intent was to work together with young people (as well as representatives from government and key non-government organisations) to achieve this, including developing a three-year Youth Action Plan for South Australia.”*  
(Participedia.net)

*“We are inviting young people aged 12-24 to help shape a new three-year Youth Action Plan for South Australia.*

*What is being decided?*

*We are developing a Youth Action Plan for South Australia and invite young people aged 12-24 to tell us how we can work better together to achieve the best outcomes for young South Australians on the issues that most concern them.*

*From previous reports, we have identified four key areas that are important to young people:*

- *Learn and Earn*
- *Connect and Grow*
- *Wellbeing and the Environment*
- *Fairness and Inclusion*

*We will use these four areas as a foundation for engaging with young people and stakeholders across the development of the Youth Action Plan.*

*How can your input influence the decision?*

*We want to hear many different voices so that the Youth Action Plan is representative of South Australia’s diversity. We want to involve young people at all stages of development – designing, delivering and reviewing – to make sure we are targeting their needs and designing actions that will make a difference.*

*To achieve this, we will be forming a Youth Panel to help design a three-year Youth*

- 24 *Action Plan for South Australia with other young people, representatives from government and representatives from key non-government organisations.”*  
(YourSay: Designing a Youth Action Plan for South Australia)

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/6668>

**YOURSAY: DESIGNING A YOUTH ACTION PLAN FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

<https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/designing-a-youth-action-plan-for-south-australia>

**STRONG FUTURES FOR ALL YOUNG SOUTH AUSTRALIANS** <https://www.youthactionplan.sa.gov.au/>

## Example 2: Southampton youth forum (2016 – present)

*“The Southampton Youth Forum was founded to provide a platform for young people (aged 13–25) living, working or studying in Southampton to influence the political agenda in the city and lobby for improvements for young people. It enables young people within the political boundaries of Southampton City Council to influence the city’s legislative agenda through campaigns that seek to shape both the direction of policy and its implementation to ensure that it works as efficiently as possible for young people. The Forum is similar to others found in the UK and replicates much of the agenda-setting work of the UK Youth Parliament, which does not have representatives in Southampton.”* (Participedia.net)

*“The Youth Forum Southampton is an open group for children and young people to join.*

*Becoming a member of the Youth Forum Southampton is a free and easy way to give your opinions on a wide range of local issues. It will enable you to influence how services are delivered, highlight issues you feel need to be reviewed, and help you shape public services for your community.*

*We want your views about anything the council are involved in, for example; schools, parks, transport, housing and social care to name but a few. We also want you to have your say on the council services you use directly.*

*By becoming a member, it is completely up to you how much or how little you would like to be involved. By signing up, we will inform you of the latest events, workshops and opportunities to have your say. Equally, if you have an idea such as a project, campaign or issue that you would like the Youth Forum to help with, then we want to hear from you!”* (Southampton Youth Forum)

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/5100>SOUTHAMPTON YOUTH FORUM <https://www.southampton.gov.uk/council-democracy/have-your-say/youth-forum>

## Example 3: Expert panel review of environmental assessment processes

*“The objective was to overhaul the existing federal environmental impact assessment process by designing a transparent consultation process that brought stakeholders together to provide their input and expertise, and established ongoing partnerships with influencers and affected groups.*”

### Methods:

- *Workshops. Workshops that focused on understanding stakeholder values. The Panel was also in attendance at these engagement sessions.*
- *Panel presentations, also known as Town Halls. The Panel, accompanied by members of the secretariat, travelled to 21 cities to hear Canadians' views and better understand the issues around environmental assessment. The public was invited to present their views to the Panel.*
- *Indigenous Dialogue Sessions. These sessions were opportunities to hear views from Indigenous peoples, and capture their unique challenges related to environmental impact assessment. The Panel spent 2 days in each of the locations; one session was allocated for public input, and two were dedicated to Indigenous peoples.*
- *Request for comment. Views could be submitted through a dedicated email address, as well as mailed to CEAA.*

### Tools:

- *Online Portal. Used to display submissions and collect input. It was important to the team that all information received would be open and accessible, so there was no login requirements for the site.*
- *Choicebook. This online questionnaire was used to collect input.*
- *Event Brite. Used for invitations to regional events; the team found this to be a very effective tool as a centralized system to manage and record participation.”*

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/6325>

## EXPERT PANEL REPORT

## BUILDING COMMON GROUND: A NEW VISION FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN CANADA

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/conservation/assessments/environmental-reviews/environmental-assessment-processes/building-common-ground.html>

## ANNOTATED COMPENDIUM OF EXPERT PANEL'S RESPONSES TO PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/conservation/assessments/environmental-reviews/environmental-assessment-processes/annotated-compendium.html>

## Example 4: Conference on the future of Europe

*“The Conference on the Future of Europe was convened to “give citizens a say on what matters to them,” with their suggestions “reflect[ing] the areas where the European Union has the competence to act or where European Union action would be to the benefit of European citizens.” Its agenda specifically aligns with the Strategic Agenda of the European Council and the 2019 – 2024 Political Guidelines of the European Commission.*

*The Conference’s topics of discussion include the COVID-19 pandemic, “building a healthy continent, the fight against climate change and environmental challenges, an economy that works for people, social fairness, equality and intergenerational solidarity, Europe’s digital transformation, European rights and values including the Rule of Law, migration challenges, security, the EU’s role in the world, the Union’s democratic foundations, and how to strengthen democratic processes governing the European Union.” However, citizens are also able to add their own agenda items.*

*The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission have committed to listen to Europeans and to follow up, within their sphere of competences, on the recommendations made.*

*By spring 2022, the Conference is expected to reach conclusions and provide guidance on the future of Europe.”* (Participedia.net)

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/8178>

**CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE OBSERVATORY. CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE: WHAT WORKED, WHAT NOW, WHAT NEXT?**

[https://conference-observatory.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/High\\_Level\\_Advisory\\_Group\\_Report.pdf](https://conference-observatory.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/High_Level_Advisory_Group_Report.pdf)

**CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE. WHAT IS THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE?**

<https://futureu.europa.eu/pages/about?format=html&locale=en>

## 27 DEVELOPMENTAL AIMS

**Youth political participation mechanisms with developmental aims strive to provide young people with enriching real-life experiences in the domain of political participation and beyond.** Since youth political participation also requires young people to be able to communicate effectively and with various audiences, work in teams, formulate arguments, and ultimately also come to decisions, development of young people is always present in youth political participation, at times implicitly, and sometimes explicitly. Implicit development happens in all real-life situations where young people have a chance to engage in the world around them, and it is often referred to as informal learning, or as learning by doing. This means that all youth political participation events, activities, or mechanisms also have implicit developmental aims. Explicit developmental aims are formulated up front before the youth political participation opportunities take place and are clearly linked to concrete mechanisms or events taking place (e.g., a deliberative session), and to well-described learning outcomes (e.g., young people will learn to pose arguments which are understandable to others, based on available scientific evidence, and relevant to the topics of the discussion). It should be noted that the explicit developmental aims are especially valuable since their clear formulation enables organizers of events or processes to take these aims into account along with other youth political participation aims, and to set up such conditions which favour learning of young people, and ideally also such evaluation tools which map the learning outcomes as well.

Once again, it needs to be stressed that we are referring to developmental aims of youth political participation activities, and therefore the activity in question needs to comply with the overall definition of a youth political participation event in the first place. An activity which focuses on youth development but shows no other signs of youth political participation (activity of an individual, voluntary nature of the activity, citizenship perspective of the activity, and political aims), then the activity cannot be described as youth political participation, but rather as an educational tool. This is especially true of various simulations of political processes (e.g., [Model United Nations](#), etc.). This does not diminish value of such educational tools since they can be extremely useful, but these tools do not fulfil the youth political participation definition and should not be labelled as such.

This also suggests that the developmental aims cannot be the only aims of the youth political participation. The development of young people always needs to link to real-life participation, and hence one of the other aims of youth political participation needs to be present. Similar to the argument mentioned in the previous paragraph, if only developmental aims are stated in youth political participation activity, then either there are other implicit aims which should be named (e.g., rights-based, empowerment, or efficiency), or the activity is not, in truth, a political participation one.

**28**      **Developmental aims enable young people to hone their participation skillset by:**

- Generally taking part in real-life youth political participation opportunities.
- Specifically engaging in such real-life youth political participation events which explicitly tackle youth development as one of the aims.
- Initiating, leading, and shaping youth political participation mechanisms, events, and projects.





29

## Example 1: The democracy project: Youth participation and democratic education (Burnaby, British Columbia)

*“The Democracy Project sought to address inequitable systems of representation within the school and school board of Byrne Creek, located in Burnaby, British Columbia. More precisely, it sought to address the lack of decision-making structures for students to shape their own learning. **By giving students the space to re-imagine what their learning experience could be if they were to co-create it, this experience sought to empower students to participate in the governance of their own education.**”*

*This project was youth-led and explored how a youth empowerment approach could shape more democratic decision-making structures within the school board, a regional decision-making body. **The goal was to provide the opportunity, resources, and structure for a group of youth to explore and experience democratic processes for themselves without the limitations of rigid course learning objectives and grades.***

(...)

*Once the students decided they wanted to tackle the mechanisms of student governance, the Byrne Creek Community Coordinator set up a meeting with the school administration and the District's Director of Learning. Though the Administration stated they were in support of the group's aspiration, they never publicly offered this support. **The Director of Learning engaged with students through monthly meetings, in which the students were expected to present their findings and proposals. During these meeting, students used the Director of Learning's feedback to inform their own deliberations and consensus-making process. Including the Director of Learning in their decision making brought about noticeable changes to the discussion students had with their peers and teachers. Some complaints were now brought forward directly to the administration.**”* (Participedia.net)

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/5151>

## Example 2: Democracy in practice: Democratic student government program in Cochabamba, Bolivia

- 30 *“Democracy In Practice’s 2014 student government program ran in three Bolivian schools. The pilot project involved randomly-selected student governments, thereby **enriching student’s personal development and experience with the consensus-making of democratic governance.**”*

*Three pilot projects of Democracy In Practice’s student government program ran February through November of 2014 in three schools in the Cochabamba area of Bolivia. This program involved replacing student elections with lotteries in which government members were randomly-selected to serve a given term before being replaced by a new group of randomly-selected students.*

*Following the electoral model, student government typically parallels adult governance more generally: certain kinds of students (generally, the most popular, outgoing, or ambitious) run short campaigns, and after a vote, the vast majority of students are excluded from further participation.*

*Given the nature of the program – the creation and maintenance of continuously operating or ‘standing’ student governments within school contexts – both deliberations and subsequent decision-making took place throughout the year in regular closed-door student government meetings. Unlike other participatory initiatives dedicated to reaching a particular decision or decisions at the end of a finite process, the student governments were continually tasked with making a variety of small decisions (as well as some larger ones) regarding the pursuit and execution of a number of endeavors on a regular basis.”* (Participedia.net)

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/4196>

## Section 1. B Democratic environments of meaningful youth political participation

**Democratic environments of meaningful youth political participation define boundaries within which the political participation occurs, and also nature of what can be achieved within the particular environment.** There are five types of democratic environments:

**DIRECT DEMOCRACY** – An environment typical by direct decision-making of citizens through voting on concrete policy decisions, as is the case in referenda.

**REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY** – An environment typical by citizens voting in elections from which political representatives are identified, and it is the role of the political representatives to make policy decisions on behalf of the citizens, as is the case in general elections forming country governments.

**PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY** – An environment typical by citizens suggesting concrete policies which are subsequently implemented by the political representatives, as is the case in participatory budgeting.

**DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY** – An environment typical by citizens debating (or deliberating, hence the name!) on policies, where instead of voting, the decisions are based on conclusions of the public discussions, as is the case in deliberative polling.

**COUNTER-DEMOCRACY** – An environment typical by citizens balancing the power of democratic institutions by monitoring the political and public domains, voicing opinions towards policymakers, and even expressing dissatisfaction, if necessary, as is the case in strikes and peaceful protests.

It needs to be noted that these democracy environments are not exclusive to one another, on the contrary, they frequently co-exist with each other. Since the most prevalent democracy environment in today's democratic world is the representative one, basically all of the other environments complement this main democracy environment. What differs region to region is the ratio of different other democracy environments in the mix. While there are countries with strong direct democracy mechanisms (e.g., Switzerland), there are also countries in which participatory democracy is rather frequent (e.g., Portugal). Deliberative democracy is still a rather new environment, but one with much potential to enable young citizens to move away from simply showing preferences (voting) to stating arguments and leading a wide public debate (deliberating).

- 32 Last but not least, the counter-democracy mechanisms are present in all democratic countries, and while some of them can be institutionalized (various monitoring mechanisms or activity of the civil society), some of them occur mostly in times of crisis, such as strikes or peaceful protests.



## DIRECT DEMOCRACY

**In the direct democracy environment, decisions are taken by citizens directly voting in favour of a certain policy suggestion.** There are several typical mechanisms of direct democracy:

**Referendum** – This mechanism allows citizens to vote directly on certain topics and can be sometimes referred to as “plebiscite”.

**Town (Hall) meeting** – Typically, town meeting is an annual assembly where people come together and vote directly on certain matters such as annual budget, etc.

**Right to recall** – This is a mechanism through which citizens can remove a politician from their role in case the politician is not performing well.

**Citizens’ initiative** – Also called “popular initiatives”, this happens when concrete ideas are presented by citizens directly to policymakers who are subsequently obliged to deal with the matter.



## 34 Example 1: Scottish independence referendum 2014

“On the 18th September 2014 *Scottish residents voted in a legally binding referendum on their country's independence from the UK. Unlike many referenda, citizens were engaged in dialogue and education in the months leading up to the vote. The 'no' vote won 55.3% to 44.7%.*” (Participedia.net)

“On 18 September 2014 you will be asked to vote in a referendum on the question:

‘Should Scotland be an independent country?’

(...)

*If Scotland votes Yes in the referendum the Scottish Government will negotiate so that Scotland becomes independent on 24 March 2016.*” (Scotland's Future. Your Guide to an Independent Scotland)

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/5108>

**SCOTLAND'S FUTURE. YOUR GUIDE TO AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND**

<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20170104102702/https%3A//www2.gov.scot/resource/0043/00439021.pdf>

## Example 2: Indonesian direct democracy experiment

“The creator of the experiment, Benjamin Olken, a professor of economics at MIT, was driven by the notion that communities might be happier and invest more in their government if they felt involved in the political process. Based on Olken's findings, there is support for the conclusion that societies that feel more directly involved in political processes are ultimately more satisfied overall.

(...)

In 1998, [Indonesia] was looking for ways to successfully decentralize its government. The desire to search for alternatives led to the creation of the Kecamatan Development Project (KDP) in 1998, which was financed by the World Bank. Essentially, the KDP funded projects in thousands of Indonesian villages.

35 (...)

*Between September 2005 and January 2006, Olken began an experiment in which the usual decision-making mechanism for selecting KDP projects was changed.*

(...)

*Villages were randomly selected, to choose projects based on direct election-based plebiscites. **The selected villages would then choose their projects through referendums based on direct elections.***

(...)

*The results of the experiment show that a referendum-based process led to far greater satisfaction among the villagers in general. Citizens in the plebiscite villages claimed that the projects chosen were in line with their needs and were necessary to their well being. Statistically, the evidence of a change is shown by a 13 percent increase in the satisfaction that people felt towards KDP overall.” (Participedia.net)*

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/929>



## REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

**Elections are held in the representative democracy environment in order to enable citizens to vote in their political representatives. These political representatives stay in office for a fixed period of time, and implement a programme they presented before the elections, taking the policy decisions on behalf of the citizens.** There is a typical mechanism of representative democracy:

**Youth Representative Structure** – These are any bodies which offer young people the chance to be elected and participate on decision-making, for instance in case of school parliaments, youth-led municipal youth departments, or similar bodies. Please note that they must have decision-making powers, if not, they are not participatory mechanisms, but educational tools.





## Example 1: Romania's council of students

*“The main purpose of the Council of Students (Consiliul Elevilor – CE) is to serve as an integrative platform that creates the framework necessary for authentic forms of leadership, amongst students, to emerge, through direct and self-driven participation. Secondly, it empowers students, allowing them to voice their preferences and to become equal and proactive actors of the educational systems, and to assume responsibility for shaping a dynamic, highly performing, modern and grassroots approach to pedagogic planning, development and implementation.*

*Lastly, the Council of Students serves as a watchdog against abuse in the educational system, seeking to reinforce compliance with official norms, acting as observers or even mediators at certain times.*

(...)

*This grassroots-oriented form of free association, at the pre-university level, became the most notable officially-recognized institution (of the Romanian educational system) which acts, in an unmoderated way, in the best interest of the students, through direct representation and participation across an independent, apolitical and non-religious, network of hierarchically interlinked units. Its primary focus is to ensure the existence of a framework in which students can meaningfully voice their preferences, opinions or ideas, and to generate opportunities for direct contributions towards the construction of a diverse, inclusive, modern and performant educational system, based on the organization’s adherence to universal democratic values and freedoms. The structure, via its fundamental objectives and core missions, seeks to remediate some of the major challenges that have eroded the quality of the educational act in post-communist Romania. As such, the main pillars, which form the Council of Students’ organizational goals, while subsequently addressing specific problems, are:*

- *Representing the students, as the principal beneficiaries of the educational processes, and ensuring that relevant administrative and legislative bodies are acting in accordance with their legitimate interests.*
- *Advocating for (and ensuring) the active participation and involvement of students, as equal stakeholders, in decision-making procedures that might affect them.*
- *Monitoring the correct implementation, application, and interpretation of policies related to students’ rights and obligations, while setting measures in place in order to prevent or mediate abuses and conflictual stances.*
- *Facilitating and fostering knowledge exchanges (e.g. know-how, ideas, win-win situations, good practices, etc.), as a way of enabling and further*

- 38 *implementation of innovatory and positive development.*
- *Ensuring sub and intra-structural growth (alongside their networks of partners), increasing their capacity for autonomous action-taking and the delivery of positive outcomes in the community.”* (Participedia.net)

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/7282>

**ORGANIZING BUREAU OF EUROPEAN SCHOOL STUDENT UNIONS (OBESSU)**

<https://www.obessu.org/about/members/romania/consiliul-na-ional-al-elevilor-cne/>



## PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

**Participatory democracy combines approaches of the direct and representative democracy. Citizens are suggesting concrete policies, strategies, plans, and elected policymakers take these concrete suggestions, and turn them into practice, implement them.** This gives the citizens the power to come up with very concrete proposals, and it also gives them additional information on performance of the policymakers: The way they take into account and implement these proposals, or ignore them and walk a different path, provides citizens with a valuable feedback and insight into the policymakers' values. There are several typical mechanisms of participatory democracy:

**Participatory budgeting** – This happens when a budget is created by the citizens, and representatives of state then approve of it, and put it in force either in full or to some extent.

**Citizens' or neighbourhood council** – These are permanent structures in which young people debate public matters and provide suggestions for representatives of state who put it in force either in full or to some extent.

**Public consultation** – Think of the EU Youth Dialogue: Consulting with young people in order to present policymakers with their views.

**Participatory planning** – This happens when a certain public matter is planned by the citizens, and representatives of state then approve of it, and put it in force either in full or to some extent, such as new infrastructure projects.

**E-Democracy tool** – Any digital tools which are developed and run by young people to support democratic processes, such as <https://whocanivotefor.co.uk/>. **Watch out!** There are also e-government tools, i.e., online and electronic tools and channels which enable young people to engage with their local, regional, national, or supranational governments, for example when applying for a driving licence, etc. As you can see, these are not mechanisms of political participation, but only of state governance, and they should not be included in the e-democracy category!

## Example 1: Youth lead the change: Boston's youth-focused participatory budgeting project

*"As stated in the initial Request for Proposals produced by Boston, "the goals of Boston's Participatory Budgeting project are to help ensure the capital plan reflects the priorities, interests and energy of Boston youth; teach youth about the City-building (and budgeting) process; [and] empower youth to participate in government".*

*The contractor, Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP), submitted a proposal indicating its expected result would include "giving Boston youth the ability to affect public spending [which] will be an eye-opening experience with major impacts" on education, community building, their empowerment, and involvement in the community". The proposal also indicated that PBP is " ... particularly interested in engaging populations who are typically disenfranchised and marginalized from politics. This includes youth – especially low-income youth, youth of color and immigrant youth". In a rulebook created by the Steering Committee for participatory budgeting in Boston, other goals cited were to "increase youth power," "allow all voices to be heard," "build stronger, safer, and healthier communities," and "strengthen city-wide sense of pride, solidarity, and equality".*

(...)

*The process had several key stages: establishing a Steering Committee made up of thirty youth-serving organizations which created a rulebook for the process, holding idea assemblies in a variety of neighborhoods throughout Boston to generate ideas, engaging a core group of young people as Change Agents to turn those ideas into specific proposals, and holding a vote to determine which proposals would be funded through the 1 million dollar youth budget.*

*Change Agents made their decisions through deliberation and consensus, using a decision matrix which urged them to consider feasibility, impact and need. Voters, in contrast, were often hearing about the process for the first time when they arrived at the voting station, and there is some reason to believe that decision-making criteria of voters was more self-interested than that of Change Agents, raising some concerns around parochialism in the voting process.*

(...)

*An initial set of 473 proposals generated by the idea assemblies was divided into six categories and committees of Change Agents were tasked with turning them into*

- 41 concrete proposals. They engaged in a dialogue with City officials who determined whether or not the ideas were capital eligible and provided cost estimates for individual proposals. Some participants felt inhibited by the size of the budget and the capital eligibility limitations. In cases where an idea was ineligible, City officials were sometimes able to suggest changes that would make it eligible or suggest alternate paths through which projects could be pursued outside of this process. *Ultimately, Change Agents prepared a set of 14 proposals which were included on the ballot, and each voter could vote for up to four of these projects. The voting process resulted in funding for 7 projects, which included: Franklin Park Playground and Picnic Area Upgrade, Boston Art Walls, Chromebooks for 3 High Schools, a Skate Park Feasibility Study, Security Cameras for Dr. Loesch Family Park, Paris Street Playground Extreme Makeover Renovation, and New Sidewalks for New Parks.* (Participedia.net)

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/4176>

YOUTH LEAD THE CHANGE: THE CITY OF BOSTON'S YOUTH-FOCUSED PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESS PILOT YEAR

EVALUATION [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/grillos/files/pb\\_boston\\_year\\_1\\_eval\\_0.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/grillos/files/pb_boston_year_1_eval_0.pdf)

YOUTH LEAD THE CHANGE: PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING BOSTON RULEBOOK 2014

<http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/YPB-Rulebook.pdf>

## Example 2: Collaborative online lawmaking: Brazil's e-Democracia

“Using the e-Democracia online portal, *citizens from across Brazil can access information regarding the legislative process, comment on draft bills, and interact with congressional representatives.*

(...)

*Brazil's e-Democracia platform is driven by a belief that the lawmaking process can benefit from the convergence of political representation and citizen participation, in a virtuous cycle where one model strengthens the other.* People in contemporary societies have very diverse interests, experiences, expertise, and values. The great challenge in making social participation feasible is to find out how to take advantage of such diversity and incorporate it into the policy-making system. The engine behind e-Democracia is a ‘multiple participatory mechanism,’ a kind of electronic, permeable sponge that enables people to share their professional experience and expertise, express their personal and collective interests and values, and foster creative ideas in different forms and intensity, in all phases of the policy-making cycle.

42 *That participation may consider any contribution that citizens want to deliver, or are technically able to present. Some persons would be interested in merely discussing ideas (solutions) in public forums, whereas others can be engaged in drafting, simply uploading useful information to describe the problem or presenting arguments to support ideas. One could even help to merely rank better ideas. Besides participants, there will be many other citizens who are satisfied with simply monitoring the legislative discussion.*

(...)

*Since June 2009, e-Democracia has acquired five virtual thematic legislative communities (VLC), several forums, more than 100 topics, 700 contributions and 4000 registered participants. The most successful experiments so far have been the lan houses policy and youth statute virtual communities. As a result of the latter, ideas and suggestions delivered by youngsters throughout Brazil have been taken seriously by (some) policy-makers and, in fact, reflected in the draft of the bill, not yet passed.*

*One important issue that normally causes digital participation to fail is the lack of connection between people's contributions and how laws are actually drafted. Writing legal text involves great technical complexity. e-Democracia has minimized this problem by engaging the assistance of legislative consultants, who serve, essentially, as "technical translators" during the entire participatory process.*

*Participants of the youth statute discussion have posted comments and discussed several ideas during recent months. Legislative consultants summarized this participatory content and presented it to the lawmaker in charge of drafting the bill. After her approval, the legislative consultants transformed her suggestions into legal text. Then, the lawmaker herself submitted it to the Youth Affairs Committee." (Participedia.net)*

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/964>

**E-DEMOCRACIA** <http://www.edemocracia.leg.br/>

## DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Deliberation is the key component of this democracy environment. While in direct or representative democracy, and partially also in participatory democracy, the key decision-making mechanism is voting, in deliberative democracy it is public debate. **Deliberative democracy is based on people coming together, getting knowledgeable on a topic of discussion, debating and presenting arguments and counterarguments, and seeking such decisions which are not based on simple majority of votes, but on reason and arguments.** There are two advantages to this shift from simple voting. Firstly, it is the process itself which supports the ability of citizens to engage in constructive debates and creates space for meeting and respecting one another. Secondly, the final decision is not only based on personal preferences, but on results of debates which necessarily enrich and perhaps even challenge one's point of view, pushing individuals to think beyond their own interests and take into account the wider society in a more conscious way. There are several typical mechanisms of deliberative democracy:

**Online deliberation** – An activity which takes place online and enables people to debate on public matters to reach common conclusions, for example through the [Stanford Online Deliberation Platform](#), [Kialo.com](#), or [DebateHub.net](#), and other platforms.

**Deiberative polling** – Activities in which people gather to first discuss on a certain public matter, and then take a poll to determine decisions.

**Citizens' jury or assembly** – An activity in which people gather to first discuss on a certain public matter, and then create public recommendations on the matter.

**Advisory body** – These can be linked to government bodies such as municipality, or to elected representatives, such as town council, and offer regular opinions of young people on matters that are debated and decided.

## 44 Example 1: Citizen panel for youth in Wallonia, Belgium

*“The Citizen Panel for Youth in Wallonia (Panel citoyen sur les jeunes en Wallonie) covered issues relevant to youth – such as employment, mobility, housing, training, sustainable development, and international openness – for 2025 to 2045, over four meetings held in March 2018.*

(...)

*The Citizen Panel for Youth in Wallonia deliberated on the following questions, as developed by a committee of experts, academics, and citizens:*

- *How can public and private actors better take into account the needs of the young (in employment, mobility, housing, training, sustainable development, and international openness)?*
- *How to prevent the young from job insecurity after their studies;*
- *What are the traditional norms that should be adapted to current ways of life, in order to respond to youth aspirations?*

(...)

*The panel produced a « déclaration consensus » (25 pages including appendices). In this document, the panel participants develop 22 actions to be implemented, across 5 “strategic axes”: solidarity between generations; implementation of a safe environment in which young people can innovate, learn etc.; co-decision making with the young; simplification and accessibility of the institutional/political structure; and development of international openness and opportunities. The « déclaration consensus» includes several pages reflecting upon the organization and principles (representation, participation etc.) of the panel itself, as well as, in the appendices, the panelists’ opinions about the experience.*

*In regard to how the outcome has been taken into consideration by representative institutions (government and parliament), on April 21st, 2018, the head of the Walloon government declared that they would read the panel report, and would try to identify ways to pragmatically address the conclusions of the report. Participants in the deliberation had the opportunity to discuss the process by itself, its philosophy, and the organization of the meetings. Some representatives from parliamentary groups (Godfriaux, Knaepen, Lambelin, Ryckmanset, Warzée-Caverenne) had the opportunity to exchange with members of the panel, and to present some avenues for policy in order to address the conclusions mentioned in the « déclaration consensus» (the final document produced by the mini-publics). **The President of the Parliament***





- 45 *invited the panel members to assess, one year after the panel, the extent to which the government will have answered the “declaration consensus”. He indicated that the declaration would be sent to all other parliaments in the country.”* (Participedia.net)

PARTICIPEDIA.NET <https://participedia.net/case/7308>

## Example 2: Deliberative polling to inform the design of the new school on planetary sustainability

*“The Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford (CDD) assisted the university administration in conducting on two Deliberative Polls on proposals affecting the design of the university’s new school on climate and sustainability.*

*The first Deliberative Poll engaged a participant sample of 203 faculty recruited from all parts of the University. They deliberated intensively on both Saturday and Sunday mornings on January 30 – 31, 2021.*

*The second Deliberative Poll engaged a participant sample of 184 students (undergraduate and graduate students) recruited from all part of the University. They deliberated intensively on Saturday, May 8, 2021.*

*There are separate reports for each of these Deliberative Polls. The reports summarizes both quantitative and qualitative data from the Deliberative Poll. Results are meant to inform decision making by the University about the transition to the New School.”* (Stanford center for deliberqative democracy)

*“For this Deliberative Poll, the President’s Office and the Center for Deliberative Democracy are engaging Stanford University faculty members instead of the general public. You, as part of a stratified random sample, will meet for two half-day-long deliberations to discuss issues surrounding Stanford’s New School on climate and sustainability. We will hold the event online, using technology developed at Stanford by the Crowdsourced Democracy Team led by Ashish Goel from Management Science and Engineering. Before you participate in the event, we will ask you to complete a survey. When the event starts, we will randomly assign you to a small group to discuss the issues. During these discussions, you will develop questions to ask a panel of experts on each issue.*

- 46 *At the end of the two-day event, we will ask you to complete another survey. We will share your comments with the larger Stanford University community, Stanford's leadership, opinion leaders, and policy makers (all while protecting your anonymity). In this event, Deliberative Polling® is an advisory process. Its outcomes will advise the President, the Provost, the Executive Cabinet, the Board of Trustees, and the Faculty Senate.”* (Deliberative Polling to Inform the Design of the New School Focused on Climate and Sustainability: Briefing Materials)

**STANFORD CENTER FOR DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY** <https://cdd.stanford.edu/2021/deliberative-polling-to-inform-the-design-of-the-new-school-on-planetary-sustainability/>

**STUDENT DELIBERATIVE POLL REPORT** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/h8BTTs1x67e6okCtRNseNJ7kOZhIAJzcF/view>

**FACULTY DELIBERATIVE POLL REPORT** <https://cdd.stanford.edu/2021/deliberative-polling-to-inform-the-design-of-the-new-school-focused-on-climate-and-sustainability-report/>

**DELIBERATIVE POLLING TO INFORM THE DESIGN OF THE NEW SCHOOL FOCUSED ON CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY:**

**BRIEFING MATERIALS** <https://cdd.stanford.edu/2021/deliberative-polling-to-inform-the-design-of-the-new-school-focused-on-climate-and-sustainability-briefing-materials/>

## Example 3: You choose: London borough of Redbridge council's online budget consultation tool

*“In 2010, the London Borough of Redbridge Council implemented the You Choose budget consultation tool, aiming to broaden interactivity between the local council and its residents as well as educate citizens through democratic participation on the online consultation platform.*

(...)

*Redbridge Council made it clear to participants that this online consultation was intended to establish a more efficient way of conducting a mass public opinion poll, and was not a case of direct democracy and that should not be compared to exercising a vote. The outcomes of the consultation were to be provided to the council officials only to provide context for public opinion and helpful considerations in the budget-setting process.*

(...)

- 47** *Regarding decisions formed by the You Choose budget consultation, a high number of the public participants believed there should be a reduction of 'back office' operations and that there should be a lower officer wage, along with a reduction in the number of managers employed. The public also cut non-statutory services more than social care or educational support. **From this data, councils all around the United Kingdom have implemented budgets that reflect these opinions. Indeed, a majority of all boroughs throughout the United Kingdom, with the exception of Cambridgeshire which resulted in a local referendum, expressed their opinions in a budget that would include a decrease in Council Tax.*** (Participedia.net)

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/4369>

**REPORT ON INITIAL RESULTS OF THE 2015 YOUCHOOSE EXERCISE**

<http://moderngov.redbridge.gov.uk/documents/s102366/You%20Choose%202015%20Interim%20Results.pdf>



## 48 COUNTER DEMOCRACY

**Counter-democracy comprises of all practices which seek to balance out other democratic mechanisms.** In practice it encompasses all citizen activism, all protest and strike initiatives, and overall, any mechanisms which allow citizens to oversee political processes and policy decisions and take action in case the citizens feel that policymakers are taking paths not in line with public interests. There are several typical mechanisms of representative democracy:

**Co-optee or Expert-by-experience** – This is when members of public are invited to oversee policy design and implementation.

**Participatory research** – This is such a research endeavour which engages young people in various capacities, enabling them to collect and interpret information, and to be part of all research processes.

**Petitioning** – This is an initiative of citizens in which people can express their support for a certain public cause.

**Strike or peaceful protest** – Peaceful actions taken to bring attention of public to matters or decisions which need public scrutiny.

**Call-in** – These are mechanisms through which public can demand further scrutiny to be conducted on political decisions before they are implemented.

**Citizen denunciation** – These are whistle-blowing mechanisms through which public can anonymously bring attention to corruption.

**Youth-led NGO, Youth-led project or initiative** – Young people can come together to influence the public domain and elected politicians through a range of tools: Independent evaluations of policies in question, or perhaps by conducting lobbying activities.

## 49 Example 1: Youth climate summit and youth-led climate strike

*“The climate is altering faster than the human footprint can work to undo its damage. The United Nations hosts an annual conference to address climate change and environmentalism with countries who are a part of the United Nations, but usually these talks are only inclusive of adult world leaders and stakeholders. **The Youth-Led Climate Strike was the world’s largest protest organized by youth climate activists in response to the world’s climate emergency. In 2019 they hosted the first Youth Climate Summit to bring younger generations to the decision-making process.**”* (Participedia.net)

*“Last weekend, young people around the world rallied behind a common cause: urgent climate action. **On Friday, students from some 150 countries skipped school to participate in the largest climate protests ever. These were the high point in a year of youth climate strikes that began with just one teen, Greta Thunberg, now 16, taking action. She sat outside the Swedish parliament again and again (before later speaking to delegates of a United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poland). On Saturday, she and more than 700 other young climate leaders took action once more – here, at the first United Nations Youth Climate Summit.***

(...)

*Youth are now organizing and calling on those in power to act because they feel that time is limited. The longer it takes to cut greenhouse-gas emissions, the more Earth’s atmosphere will eventually warm.*

(...)

*To meet global climate goals, **youth activists say they need to be included in solutions.** The U.N. Youth Climate Summit is one step toward upping their involvement.*

(...)

*Young activists didn’t just demand action from global leaders. They also came ready with solutions and turned to other young adults for solutions. **Before a panel of judges, climate leaders under 30 pitched some of their proposals to address climate change and related inequalities through technology.**”* (At the United Nations, youth leaders call for true climate action)

**PARTICIPEDIA.NET** <https://participedia.net/case/7701>

**FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE** <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>

**AT THE UNITED NATIONS, YOUTH LEADERS CALL FOR TRUE CLIMATE ACTION**

<https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/united-nations-youth-leaders-climate-change-greta-thunberg>

# Section 2. Recipes of meaningful youth political participation



This section builds on the basic concepts introduced in the previous part of this Cookbook, namely on aims and democratic environments, and uses case studies as practical examples of meaningful youth political participation practices that exist in the European area. In other words, first we learned of ingredients of the meaningful youth political participation, and now we are presenting recipes in which the ingredients are used in the right way to complement each other, and to create real-life good practices of meaningful youth political participation.

## Section 2. A Results of mapping of meaningful youth political participation

Mapping of youth political participation practices was conducted in May 2022 via an online survey based on the original questionnaire in Annex 1 of this Cookbook. The mapping had four main aims represented by the research questions below, and focused mainly on the European countries represented by the national youth councils in the project consortium (i.e. Austria, Croatia, Germany, Portugal):

- A What **awareness** there is in youth organizations in the domain of meaningful youth political participation tools?
- B What meaningful youth political participation tools **exist** in target countries?
- C What **direct experience** do the youth organizations in target countries have with meaningful youth political participation tools?
- D What **good practice examples** of meaningful youth political participation tools do the organizations identify?

The mapping collected views of youth organizations, hence only one person per organization was asked to fill in the survey. Apart from providing a basic insight into the first three research questions (awareness, existence, and experience with the youth participation tools), the respondents were invited to shortly describe good practice examples of meaningful youth political participation tools their organisations are directly involved in. The good practice examples collected through the survey constituted the basis for selecting cases to be further explored in the case study phase of this research. Case studies were selected based on the collected information and also on the willingness of the respondents to take part in case studies. This willingness to participate was represented by explicitly stating this in the questionnaire itself, and by filling in an email address through which the organization could be further contacted. With exception of the respondents who were willing to become part of the case studies, the questionnaire was anonymous, and no personal data was collected.

All in all, 26 respondents filled in the questionnaire, coming from 9 EU Member States and one non-European country. Most of the respondents came from local organisations (46%) and national organisations (27%). More than half of the respondents left good practice examples.

Respondents were further presented with a list of political participation tools and asked about their awareness of the tools. In case they answered positively, they were further asked about existence of these tools in their particular context, and about their

52 direct experience with the tools. This is the reason why statistics presented below do not need to add up on first sight: remember, only those who knew what the tool is were answering further, hence the following percentages are calculated only out of this smaller sample of those who knew the tool.

In case of **referendum**, 85% of the respondents knew what it is, and 81% stated that it was used at some level in their country. None of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **town meeting**, 54% of the respondents knew what it is, and 50% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 36% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **right to recall**, 23% of the respondents knew what it is, and 15% stated that it was used at some level in their country. None of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **citizens' initiative**, 69% of the respondents knew what it is, and 62% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 22% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **advisory body**, 65% of the respondents knew what it is, and 65% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 82% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **youth representative structure**, 65% of the respondents knew what it is, and 62% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 65% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **participatory budgeting**, 73% of the respondents knew what it is, and 62% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 16% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **citizens' or neighbourhood council**, 65% of the respondents knew what it is, and 65% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 41% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.



**53** In case of **public consultation**, 69% of the respondents knew what it is, and 62% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 61% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **participatory planning**, 50% of the respondents knew what it is, and 35% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 15% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **e-Government tool**, 35% of the respondents knew what it is, and 31% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 11% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **e-Democracy tool**, 31% of the respondents knew what it is, and 8% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 17% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **online deliberation**, 23% of the respondents knew what it is, and 50% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 36% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **deliberative polling**, 15% of the respondents knew what it is, and 12% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 25% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **citizens' jury or assembly**, 35% of the respondents knew what it is, and 27% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 22% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **co-optee or expert-by-experience**, 27% of the respondents knew what it is, and 27% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 43% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **participatory research**, 31% of the respondents knew what it is, and 31% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 63% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

**54** In case of **petitioning**, 77% of the respondents knew what it is, and 73% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 5% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **strike or peaceful protest**, 92% of the respondents knew what it is, and 92% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 38% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **call-in**, 8% of the respondents knew what it is, and 4% stated that it was used at some level in their country. None of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **citizen denunciation**, 23% of the respondents knew what it is, and 23% stated that it was used at some level in their country. None of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **youth-led NGO and youth-led project or initiative**, 77% of the respondents knew what it is, and 77% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 85% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

In case of **town meeting**, 54% of the respondents knew what it is, and 50% stated that it was used at some level in their country. 36% of the respondents stated that their organisations were involved in referenda in the past 12 months before filling in the questionnaire.

At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents also could share their view of the added value that filling in the questionnaire which listed many political participation tools brought them. 96% of the respondents said that they gained new knowledge, 80% stated that they are inspired to further look up new knowledge on their own, and 44% of the respondents indicated that they are inspired to start new youth political participation practices.

## Section 2. B Case studies: Meaningful youth political participation

Good practices showcasing how to bring together the key ingredients (aims and democratic environments) to create recipes for meaningful youth political participation practices were identified through the mapping exercise, and also through practitioners, experts, and representatives of various organisations reaching out directly to the consortium of the *How to Score a Youth Goal?* project.

All in all, the case studies needed to fulfil all criteria of the meaningful youth political participation. They were selected to provide as wide a palette of good practices as possible, representing all different aims, and operating in all possible democratic environments. The 10 case studies also represent all levels of governance, from local to European, and as many European countries as possible.

Each case study was built on a combination of interviews and document review. Interviews were held with key informants in summer and autumn of 2022, they lasted about 90 minutes and were held online. The interviews were recorded, and the recordings were analysed to provide one of key data inputs for the case studies. The key informants were also asked to support case studies by facilitating access to documents detailing the practices described in case studies. These documents presented a wide range of sources: web pages of various organisations, social media pages, final reports, infographics, legal codes, academic articles, videos, and many others. Interviews together with background documents constituted the basis for each case study in which the following key aspects of each case are described:

**Processes and principles** – What is the gist of the meaningful youth political participation?

**Establishing and maintaining the initiative** – How was the meaningful youth political participation started and how does it continue?

**Impacts and transparency** – What impacts can be identified in the meaningful youth political participation and how is transparency ensured?

**Aspects of youth political participation** – How does the meaningful youth political participation fulfil the key criteria outlined in the first section of this Cookbook?

**Meaningfulness of the youth political participation** – How are the key criteria mixed

56 in order to create a good practice of meaningful youth political participation?

**Conclusions: Strengthening the participation** – What can be improved and how can the practice be scaled (up or down) and spread?

Enjoy reading through the recipes of meaningful youth political participation!



## Case study 1: Take action! / Akcija za 5!

“Take Action!” (“Akcija za 5!” in Croatian) is an initiative that takes place every autumn in the city of Rijeka, Croatia, and in some other municipalities as well. It is based on bringing together groups of high school students who identify needs or local topics of interest to youth, prepare project proposals to respond to these needs, decide which one to fund, and subsequently implement the project with financial support of the Municipality, potentially delivering recommendations to the local administration and policymakers on various matters as well as implementing educational activities in these areas. High school students are guided by university students who volunteer to support them and gain youth work experience at the same time.

### Processes and principles

*“For the period of one day, young people aged 14–19 are taking over the City Council.”* (Youth worker from Association Delta)

Overall, there are several stages of the “Take Action!” initiative:

- **Annual preparations** (Association Delta and Rijeka Municipality; summer months)
- **Youth preparations** (Youth and Association Delta; October)
- **Project preparations** (Youth, Association Delta, and Rijeka Municipality; November)
- **Project implementation** (Youth and Association Delta; November and December)
- **Overall evaluation** (Youth, Association Delta, and Rijeka Municipality; January)

Firstly, **annual preparations** of the “Take Action!” initiative take place in summer months. Association Delta identifies and outlines a topic of the given year. The topic is based on a deliberation within Association Delta, building on inputs from research (e.g., Institute for Social Research in Zagreb) and policy, as well as on input from local young volunteers and university students currently placed for internships at Association Delta. Association Delta is trying to strike a balance between topics which are relevant and those which are attractive and trendy among young people. Topics vary, from sustainable clothing, through media literacy, and mental health, and Association Delta prepares a detailed Manual for Students which outlines not only the overall process, but also introduces and presents the topic of the year.

Subsequently, a meeting takes place between Association Delta and a representative of the Municipality to agree upon the overall timeline, crucial dates, and also to inform the Municipality on the choice of the topic. Once the preparations are done and agreed upon with the Municipality, an open call is sent to teachers in all high schools in the

58 Rijeka area to select students to participate. While the students are recommended by the teachers, they can refuse participation, and they can also stop participating at any given time of the overall process, making the whole “Take Action!” initiative a voluntary endeavour.

Secondly, **youth preparations** take place. Association Delta organizes preparatory sessions for the young people willing to participate and allocates the high school students (14 – 19-year-olds) to mixed groups in order for these to be gender balanced and to contain young people from different high schools. Usually, in total about 40 students from about 10 high schools in Rijeka take part. Students gather at Association Delta, they are briefed on the topic as well as on the process, and they receive the Manual for Students (see list of documents below). Association Delta is explicit that this is a learning process, and there are plenty of learning moments waiting to be explored by the young people.

At the same time, university students (19 – 26-year-olds) who volunteer to mentor and coordinate the groups are introduced to the whole process, as Association Delta holds a separate preparatory session also for these voluntary coordinators. This brings additional learning opportunities, as it supports young people (university students) to support other young people (high school students) while gaining youth work experience in the process. The volunteers receive a Youth Work Manual and a Manual for Coordinators as basic reading materials (see list of documents below) and they facilitate proceedings within the small groups of high school students.

Third, **project preparations** are done during one full working day in which young people work at the Rijeka Municipality, sharing the building with the local administration and policymakers, and conducting a City Youth Council Simulation. The City Youth Council Simulation usually takes place in November, it is opened by the Mayor, subsequently young people receive organizational details, and then volunteer coordinators helping in the process are introduced. Young people are then spread across the Rijeka Municipality building and work on project proposals which need to be submitted by lunchtime. Project proposals need to:

- Stay within the wide topic of the year introduced in the Manual for Students.
- Be based on at least one of the two following approaches:
  - an educational component (e.g., a panel discussion, or a round table, etc.)
  - an advocacy activity (e.g., research, forming recommendations, etc.)
- Define one concrete problem in the local community.
- Identify one concrete solution that the students are able to implement in the next two months with a budget of about €660 euros by describing:
  - Project objectives
  - Implementation plan
  - Timeline
  - Budget

59 After lunch, the teams decide on who takes on what roles for the upcoming part of the program:

- One person is preparing to *present their project* on behalf of the whole team to all other students.
- One person takes part as a *member of a simulated City Youth Council*, s/he receives an assessment grid, and assesses all presented projects, marking the following areas:
  - Project responds to the needs of local young people
  - Project is clear in terms of activities and budget
  - Project includes all vital elements
  - Project is doable
- The rest of the team is *reading all project proposals submitted by different teams and preparing questions for the debates, namely:*
  - Asking for clarifications
  - Suggesting improvements

Once the teams are ready, the plenary session simulating the City Youth Council starts. Each project proposal is presented, questions are asked and answered. Overall, the students are tasked with keeping the debates on the proposals constructive, bearing in mind the ramifications of public money used to fund the implementation of the winning project proposal. After each project proposal presentation, Rijeka's Volunteering Centre (Association SMART) also provides constructive feedback on the presentations themselves so that young people are further supported in developing their own presentation skills. Representatives of the standing (real, not simulated) Youth Advisory Board are also present during the simulation, and they also provide information on how the Youth Advisory Board operates, what matters it addresses, and also on feasibility of the proposals presented by the young people, providing yet another learning opportunity for the students. Moreover, policymakers are also present during the City Council simulation, listening in to the debates. The project proposals are assessed by the young people themselves (representatives of each working group), using an assessment grid provided by Association Delta. In the assessment grid, each of the project proposals is rated in four different areas (see the bullet points above) from 1 (the least favourable mark) to 5 (the most favourable mark), and eventually, these assessment grids are collected, and the winning project proposal is identified. The group behind the winning project proposal is subsequently invited to attend a meeting at which project implementation is planned. In case young people from other groups wish to join the implementation efforts for the winning project proposal, they can do so.





Meeting of the team behind the winning project proposal and Association Delta marks the beginning of the **project implementation** phase of the “Take Action!” initiative. In order to align with the Municipal processes (e.g., accounting, etc.), the winning project needs to be implemented until the end of the given year. For that reason, emphasis is also put on time management and planning skills as young people need to start implementing the project as soon as possible. While young people are supported by both Association Delta (directly and through volunteers in mentoring roles) and the Municipality administration (via a list of useful contacts that is shared with the young people), the implementation (i.e., taking action on the project elements and making them happen) is fully the responsibility of the young people themselves. Young people decide on where the budget will be spent, and it is their final decisions that shape implementation of the winning project. As was the case in all previous stages of the “Take Action!” initiative, young people are participating on a voluntary basis and can stop working on the project implementation at any point, should they wish so. This hands-on and voluntary approach to project implementation provides young people with plenty of learning opportunities, while creating real-life impacts. As is the case with any project, the extent to which the project is successfully implemented varies, and failure to achieve some of the goals is seen as a learning moment, with constructive and caring feedback aimed at suggesting different approaches in the future while not discouraging the young people from trying again.





**ANETA 15**

	1	Donacije palach
Prostor Palach	800kn	Donacije Rjeka
Prostor delta		Moguci popust
Izrada bedzeva	500kn	Donacija Rjeka
Kupnja hrana i pića za radionicu	* 400kn	
<b>UKUPNO:</b>		

Važne napomene:  
 \* "Ukupan iznos" može biti manji ali ne smije biti veći od 5.000,00 kuna!  
 \*\* "Doprinos zajednice" se odnosi na popuste i donacije u robi i uslugama! Nije dozvoljeno tražiti donacije u novcu!

~~KAKO BI STE OBLAKOVALI PROJEKT?~~  
 KAKO BISTE PROJEKTIRALI PP PREZENTACIJU?  
 KADA SE FINANCIJA REALIZIRANJE PROJEKTA?  
 (DATUM NIJE NAVEĐEN)  
 PROJEKT VAM JE NEDOVRŠEN I NEDOREČEN. OBJASNITE NAM CIJENE?

When the last project activity is finished and project implementation is completed, Association Delta organizes a small gathering for the young people who implemented the project and for volunteers who mentored them along the way. At this final meeting, a space for feedback and debriefing is created, contributing to learning and reflecting of the young people. Concrete projects that were implemented in the past as part of the "Take Action!" initiative can be seen in the boxes below. This **overall evaluation** takes place in order to take stock of what happened and make the most of all learning opportunities for all involved actors. Up until 2021, this evaluation focused on directly involved actors only: Association Delta and the young people (both the high-school students implementing the project and the university-student-volunteers who are mentoring them in the process). In the future, Association Delta sees potential in widening the scope of the evaluation to indirectly involved stakeholders (e.g., local community, or the Municipality itself), as well as in reviewing policy impacts (e.g., to what extent any recommendations prepared by young people are put in practice by the Municipality, etc.).

## 62 “Take action!” initiative 2021

### TOPIC OF THE YEAR: YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Young people prepared a research endeavour on the topic of youth mental health, they collected over 1000 responses from students and young people in the Rijeka region through an online survey, analysed it, and created a publication for youth, policymakers, and professional staff in high schools (e.g., teachers, school psychologists, etc.). The research publication was promoted online through Association Delta website, but young people also held a public presentation in the City Hall. During the City Hall presentation, young people presented the research to experts in the topic and to policymakers as well as to employees of the Municipal administration. The publication and subsequent recommendations were also sent to the relevant Municipality department and presented to the local media.



The City of Rijeka created an online platform where (young) people can anonymously share their mental health problems, and a team of experts replies. This platform was subsequently promoted among young people within the “Take Action!” initiative, and even included in the recommendations put together by the young people at the end of the initiative implementation phase, showcasing synergies between the activities implemented by young people, and those run by the local government.

### Establishing and maintaining the initiative

*“The goal is not to have the best project, but to help the young people succeed.”*

(Youth worker from Association Delta)

The “Take Action!” initiative was established in Croatia in 2006 after a similar initiative was explored during a study visit in the Netherlands (programme “Find Your Way to the Local Government”). The initiative from the Netherlands served as a blueprint for

63 creating the “Take Action!” initiative, taking into account all necessary adjustments to fit the local Croatian context. From 2006 to 2014, the initiative was implemented under the name “Think Globally, Act Locally – Action Day!”, and it was renamed in 2015 to its current name “Take Action!”.

In the first years of the “Take Action!” initiative, Association Delta had to present the initiative repeatedly at all high schools, striving to create long-term collaborations with some of the active teachers in the Rijeka area. At these initial stages, the budgetary allocation was about €15000 per year, but as the links between Association Delta and the local teachers became established, the budget was lowered since in-person presentations at all high schools in the area became redundant. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the “Take Action!” initiative took place fully online, and the budget was drastically limited to approximately €2000.

In order to maintain the initiative, several documents have been created by Association Delta, namely:

**Conceptual framework** – This document outlines wider connections between the “Take Action!” initiative and relevant national policies, such as school curricula on civic education, Croatian National Youth Policies, but also international documents, such as the European Charter on Local Youth Work (not dated), the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (Council of the European Union 2018), or the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030 (Council of Europe 2020).

**Youth work manual & manual for coordinators** – These documents aim at supporting university students to become mentors (or coordinators, as they are called within the “Take Action!” initiative) to the groups of high school students working on project design, presentation, and later on, implementation. The documents aim at creating clear understanding of the “Take Action!” initiative, but also at communicating basic youth work knowledge, including introductions into psychology of adolescence, or youth work methods, and overall providing some practical advice useful in the process.

**“Take Action!” curriculum** – This document clearly states the overall aims of the “Take Action!” initiative, and it further elaborates on learning outcomes, content of various sections of the programme, teaching and learning methods, and methods of evaluation.

**Manuals for students** – These documents are created every year, they describe the topic of the given year. For example, the topic of 2019 was sustainable clothing, the topic of 2020 was young people and COVID, and the topic of 2021 was mental health of young people. The document also includes basic framework of the initiative, processes, and preliminary timelines. This Manual is shared with the young people during preparatory sessions each year.

**Documents on evaluation of the “Take Action!” initiative** – Association Delta also

64 conducts yearly evaluations of the “Take Action!” initiative, and these are done on several levels: evaluations of preparatory sessions, evaluations by the team of young people who implemented the winning project, and final evaluation. All of these are summarized in standalone documents and provide an insight into the outcomes of the “Take Action!” initiative in the given year.

These documents are key to assure continuity of the “Take Action!” initiative despite personal and other changes in Association Delta or at the Municipality, they provide practical guidance to various actors in the overall process, but they also provide an invaluable insight into the proceedings themselves to anyone who is interested, and as such create solid basis for transferability of the “Take Action!” initiative to new contexts within and outside of Croatia.

## Impacts and transparency

As mentioned above, there is an evaluation phase in each year of “Take Action!”, and given the well-defined aims, it is possible each year to compare planned and real outcomes and impacts. Evaluations include young people (the team implementing the winning project as well as the volunteers who coordinate and mentor them), and there is also an additional internal evaluation process within Association Delta. Results from the evaluation processes contribute to preparations of the next year’s “Take Action!” implementation, and they are summarized in several brief publications each year.

High school teachers are also informed of the “Take Action!” proceedings, they are invited to the final activities of the implementation phase, the final outcomes are shared with them (e.g., publications), and they are also informed about learning experience of the students.

An area in which the evaluation is still lacking is the one of policy impacts. Given limited funding of the evaluation domain, it is not possible, at the moment, to follow up on policy impacts that the concrete “Take Action!” projects might have. Another blind spot of the evaluation efforts is the perspective of the policymakers and Municipal workers. Their views are also crucial as they are one of the interested stakeholders and engaging them in evaluation exercises might also provide a rather low-cost monitoring of policy impacts of the concrete “Take Action!” projects.

As for the dissemination, Municipality of Rijeka organizes a media press conference together with Association Delta every year as soon as the initial phase of “Take Action!” is concluded and the topic of the year is set. Association Delta also uses its webpage, and regularly posts on Facebook and Instagram, to communicate and disseminate information on “Take Action!”. Depending on the planning of young people themselves, Association Delta also helps them to reach out to media during the project implementation phase. At times, media reach out to “Take Action!” initiative on their own, as was

65 the case in the mental health project where some media visited a high school of the students who implemented the project. Overall, Association Delta tries to use every opportunity to disseminate information on “Take Action!” via local media.

## Aspects of youth political participation

**Are young people active in the process?** – Yes, they actively work in teams, design project applications, present and deliberate on the project application merits, select the winning project, and also implement it in the local community, and participate in evaluation activities.

**Are young people participating voluntarily?** – Yes, they are free to refuse participation despite being nominated by the teachers, and they can withdraw from the process at any point in time.

**Are young people participating in the role of young citizens?** – Yes, they are participating in the capacity of local high school students and aiming at supporting and improving local community wellbeing.

**Is the initiative targeting a policy domain?** – Yes, it is using public funds to implement projects supporting a local community, and young people are encouraged to create recommendations to the Municipality of Rijeka, as well as to present project results to the public.

## Meaningfulness of the youth political participation

**What does the initiative aim to achieve?**

### DEVELOPMENTAL AIMS

- Train young people to enable them to act in the local community
- Develop civic and social competence of young people
- Educate young people about the basics of writing project proposals
- Acquaint young people with the work of local self-government
- Reduce young people's distrust in the political system and institutions authorities (and vice versa)

### EMPOWERMENT AIMS

- Encourage young people to act in the local community
- Enable young people to actively participate in decision-making at the local level and in their local community
- Encourage activism and volunteer work of young people and their involvement in the work of non-governmental organisations and civic initiatives

## 66 What democratic environments is the initiative operating in and what concrete mechanisms is the initiative using?

### PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY

- Participative budgeting is used as a mechanism to allow young people to design their own initiatives, decide on which initiative is to be implemented, and also put the initiative in action.

### How do the aims and mechanisms complement each other to create a meaningful youth political participation opportunity?

The aims are both developmental (to facilitate learning and skills improvement) and empowerment-oriented (encouraging young people to act in the local community with policy as one of the domains of these actions), and the basic mechanism that is used is participatory budgeting (which enables young people to exert decision-making power in allocating public funds) in combination with simulation methods (which enables young people to get familiar with proceedings of local government), and hands-on project design, management, and implementation opportunities (which enables young people to learn as well as influence local reality and policy).

All in all, the aims are achievable through the methods that are utilized in the “Take Action!” initiative, and hence this is a meaningful youth political participation opportunity

## Conclusions: Strengthening the Participation

### How can the initiative be improved?

Firstly, participatory budgeting scheme in the “Take Action!” initiative is limited to about €660. The budget could be boosted, enabling the participatory budgeting to become more substantial, and instead of choosing one winning project, having the ability to decide on an allocation of a certain budgetary sum, even across several projects.

Secondly, evaluation, impact assessment, and legacy monitoring could be strengthened by providing reasonable funding support by the Municipality to Association Delta or an external evaluator. This would not only help monitor and potentially refine and improve the initiative itself, but it would also help better communicate the results to the general public and to the young people themselves, increasing transparency in Municipal spending and processes. Furthermore, following up on recommendations that some of the projects generated towards the Municipality and involving some of the local policymakers and Municipal workers in the evaluation processes might help increase transparency of the political and administrative processes on the local level. This would, in turn, support trust building in young people toward the democratic processes and state administration, directly contributing to one of the “Take Action!” aims.



67 Third, the long-term and well-established partnership between the Association Delta and the Rijeka Municipality could be formalized in order to ensure the continuation of the “Take Action!” initiative. This can be done in various ways, from recognizing the partnership in official policy documents, to making the “Take Action!” initiative itself a permanent part of the Municipal policy planning with a dedicated budgetary chapter. Such changes would not only signal the importance of youth political participation to the Rijeka Municipality, but they would also make the “Take Action!” initiative more sustainable and permanent in case of political changes on the municipal level, and even open up further avenues to develop the “Take Action!” initiative further and connect it with synergetic processes within the Rijeka Municipality, and beyond.

Fourth, all projects implemented under the “Take Action!” initiative by young people have potential to generate recommendations for the local government in areas of interest to the young people. This could become an integral part of the “Take Action!” initiative, strengthening the overall political participation dimension, boosting young people’s insights into local policymaking, and widening the scope of their projects.

Fifth, Association Delta could include local people to a larger extent in the final selection of the topic of the year. Mechanisms such as voting on the topic by young people themselves could be introduced in the future, and young people could even directly suggest some topics of their own choosing, or within a widely pre-defined area. All of the aforementioned mechanisms might help increase outreach of the “Take Action!” initiative, and also ownership of the initiative by young people.

Sixth, the “Take Action!” initiative at the moment focuses only on students (high-school and university ones). It would be beneficial to also allow for young people who do not study at high schools or universities to take part. Youth in employment, self-employed youth, or youth not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) might be offered the opportunity to participate in the initiative together with their peers from high schools and universities, creating a highly inclusive environment benefiting all involved actors.

### **How can the initiative be scaled or spread?**

Firstly, there is potential to scale the “Take Action!” activity into a regional or even a national scheme of youth participatory budgeting. This can be done by building on what Association Delta already achieved when gaining know-how of the initiative implementation over the past 16 years and publishing various documents to support the implementation efforts. Such participatory budgeting scheme could help not only young people to engage in public matters, and gain real-life political participation experience, but it could also benefit the policymakers and the state administration to learn how to collaborate meaningfully with young people.

Secondly, there is potential to further adjust “Take Action!” for various different local, regional, or national contexts, as it is an initiative which proved to be functional in at

68 least two national contexts (Belgium and Croatia) and is long-term stable (proven track record of 16 years in which the initiative was successfully and continuously implemented), and financially efficient (providing a very modest budget for the implementation of youth projects). So far, the “Take Action!” initiative was implemented or piloted in the following Croatian cities: Rijeka, Pazin, Opatija, Labin, Otočac, Pregrada.

Third, there is a well-developed library of publications that Association Delta prepared over the past 16 years. Each of these publications has a potential to help in scaling or spreading the initiative beyond the City of Rijeka, as they carry vital information on practical proceedings as well as general frameworks and aims.

Fourth, there are nowadays about 1200 (former) high school students who took part in the “Take Action!” initiative in the past. Additionally, there are rather many university students who helped as volunteers in many of these 16 years of “Take Action!” implementation. The direct experience of these past participants and volunteers is yet another valuable resource which can be used in case scaling and spreading of this initiative is planned, as these young people might have moved to another city, bringing the unique experience with them. Staying in touch with the participants via an alumni network and spreading news on potential scaling or spreading activities might help some of the past participants get engaged in these activities.





## Case study 2: Paint Karlovac / Ofarbaj Karlovac

“Paint Karlovac” (“Ofarbaj Karlovac” in Croatian) is an initiative that took place in the second half of 2021 in Karlovac, Croatia, and it focused on combating gender violence in local community by covering hate speech graffiti. It is combining direct activist actions (i.e., covering hate speech graffiti) and advocacy mechanisms (i.e., formulating recommendations together with local municipality representatives on tackling hate speech graffiti in general). Paint Karlovac initiative is also bringing together the Municipality of Karlovac and DrONE Association (a local NGO) as project partners in a joint project with common goals, creating an interesting blueprint in organising political participation initiatives in general.

### Processes and principles

*“We did not know something like that existed, but young people did.”*

(Youth worker from DrONE Association on some of the art forms used in the initiative)

Overall, there are several stages of the “Paint Karlovac!” initiative:

- Research and good practice mapping
- Dialogue with policymakers
- Workshop on gender violence, sexism, and feminism
- Creating wall paintings to cover hate speech graffiti
- Follow-up

The concrete focus of the “Paint Karlovac” initiative was on tackling hate speech graffiti which occurred in Karlovac, aiming at not only removing these graffiti, but also empowering young people to be active in the future, and engage the Municipality of Karlovac in a meaningful dialogue with young people resulting in better tackling of the hate speech graffiti by the Municipality itself. This was done with a special emphasis on combating gender violence, and designs covering hate speech graffiti reflected this topic closely.

In the first phase, **research** was conducted by young people who made 46 of half-an-hour-long interviews with their peers, talking about perceptions of hate speech graffiti (e.g., profanities written on the walls, symbols of harmful ideologies such as fascism, misogynist messages, etc.), and identifying concrete problematic locations across Karlovac. Non-formal groups of young people based in Osijek, Pula, and Karlovac also came together to share and **map examples of good practices** in tackling hate speech graffiti, supporting the inception of the “Paint Karlovac” initiative. This also created an

- 70 additional benefit for young people as it allowed them to undergo a short-term youth mobility within Croatia, and it also boosted networking among the active young people.



After this first phase, a **dialogue with policymakers** was organised. Policymakers from the Municipality of Karlovac met with young people who presented the results of the previous phase: research results, and good practices. The subsequent panel debate provided space for the young people and the policymakers to discuss about the hate speech graffiti problems, to talk about potential solutions, to outline hurdles (e.g., legal problems that arise in case the estate is not owned by the Municipality, etc.). Finally, young people and policymakers jointly created recommendations for the relevant Municipal Department in order to help them tackle hate speech graffiti in a more effective and efficient way. Young people suggested, for example, that community actions are organised, identifying hate speech graffiti on public property, and urging the relevant Municipal Department to remove them or support young people in removing the hate speech graffiti on their own, or in cooperation with DrONE Association. The recommendations were also sent to local City Councils in different neighbourhoods in Karlovac. Reaching out to the local City Councils was considered to be an important outcome of the dialogue with policymakers, as it is an innovative approach not used before. Eventually, three locations were identified at which young people can remove the hate speech graffiti in the next phase of the project.



After the dialogue with policymakers, a **workshop** was held where young people explored further the concept of gender violence, artistic representation of gender, and feminism in broader terms. The workshop also allowed young people to reflect on how to tackle the hate speech graffiti in such a way so that awareness of gender violence is raised, and a positive message is sent. At the same time, concrete designs and techniques for cover graffiti were agreed and prepared during the workshops, with multiple young people co-authoring all of the motives, and local artists supporting them in the process. Young people therefore not only directly created the works of art used to cover up the hate speech graffiti, but also learned something more on gender violence, sexism, feminism, and arts, boosting ownership of the whole project in young people as well.

Young people then used the designs to cover up the three hate speech graffiti identified during the dialogue with the policymakers, utilizing different techniques, and building on the work done during the workshop. This was done in accordance with all legal obligations, requiring young people to explore the property ownership and securing legal agreement from the property owner on installation of the cover graffiti. The Municipality notably supported young people in this process

As **follow-up activities**, an exhibition and a “Youth Library” activity were held in the youth centre, sharing the results of the “Paint Karlovac” initiative with wider public.

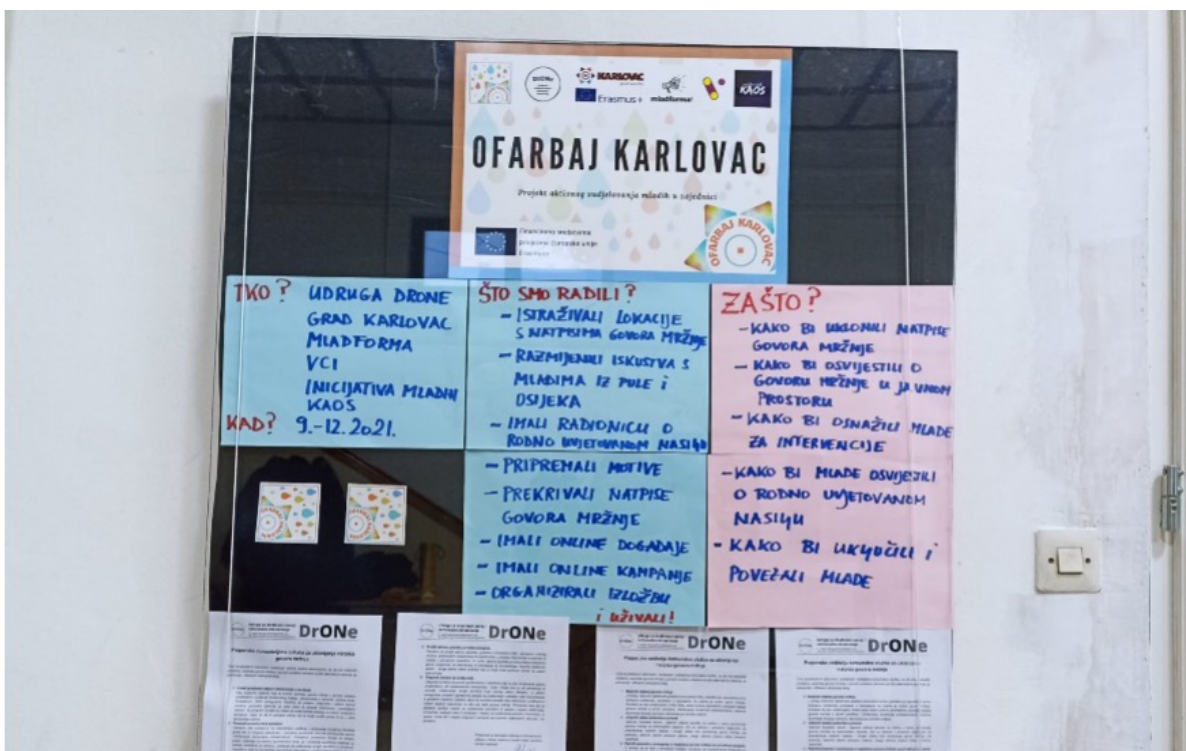
## Establishing and maintaining the initiative

*“I think what young people need a lot these days is something concrete, that they can see the results of their actions”* (Youth worker from DrONe Association)

The “Paint Karlovac” initiative was originally started in order to find a tool through which young people might get engaged in a local community and in a new local youth work

72 association: DrONE. The tool was designed to allow more than volunteering, allowing young people to express themselves artistically while influencing their surroundings in a positive way. DrONE Association got inspired by similar community initiatives which existed in the region at the time, such as the initiative by a non-formal group of young people called Mladforma which painted over hate speech graffiti.

During 2-3 months of project proposal preparations, all members of the DrONE Association including young volunteers, were invited to talk about the potential content and structure of the project. While these debates built on the strengths of the DrONE Association, such as the concrete expertise available to some of its members in the domain of feminism, they took into account the needs and wishes of the young people engaged in the DrONE Association, and built on their strengths as well, especially in the domains of culture and art. When the initial ideas on the contents and structure of the project were agreed upon, the project team of youth workers at DrONE Association decided on what grant scheme to apply for (Erasmus+) and drafted and submitted the project application itself. The project application was, however, also strongly supported by young local artists from the local community in terms of outlining the right artistic approach, and identifying all necessary tools in order to budget the project correctly. The abovementioned processes are a good practice example of how young people can co-create concrete initiatives: from choosing the topic, to outlining the approach, and eventually also identifying concrete processes that need to be included in the project to be able to reach the goals.



**73** Another interesting aspect of the project preparation was involving the Municipality of Karlovac as a project partner. This was possible, according to a youth worker from DrONE Association, because the Municipality of Karlovac is already well-versed in the domain of youth policy, has a strong youth strategy in place, maintains a youth centre co-managed jointly by youth workers and young people, and also holds regular open calls to support youth initiatives proposed and implemented by the young people themselves, enabling them to get small financial support without the need to establish and NGO or become part of one (e.g., a street carnival was implemented by one local youth initiative in Karlovac). In other words, the Municipality of Karlovac has strong youth-friendly attitude and is approachable in case youth-related initiatives are to be started. The Municipality of Karlovac was therefore engaged in the project as a partner, making sure they are also active in the project, building on and further expanding the existent youth policy and youth service expertise. Apart from the Municipality of Karlovac there were also other project collaborators: a volunteering centre called Istria, and non-formal groups of young people from Osijek called Mladforma and Kaos.

## Impacts and transparency

As a direct outcome of the initiative, a new project proposal was created, submitted, and approved, allowing methodology of the “Paint Karlovac” initiative to be used in different places across Croatia (including the capital, Zagreb) to tackle different topics important to young people. As a result of the “Paint Karlovac” initiative, young people were involved in a deliberation and negotiation with the Municipality, included in community processes, active in creation of participatory action research, and they helped organise concrete activities to improve living conditions in their city. Three young people are now, as a result of taking part in the initiative, actively involved with DrONE Association in different roles. DrONE Association also plans to present results of the initiative to the Municipality when local youth strategy will be updated, enabling the outcomes of the initiative to impact local youth policy as well. New collaborations were also established during the project (e.g., with a local library, with groups of young people operating in different parts of Croatia, with regional feminist summer school, etc.).

Moreover, young people participating in “Paint Karlovac” initiative used the opportunity to create their own initiative aiming at free provision of menstrual hygienic products in all high schools in Karlovac. This initiative was successfully implemented by young people in seven out of ten high schools, facilitating access to basic hygienic products for many young women. Furthermore, newly activated young people started coming up with new topics of interest to them, such as support for the LGBT community in Karlovac.

Young people involved directly in the “Paint Karlovac” initiative had different backgrounds: some of them came from different NGOs (including DrONE Association), some of them were local active young people selected through an open call, and some of



74 them were young local artists interested in the initiative (painters, poets, dancers, etc.). All in all, about 50 young people were involved in the initiative, allowing them to learn, and to become active in their local community.



## Aspects of youth political participation

**Are young people active in the process?** – Yes, they take part in preparations of the project, topic selection, and in all key steps of the project implementation, including creation of recommendations for the relevant Municipal Department, and direct actions related to covering hate speech graffiti.

**Are young people participating voluntarily?** – Yes, they are either voluntarily cooperating with DrONE Association on a long-term basis, or they approached DrONE Association on their own because of interest in the project itself, or they voluntarily applied for an open call through which additional young participants were selected. Young people participated in activities of their choosing and were free to stop engaging at any time.

**Are young people participating in the role of young citizens?** – Yes, they are participating in the capacity of members of a local community and young citizens of Karlovac.

**Is the initiative targeting a policy domain?** – Yes, it is using public funds (A) to support

- 75 direct civic activism (i.e., removal of hate speech graffiti), and (B) to facilitate a dialogue between the young people and the Municipality, resulting in recommendations tackling the topic of removal of hate speech graffiti.

## Meaningfulness of the youth political participation

### What does the initiative aim to achieve?

#### EMPOWERMENT AIMS

- Empower young people to implement interventions in community
- Empower Karlovac community to get involved in initiatives of young people

#### EFFICIENCY AIMS

- Implement interventions in the community in a dialogue between young people and decision makers

#### DEVELOPMENTAL AIMS

- Raise awareness among young people and the local community about hate speech and the importance of removing hate speech graffiti from the streets of Karlovac
- Empower Karlovac community to get involved in initiatives of young people
- Raise awareness of gender-based violence and representation issues through art

### What democratic environments is the initiative operating in and what concrete mechanisms is the initiative using?

#### COUNTER-DEMOCRACY

- Direct activism of young people is supported by creating conditions that allow them to improve their local community by eliminating hate speech graffiti.

#### DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

- Advocacy is conducted via an event that allows for a structured dialogue to occur between young people and policymakers. Recommendations on tackling the hate speech graffiti by the Municipality are jointly co-created by young people and the policymakers during the dialogue.

### How do the aims and mechanisms complement each other to create a meaningful youth political participation opportunity?

The aims are empowerment-oriented (encouraging young people to act in the local community, but also encouraging the local community to support young people in their initiatives), efficiency-oriented (improving operations of the Municipality when dealing

76 with hate speech graffiti), and also developmental (focusing on raising awareness of hate speech and the importance of removing hate speech graffiti from the streets of Karlovac). The basic mechanisms that are used in “Paint Karlovac” initiative are direct activism (which enables young people to act directly to improve conditions in local community) in combination with an advocacy event (which enables young people to speak directly to local policymakers and co-create recommendations on improved Municipal actions in tackling hate speech graffiti), and creative workshops (offering young people space to design graffiti covers and learn more on art, hate speech, and gender violence). Young people were also co-deciding on the topic and processes of the project itself, and they were the ones implementing the key events (i.e., mapping good practices, holding the dialogue with the policymakers, and covering three hate speech graffiti).

All in all, the aims are achievable through the methods that are utilized in the “Paint Karlovac” initiative, and hence this is a meaningful youth political participation opportunity.

## Conclusions: Strengthening the participation

*“What we wanted to do was to create an NGO serving as a canvass for the young people to realize their own ideas, and with this project, and many others, I think we did exactly that.”* (Youth worker from DrONe Association)

### How can the initiative be improved?

Firstly, the initiative could follow up on the recommendations young people jointly created with the Municipality representatives. While it is crucial these were sent to the relevant Municipal Department, it would be helpful to know to what extent the recommendations are used, and if and how they are helpful in tackling hate speech graffiti in Karlovac. Creating this feedback loop might not only help create additional pressure to put the recommendations in practice, but it would also create a solid basis for transparent reporting back to the young people who co-created the recommendations in the first place. Transparency is vital, especially in processes which are complex and lengthy, as it creates trust in all involved authors by sharing information on impacts of the implemented activities. Such process could also create a positive precedent for any future projects in which young people are in direct communication with the Municipality, create any recommendations, or otherwise participate on the Municipal policymaking and policy implementation.

Secondly, DrONe Association could create a concrete and public plan describing how outcomes of the “Paint Karlovac” initiative will be further used. It is noteworthy that there are plans to utilise the outcomes when the Municipal youth strategy is updated, and young people should know this will happen, and they should be able to also follow up on these future developments. Again, such approach might help young people



**77** gain trust in political participation activities as they can clearly see what their actions achieved and still can achieve in the future.

### How can the initiative be scaled or spread?

The initiative is spreading already, utilizing a follow-up project to establish the methodology of “Paint Karlovac” initiative in other places across Croatia. This is possible not only due to the know-how that DrONE Association gained during the implementation process of the “Paint Karlovac” initiative, but also due to networking activities which allowed DrONE Association to find interested partners in other contexts. In principle, spreading the initiative also to other countries is not only possible, but also welcome. Hate speech graffiti can be found all around Europe and combining citizen activism and advocacy activities which enable local Municipalities to deal with this negative phenomenon in a more efficient way and together with young people, is a meaningful way of being politically active as well as offer young people space for developing they participatory muscles.

The “Paint Karlovac” can also be transformed into a long-term initiative, for example funded by the Municipality, in which young people continuously negotiate with the Municipality different aspects of street art, artistic creations in public space, and other related matters, potentially even going beyond the boundaries of arts, and negotiating public campaigns aiming at various topics (e.g., gender violence, youth spaces, LGBT rights, etc.). Such approach could even lead to creation of a deliberation platform (e.g., a round table, or an advisory body for the Municipality) through which young artists and representatives of the Municipality regularly meet and discuss pressing matters of various nature.



## Case study 3: Healthy consultations / Zdrave konzultacije

“Croatian Debate Society” (“Hrvatsko debatno društvo” in Croatian, hence the abbreviation HDD) is an umbrella organisation for school debate clubs in Croatia that implemented the “Healthy Consultations” (“Zdrave konzultacije” in Croatian) initiative. The “Healthy Consultations” initiative allowed young people to explore existing health-related policies on the municipal level in Zagreb, Croatia. Subsequently, young people identified problematic areas and also potential solutions, and they met with policymakers during a deliberative event, discussing problematic areas and suggested solutions, and presenting recommendations to the policymakers. HDD cooperated directly with the Municipality of Zagreb when implementing the “Healthy Consultations” initiative, and recommendations prepared by young people during the workshops and deliberative processes were taken into account when updating a municipal youth strategy.

### Processes and principles

*“Young people had really good insights and solutions, so whenever anyone said they think they cannot do it, young told them how it is possible to do it.”*

(Youth worker from HDD)

The “Healthy Consultations” initiative was financially supported by the EU programme Erasmus+ (Key Action 3: Support for policy reforms), took place from October 2019 until August 2021, and consisted of the following elements:

- Workshops for young people,
- Final conference designed as a deliberative event with policymakers, and
- Final publication.

First, 15 one-day workshops took place. These workshops hosted 420 young people in total and aimed at analysing municipal public policy documents related to health in young people, namely in the following areas:

- Nutrition and physical activity of young people,
- Youth mental health,
- Combating addiction among young people,
- Alcohol and youth, and
- Reproductive health of young people.

Initially, young people had an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the policy documents through work in smaller groups. Given that the topics chosen as content

**79** basis for the “Healthy Consultations” initiative were selected in line with the EU Youth Strategy 2019 – 2027, the workshops started by introducing this overarching European policy document, and then moved on to exploring the local public health strategy of the Zagreb Municipality. Subsequently, municipal public policy documents related to the abovementioned areas were analysed from three perspectives: prevention, service analysis, and innovative approach. Based on these deliberations, problem areas as well as potential solutions were identified and recommendations for municipal policymakers were created.

Young people were given the opportunity not only to explore existing policies, but also to establish processes through which they identified potentially problematic areas as well as possible solutions, gaining group work experience, time management skills, and developing their critical thinking and argumentation competences, as well as the ability to present their arguments to others.

Second, final conference took place in August 2021 in Zagreb, Croatia, bringing together 60 young people and about 20 municipal policymakers and experts in the relevant fields in a deliberative process where results of the workshops were presented, and recommendations debated and finalized by both the young people and the policymakers. The recommendations were subsequently used by the policymakers as one of inputs when municipal youth strategy was updated, making the deliberative process complete through concrete policy impacts.

Lastly, a final publication summarizing proceedings, but also contents of the “Healthy Consultations” initiative, was prepared by HDD and published online as well as in hard copies which were distributed to the young people participating in the initiative. This final publication ensures that (A) the processes of deliberative democracy utilized within the “Healthy Consultations” initiative stay available to others who might be interested in implementing similar youth political participation formats, but also (B) capture all key content elements and hence enable the public debate to build on the work of young people within the “Healthy Consultations” initiative.

## Establishing and Maintaining the Initiative

*“Young people wanted to talk about it, and it was my job to figure out how to do it.”*

(Youth worker from HDD)

“Croatian Debate Society” (HDD) builds on more than 20 years of experience with supporting, designing, and holding debate activities in Croatia. The HDD is an umbrella organisation currently gathering over 140 debate clubs all around Croatia, totalling active participation of more than 2000 young people every year, while also implementing various projects. Bearing this solid know-how basis in mind, creating a bridge between debate as a competitive discipline which teaches young people argumentation, and a

80 tool for not only civic education but also political participation, was the next step HDD decided to take. It is also important to note that the “Healthy Consultations” initiative built heavily on support of young people themselves since they were facilitating the workshops, and they also engaged as other key figures implementing the initiative, in line with the “youth for youth” motto of HDD. Moreover, some of the young volunteers who cooperate with HDD contributed to the selection of topics for the “Healthy Consultations” initiative through sharing their interests and needs with the youth workers at HDD.

The Municipality of Zagreb was also involved in the “Healthy Consultations” initiative as an external partner (e.g., supporting HDD in finding young participants, etc.), and the Municipality of Zagreb provided HDD with letters of support when project application was prepared. This enabled HDD and the Zagreb Municipality to stay in close touch throughout the implementation phase, and to also follow up on the impacts of the recommendations co-created by young people and the local policymakers during the deliberative event (final conference).

“Healthy Consultations” initiative served as a proof of concept. It showed that HDD was able to use its know-how to implement a project building on a debate format, utilizing deliberative democracy methods, and bringing together young people and policymakers to facilitate change in public policy. Currently, another project, long-term and taking place in different places across Croatia, is being implemented: “Democratic Vaccination”. This project builds on the basic framework of the “Healthy Consultations” initiative but strives to push the boundaries by (A) establishing an officially recognized methodology for educating teachers in deliberative methods and how to use them in school environment, and by (B) implementing the deliberative events across different contexts within Croatia, including underdeveloped areas, and also featuring online deliberative tools that enable cross-border cooperation. Similarly, a project using the same structure is run by HDD and several partners across Croatia and focuses on the domain of youth social rights.

“Democratic Vaccination” initiative aims at establishing new debate clubs, at educating teachers in using debates and deliberations in the school environment to support development of young people, and at creating deliberative platforms which are regularly organised and used to enable young people to input their views into policymaking (e.g., through formulation of recommendations, but also through written promises created by policymakers and based on the recommendations of young people, etc.). The “Democratic Vaccination” initiative already shows some concrete outcomes: through from newly established debate clubs, and deliberative events that took place, young people were able to argue for creation of relaxation area in one of the schools (helping them wait for local transportation in a safe and well-established area and eliminating the need to go to a restaurant or a coffee shop), and another group of young people is trying to push for such local transport schedules which would enable them to get to and from school smoothly and quickly, while yet another group of young people advocated for



- 81 establishing a self-organised youth club run by young people for young people.

## Impacts and transparency

*“Some of the recommendations young people put forward are already starting to work.”* (Youth worker from HDD)

Impacts can be seen in the policy domain, where the recommendations co-created by young people during deliberative processes were taken into account when updating the Municipal youth strategy in Zagreb, Croatia. This is a considerable success as it showcases functionality of the “Healthy Consultations” concept, from introducing young people to the topic, through their deliberations within the workshops and small working groups, all the way to deliberating with the policymakers during the final conference.

Transparency was also achieved through the final publication which summarized not only the proceedings, but also the contents of the deliberations, and which is open source and available online. Young people who participated in the final conference of the “Healthy Consultations” initiative received the publication, with other young people also potentially informed of the impacts of the initiative, namely about the influence of the recommendations on the Municipal youth strategy update (e.g., those young people who participated in other parts of the initiative, etc.).

All in all, young people assessed participation in the “Healthy Consultations” initiative positively, therefore it can be assumed that the developmental goals of the initiative were fulfilled at least to some extent, and young people learned something new on the Municipal health policies, engaged in debates on taboo topics in a safe environment, and even might get more active in the public domain than they were before participating in the initiative. It is possible that participating young people boosted their entrepreneurial skills, civic competences, developed their critical thinking and other areas. Non-formal and informal learning occurring during the events supports such developments in young people, together with the fact that they participate in a real-life political process. Moreover, young people learned about different domains of health policy, potentially boosting their ability to consider their own life choices with respect to their health impacts (e.g., in the domains of addiction, reproductive health, alcohol consumption, healthy diet, or mental health). Young people also had a chance to look into the processes at the municipal level, understanding better how much time certain proceedings take, and potentially be more realistic in their expectations when dealing with the Municipality in the future.

The organiser, HDD, also learned its lessons, and used them to establish a follow-up initiative, one which is more wide-spread and with more foresight into the period beyond the project itself, trying to establish deliberative mechanisms for young people at numerous places across Croatia, and even developing methodology for teacher training



82 that would allow such deliberative mechanisms to be established in even more places in the future. As a consequence of the initiative having been implemented during the pandemic and hence heavily impacted by lockdowns and other measures in place at the time, knowledge about alternative means of deliberation (e.g., online platforms, etc.) was also gained.

As for the Municipality of Zagreb, the initiative proved that it is beneficial to all stakeholders to invite young people into the deliberative processes as their perspective is not only unique but can provide innovative approaches to important topic that influence young people. The “Healthy Consultation” initiative also showed that such deliberative processes can be implemented by young people supported by other young people (youth-led processes), and involve policymakers in key stages of the process, enriching both the young people, and the policymakers. This improves openness of the Municipality as well as transparency behind the policymaking process.

## Aspects of youth political participation

**Are young people active in the process?** – Yes, they take part in facilitating the workshops, analysing local health policies, deliberating, creating recommendations, presenting them to the policymakers, and finalising the recommendations together with the policymakers during a deliberative event. Young people also had a say in choosing topics of the overall process (health policies).

**Are young people participating voluntarily?** – Yes, they are either voluntarily cooperating with HDD or they were selected based on an open call, and they were free to stop participating at any time.

**Are young people participating in the role of young citizens?** – Yes, they are participating in the capacity of members of a local community and young citizens of Zagreb.

**Is the initiative targeting a policy domain?** – Yes, it is directly focusing on introducing, analysing, and critically reviewing existent health policies at the municipal level in the city of Zagreb, and creating recommendations towards improving these policies, through a deliberative process including local policymakers.

## Meaningfulness of the youth political participation

**What does the initiative aim to achieve?**

### DEVELOPMENTAL AIMS

- Inform young people about the existing health policies of the City of Zagreb.
- Create generations of young citizens who are proactive in the form of health

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policy and attitudes towards health.

- Discuss taboo topics such as mental and reproductive health of young people and empower them to break taboo topics in society.
- Provide participants with a safe environment in which they will be able to get information about health opportunities for young people in the City of Zagreb.

#### EFFICIENCY AIMS

- Create public policies that are tailored to the needs of the people to whom they are addressed.
- Empowerment Aims
- Empower young people in creating health policies for young people.
- 2. What democratic environments is the initiative operating in and what concrete mechanisms is the initiative using?

#### DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

- Deliberative processes allow young people to debate local health policies among themselves, reviewing them, identifying weak spots, and suggesting improvements, and also to start a conversation with policymakers while co-creating recommendations on policy improvements.

#### How do the aims and mechanisms complement each other to create a meaningful youth political participation opportunity?

The aims are developmental (knowledge and skills gains in young people), efficiency-oriented (creating public policies that are tailored to the needs of the people to whom they are addressed), and empowerment-oriented (empowering young people in creating health policies for young people) and the basic mechanisms that are used are deliberative processes (critically reviewing existent health policies, debating strengths and weaknesses, and formulating recommendations on their improvements together with policymakers). Young people were also co-deciding on the topics of the initiative, and they were the ones implementing the key events in the roles of facilitators (i.e., workshops and the deliberative event with policymakers).

All in all, the aims are achievable through the methods that are utilized in the “Healthy Consultations” initiative, and hence this is a meaningful youth political participation opportunity.

### Conclusions: Strengthening the participation

*“Making the young people and the decisionmakers sit together and creating a little bit of understanding between each other is a positive thing of itself.”*

(Youth worker from HDD)

## 84 How can the initiative be improved?

Despite well done webpage summary and an open-source final publication, transparency of the deliberative processes can be improved by setting up a monitoring and communication system in advance, sharing key steps of the process, and outcomes, with both the wide public and the young people who participated in the deliberations. This is especially true for establishing long-term policy impacts, in particular monitoring of how recommendations are used by the policymakers. This is difficult due to the lengthy policymaking processes which do not align with a rather short-lived project funding support, but it is crucial to make sure young people know what in particular they achieved. Young people have different expectations, and some of them are undoubtedly linked to concrete policy impacts, trusting the democratic mechanisms will take their deliberations into account. Fulfilling these expectations is key in cementing trust of the young people in democratic processes.

The initiative can also serve as a blueprint not only for other projects (e.g., “Democratic Vaccination”), but also for long-term structures set up by municipalities in Croatia and beyond. As it currently becomes painfully clear that young people are impacted by a much wider palette of policies than what was traditionally perceived as the “youth policy domain” (e.g., youth work, education, etc.), it is necessary that young people also are presented with mechanisms to contribute to policy design in other policy areas (e.g., in case of climate crisis, there are numerous policy areas which directly influence young and future generations, such as energy field, housing, agriculture, etc.). Deliberative democracy presents mechanisms such as those utilised in “Healthy Consultations” initiative that have potential to not only develop young people in competences and knowledge, but also allow them to provide invaluable advice to policymakers. Moreover, many of these processes can be youth-led, providing yet another learning opportunity for young people, and creating very effective and efficient political participation mechanisms. As such, these mechanisms can become part of participatory repertoire on the local level, and the deliberations can be utilised either ad hoc (e.g., in case new policy is being drafted or an existing one being updated, etc.), or on a regular basis (e.g., once a year, focusing on topics at hand, including deliberations on policy implementation processes, etc.). Advantages of such long-term cooperation between young people and municipalities goes beyond policymaking impact, and is potentially beneficial also to creating, maintaining, and continuously enriching and improving culture of active political participation of young people.

## How can the initiative be scaled or spread?

As mentioned above, the “Healthy Consultations” initiative can be seen as proof of concept: it is possible to very well utilise debate clubs to organise political participation events based on a model of deliberative democracy. In line with this reasoning, and also building on the follow-up initiative of HDD, the “Democratic Vaccination”, potential for spreading and scaling the deliberative participation mechanisms lies



85 primarily in utilising existent debate clubs and building on their know-how. This can happen on school, municipal, but also on regional and national levels as some debate associations operate on different levels, and some deliberations can relate to policies above the local level as well.

Furthermore, it is also possible to establish such deliberative models in schools and youth clubs with no tradition of debating whatsoever. To this end, it is crucial that open access publications are available, such as the one related to the “Healthy Consultations” initiative, and work done by the HDD on establishing a methodology for teacher trainings can be invaluable when involving new schools and youth clubs. Such methodology should also be spread far and wide once it is ready in order to support stakeholders all around Croatia and Europe in establishing their own deliberative democracy participation mechanisms.

It is also noteworthy that HDD is running some of its activities internationally, and hence peer learning potential as well as potential for spreading the deliberative participation practices beyond Croatia exists. This is further supported by the fact that online tools for deliberations are also used by HDD, and these can serve as effective and efficient platforms for sharing good practices and competences related to deliberative political participation of young people.

Lastly, the valuable approach of involving young people in different key steps (e.g., topic selection, workshop facilitation, etc.) can be used as a mechanism that allows for spreading the deliberative participation methodology beyond schools and other structures where debate clubs are already established. As young people move around, living and working in various parts of a country or even of Europe, their valuable competences can be used in mentoring a new generation of young people to establish the deliberative mechanisms fitting their needs and their local context.



## Case study 4: Multilevel systems of youth councils / Jugendringe

“Multilevel System of Youth Councils” (“Jugendringe” in German) is a system in which youth organisations come together through youth councils on all levels of government: local, regional, state, and federal. Each of the levels is also clearly linked to different public bodies in which representatives of a given youth council are expected to actively engage. The system is based on electing representatives: from youth organisations to youth councils, and from youth councils to the public bodies. In that way, connections between young people on different levels and policies on these levels are created.

### Processes and principles

*“It is good to have the youth council to also represent smaller organisations, smaller groups of young people, not always those who are already privileged. That is the benefit of the network, to keep an eye out on those who might otherwise fall out of the perspective.”* (Representative of the North Rhine-Westphalia Youth Council)

Multilevel System of Youth Councils (MSYC) is in place in the Federal Republic of Germany, and it enables young people to be represented by youth organisations through their memberships in youth councils at different levels: local, regional, state, and federal. There is one youth council on the federal level (the German Federal Youth Council, “Deutscher Bundesjugendring” in German; DBJR 2023), there are 16 youth councils on the levels of German states (as there are 16 states within Germany, “Bundesländer” in German), and there are hundreds of youth councils on the lower levels: regions, large cities, small towns and municipalities. In case of the regional and local levels, the youth councils operate on an ad hoc basis. That means that while in some places, there are numerous youth councils which are representing young people in local governments (see Youth Welfare Committee below), in some places, the youth councils are missing.

The main principle of the MSYC is democratic and state-independent self-organisation of young people. Young people can form organisations and send representatives of these youth organisations to youth councils which are working in their geographic area and at the same level of government (e.g., local, regional, etc.). Youth councils are therefore associations in which youth organisations come together to debate matters important to young people. The following key aspects of the MSYC are explored below:

- How do youth councils operate?
- What public structures do youth councils provide input to?
- How are youth councils defined in German law?

**87** In order to see **how youth councils operate**, it is best to look at some key practical steps they take. In practice, each youth council defines as to what youth organisation can become its member, and also outlines membership rules in line with legal framework the youth councils follow (Social Code, Book VIII – Child and Youth Services, “Sozialgesetzbuch Achtes Buch Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, SGB VIII” in German; SGB 1990). The membership rules define the youth council playing field and answer key questions, such as:

- How many members there are to the Board of the youth council and what are its powers?
- How is the Board elected, by whom, and how long is the electoral term?
- How often is General Assembly held and what proceedings are to be observed?
- What number of representatives from each youth organisation are to attend the General Assembly, and what are its powers?

As suggested above, each youth council usually has a **board of directors**, i.e., a governing body which steers the given youth council, sets the agenda, and overlooks its functioning throughout the year. There also are **general assemblies** which bring together representatives of all member youth organisations to decide on important matters, such as to elect the Board of Directors, or to **elect representatives who are to be sent to public bodies**. These elections follow the schedule of general elections so that representatives to be sent to public bodies are elected at the same time as new governments, and the representatives are therefore ready to take part in newly elected governmental bodies.

**On the local level**, youth councils send their elected representatives to **youth welfare committee** (“Jugendhilfeausschuss” in German). The Youth Welfare Committee is the legislative section of municipal departments dedicated to youth and children matters (“Jugendamt” in German). This Committee overlooks various youth-related matters from the perspective of the local government, and hence representatives of the youth councils are able to voice matters brought up by young people to youth organisations (Federal Work Group for State Youth Welfare Offices 2012: 5). The Youth Welfare Committees consist of 15 people out of which 9 are state representatives and 6 are elected from the youth field: 3 by welfare organisations and 3 by youth councils. Since local elections take place every 5 years in Germany, also the youth councils propose representatives to become members of the Youth Welfare Committee every 5 years. Once the youth councils propose their representatives, these need to be confirmed by local authorities to officially take up their mandate within the Youth Welfare Committee.

**On the level of the 16 German states (“Bundesländer” in German), the State Youth Councils send their representatives to various external bodies, both public and non-governmental.** As an example, the North Rhine-Westphalia Youth Council took part, among others, in the following bodies in 2023 (Landes Jugendring NRW 2023):

- State Youth Welfare Committees,
- Working Group for Protection of Children and Young People in North Rhine-Westphalia,
- Youth Welfare Working Group, and
- Advisory Board for Children and Young People with Disabilities.

On the federal level, **the German Federal Youth Council (DBJR) works directly with various bodies of the federal government**, sending experts to working groups or advisory boards. In concrete terms, the DBJR was represented in the following bodies on the federal level in 2023, for example (DBJR 2023):

- Advisory Board of the Federal Agency for the Protection of Children and Young People,
- Advisory Group of the Federal Government on Poverty and Wealth Reporting,
- Federal Committee for Civic Education,
- General Assembly and Board of Trustees of the German Youth Institute,
- Advisory Board Competence Centre Youth Check,
- Youth Policy Advisory Board of the Federal Ministry of Youth, and
- National Advisory Board for the EU Program Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the **youth councils are codified by law** as self-organised activities of young people in Social Code, Book VIII – Child and Youth Services (“Sozialgesetzbuch Ahtes Buch Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, SGB VIII” in German; SGB 1990). The law also states that the youth councils must be financially supported in order to carry out the advisory function and represent young people in various advisory bodies, committees, and working groups, nevertheless, the financial support is not specified in terms of financial sums.

Youth councils influence policymaking essentially in three ways: through deliberations, through participatory approaches, and through voting. As mentioned above, youth councils send their representatives to various public bodies. These bodies can have advisory functions, and in that case, it is the expertise which is provided by the youth council representatives during deliberations on various matters. At times, these deliberations take shape of concretely designing some policy instruments or documents, and in that case a participatory approach is taken, and youth council representatives directly contribute to drafting these new policies (e.g., youth action plans, etc.). Some of the bodies also carry a decision-making power (e.g., the Youth Welfare Committee), and in that case the youth council representatives also directly vote on various proposals.

## Establishing and maintaining the initiative

*“Not every 16-year-old wants to deal with finding funding for youth council oper-*

**89** *ations, that is not the issue of young people. There should be support structure around the youth councils.”* (Representative of the North Rhine-Westphalia Youth Council)

Already in late 19th century, voluntary youth organisations conducted much work on the local levels (e.g., religious organisations, political organisations, etc.). After the Second World War, this historical legacy was used in the West Germany to design self-organised youth organisations and their associations: the youth councils. This model provided space for democratic and state-independent self-organisation of young people, enabled them to have a say in policymaking, and prevented public authorities to have direct influence on their work. The youth councils were codified by law already since their establishment after the Second World War, and they brought together a very wide range of local youth organisations: from young firefighters to political and religious youth organisations. There are, however, no set numbers on any of the structures: there can be varying numbers of youth organisations, and there can also be varying numbers of youth councils (C.f. Oechler, Schmidt 2014). As of 2023, the youth councils are codified in the Social Code, Book VIII – Child and Youth Services (“Sozialgesetzbuch Ahtes Buch Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, SGB VIII” in German; SGB 1990).

The legitimacy and mandate are given to the youth councils by the young people via elections in which members of the youth council vote for representatives who take part in various public bodies in advisory roles. This enables young people to be democratically represented in policymaking by having their voice heard in public debates on various levels: communal (local and regional), state, and federal. Youth councils therefore ensure that youth policy which is created on the communal, state, and federal levels, takes into account interests and needs of young people from different walks of life as represented by youth organisations working with different target groups.

As mentioned above, the law also specifies that youth councils are to be supported financially in order to carry out the advisory function and represent young people in policymaking. This is done rather well on the federal and state levels, but there are complications on the regional and local levels. Authorities on regional and local levels at times avoid financing the youth councils altogether, arguing that youth organisations already do receive funding for their various activities, and hence the funding is already provided also for their engagement in youth councils. From the perspective of the local and regional youth organisations, however, the representation of young people in the youth councils and potentially also in public bodies (on behalf of the youth councils, if elected) constitutes yet another obligation on top of their day-to-day agenda. In other words, while the youth organisation receives funding for its daily work with young people, any additional work is often done on a voluntary basis, including work done within the youth councils. This situation, understandably, limits the potential of the youth councils in advocating for youth interests on the local and regional levels, and it also limits a direct engagement of young people in the youth councils as such. Furthermore, it contributes to spreading inequalities in youth council work as some of the youth councils are well funded and therefore have means to cover a wide range of

90 topics and provide expertise in various public bodies, while other youth councils work with either low or no funding whatsoever.

## Impacts and transparency

*“That is a very important part of education because you learn English or math and everything else in school, but you do not learn how to become a good member of society. And that is what we do in the youth organisations on every level.”*

(Representative of the North Rhine-Westphalia Youth Council)

Firstly, there are apparent impacts in the domains of personal and professional development when engaging in youth council work. Young people work in youth organisations which are self-organised, democratic, state-independent, and, moreover, enable them to work with other organisations within the youth council setting, representing young people by carrying their voices to public bodies. Young people have a chance to learn first-hand how an organisation is run, how youth councils operate, what public bodies are responsible for what policies, and how to represent others in creating youth policies in which young peoples’ interests are reflected. Apart from knowledge, skills are also developed, revolving around teamwork, deliberations and participation, and soft skills. Furthermore, the capacity of acting as citizens in a democratic society is increased, and hence a wider society can benefit from these developments as well. As an example of a concrete developmental impact, one can mention a case of a former chairman of the German Federal Youth Council who moved on to work at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, utilizing their know-how and skills in public policymaking from the state perspective. Through offering a chance to engage in democratic processes, the young generations of citizens are brought up in the democratic tradition of respect and equality, benefiting the wide society.

Secondly, the youth councils are seen as sources of expertise and are regularly consulted when it comes to various matters, and outlining emerging topics, such as dealing with COVID-19 pandemic, working with young refugees from Syria or Ukraine, and many others. As examples of concrete outcomes of the youth council advocacy work, voting at 16 in North Rhine-Westphalia at the level of municipal elections can be listed. On the federal level, youth council advocacy work contributed to shaping the Youth Check (Kompetenzzentrums Jugend-Check 2023) and the Youth Strategy. In all of these cases, youth councils at various levels contributed to the youth policy design.

Despite the positive impacts listed above, absence of funding can drastically limit impacts of youth councils. Moreover, and especially in case of underfunded youth councils, a lack of feedback from the public bodies can also be a discouraging moment. Many of the youth council members devote their time and energy as volunteers to contributing to various public processes and in case their work is not taken into account or reflected on in any way, it is hard to keep up their engagement. Overall, there are different impacts

91 across levels and also in various geographical areas as there are different numbers of youth councils who receive uneven funding.

In terms of transparency, the German Federal Youth Council as well as all state youth councils and many youth councils on the lower levels keep updated webpages at which all of their engagements are listed. These include internal rules and statutes, membership rules and member organisations, youth council engagement with external actors, including state bodies, and also their other activities, such as ongoing projects (see for example DBJR 2023, or Landes Judendring NRW 2023).

There is also the need to communicate across different levels. Some of the matters brought up by young people need to be sorted at one particular level, for example, issues brought up at local level perhaps need a change in law which is only possible at the federal level. There are various assemblies and sessions in which youth councils meet and discuss various topics across levels, looking for consensus which is then communicated to policymaking bodies. A question arises as to what extent these assemblies and meetings are (A) systematic and (B) transparent to youth council members and to young people generally.

Youth councils also try to take stock of the impacts and results of their work and publish these regularly in various formats. This, however, is not a systematic work, and it constitutes additional workload which requires youth council members to devote yet more time and energy. Alternatively, youth councils might try to find finances for outsourcing these tasks to other organisations (e.g., putting in place systematic evaluations through external evaluation experts). At the same time, German authorities engage in evaluation exercises focusing on young people generally and on youth work specifically. Youth councils are usually engaged in these evaluations as well, listing their achievements and activities.

## Aspects of Youth Political Participation

**Are young people active in the process?** – Yes, young people are taking part in operations and also are a target group of youth organisations, they can become members of the youth councils, and they also can be elected to become part of public bodies in advisory, participatory, or decision-making functions.

**Are young people participating voluntarily?** – Yes, in order to get engaged, they need to become actively involved with youth organisations. In order to work with a youth council, they need to actively step up, and in order to be elected for functions within public bodies, they need to agree to their nomination and be elected. They are also free to step down from any of the roles at any time.

**Are young people participating in the role of young citizens?** – Yes, they are partic-



92 ipating in the capacity of members of a local community, of young citizens, and of experts on their own lives.

**Is the initiative targeting a policy domain?** – Yes, it is creating a pool of expertise which is used in advisory, participatory, or decision-making functions in public bodies. Youth councils are also deliberative bodies which work as reflective assemblies in which matters important to young people are debated and formulated.

## Meaningfulness of the youth political participation

**What does the initiative aim to achieve?**

### RIGHTS-BASED AIMS

- Provide young people and youth organisations with a structure through which they can influence policymaking that concerns them.

### EMPOWERMENT AIMS

- Enable young people to influence world around them through participating in youth council elections and decision-making.
- Enable young people to influence world around them through engaging in public institutions on behalf of a youth council.

### EFFICIENCY AIMS

- Provide young people with opportunities to deliberate on and participate on designing policies that influence them, such as local youth action plans, or overall youth policies.

### DEVELOPMENTAL AIMS

- Provide young people with learning environments in which they can practice various skills, and develop their democratic and citizenship attitudes and values through hands-on activities of the youth councils and public bodies.

**What democratic environments is the initiative operating in and what concrete mechanisms is the initiative using?**

### REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

- Young people can vote in elections to (A) select representatives of a given youth organisation to a youth council, and to (B) select representatives of the youth council to a public body.
- Young people can stand for elections to (A) select representatives of a given youth organisation to a youth council, and to (B) select representatives of the youth council to a public body.
- If elected, young people can participate in decision-making of the youth council and of the public body.



**PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY**

- Young people can design agendas of the youth council.
- Young people can contribute to designing policies within the public bodies.

**DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY**

- Young people can contribute to debates which shape direction of the youth council.
- Young people can contribute to debates which shape policies set by the public bodies.

**How do the aims and mechanisms complement each other to create a meaningful youth political participation opportunity?**

The aims of the Multilevel System of Youth Councils are ranging from rights-based (providing young people with access to their right to participate) to empowerment (enabling young people to influence world around them via deliberating, participating, and decision-taking) to efficiency (enabling young people to co-design policies and agendas), and also developmental (offering young people with space to gain hands-on experience). These aims are pursued through a combination of representative mechanism (electing representatives to various bodies), participatory mechanisms (co-designing agendas and policies), and deliberative mechanisms (participating in debates that shape future directions of various bodies).

All in all, the aims are achievable through the methods that are utilized in the Multilevel System of Youth Councils in Germany, and hence this is a meaningful youth political participation opportunity.

**Conclusions: Strengthening the Participation**

*“Do we see it as a benefit for our political work, for our society that young people are represented, that they have the possibility to influence the decision-making?”*

(Representative of the North Rhine-Westphalia Youth Council)

**How can the initiative be improved?**

The Multilevel System of Youth Councils suffers from lack of funding in some cases at local and regional levels (c.f. Seckinger, Pluto, Peucker, Gadow 2012). This can be solved by employing similar mechanisms which are used at the federal and state levels: stable, transparent, and gradually increased financing. In concrete terms, this means dedicating concrete funding sources which continuously enable youth councils to operate under pre-agreed and transparent conditions, and ideally also using a transparent mechanism which takes into account inflation and gradually increases the funding of youth councils. This would create conditions that might enable young people to fully

94 participate, and the youth organisations to truly become also youth advocates, and not only providers of certain youth services (e.g., youth work, etc.). It would also increase the capacity of the youth councils to create further participatory mechanisms (e.g., consultations, etc.), and to increase levels of their expertise in youth related matters.

Despite efforts dedicated to transparency, the Multilevel System of Youth Councils is complex and might profit from professional communication and dissemination strategy. Each youth council should be responsible for communicating their achievements not only back to the member organisations, but also to young people in general. At the same time, independent evaluations, impact assessments, and reviews should be conducted in order to allow youth councils to improve their internal processes, and also to provide youth councils with vital information on impacts beyond their usual field of vision (e.g., unintended impacts, etc.). Cooperating with external evaluation experts might help youth councils to keep workload connected with such exercises bearable, and at the same time provide fresh perspectives when it comes to tracking impacts. It should be noted, that the aforementioned monitoring and evaluation exercises bear financial ramifications, and therefore are limited by funding available to the MSYC and to the concrete youth councils at various levels.

The Multilevel System of Youth Councils operates on various levels, and there should be systematic and regular opportunities to exchange ideas across these levels. Meetings of local, regional, state, and federal youth councils or another form of information exchange would ensure that (A) a full picture of youth interests is in place, and that (B) concrete matters are pursued at the correct level of government. While some topics can be brought up at a local level, it may be best to pursue them at a state level as they might be dealt with in a state youth action plan, for example. Transparency of such exchange events, conferences, or round tables, needs to be ensured towards (A) youth councils, (B) youth organisations, and (C) young people in general.

At some local levels, there are no youth councils in operation. This can be improved by (A) introducing a rigid rule demanding such structures to be introduced (as is the case in Norway, for example; LOVDATA 2022), although some might argue that such a rigid approach would run contrary to the spirit of youth councils in Germany as these are to be self-organised by young people and state-independent. Another option could be to (B) provide further support structures to the local governments and to the local youth organisations to establish youth councils and their cooperation with public bodies. Such support should include providing young people with such participation spaces that they wish to use, i.e., establishing such spaces and structures together with young people, supporting them in shaping them and utilizing them. Lastly, another option would be to (C) support local youth organisations to become more numerous and more active, hence helping in creation of such a local environment which is welcoming and inviting to develop local youth councils. This would greatly improve representativity of the youth council work, ensuring no (rural) areas are left behind, especially in regions where the youth council tradition is weaker (e.g., former East Germany, officially the

95 German Democratic Republic).

### **How can the initiative be scaled or spread?**

The Multilevel System of Youth Councils is already scaled to all levels of government which is one of its key advantages. What can be done to further perfect this spread across different levels is, as mentioned previously, to employ strategies of internal and external communication which would ensure that all youth councils as well as young people that they represent, are aware of what is happening on different levels. Establishing youth councils in areas where there are none at the moment should be possible given the legal basis of the structure and the immense experience with such structures throughout Germany. Quality assurance is a potential next step: to boost establishing of peer learning and mentoring platforms at which various youth councils can meet and exchange experience and good practices. This might increase quality of implementation of the youth councils across levels as well as across geographical areas, including newly established youth councils. Such system of quality assurance exists, for example, in Slovakia (see case study on Youth Parliament at KVP District of Košice City).

Spreading the Multilevel System of Youth Councils is possible (in line with national legislation) across the democratic countries. While there are some specifics of the German model (e.g., legally anchored cooperation between the youth councils and public bodies), the overall connections between the youth organisations, the youth councils, and different levels of government, creates important aspects which can be implemented in a variety of ways. What is key in spreading the Multilevel System of Youth Councils to other countries is to keep the representative system in place (i.e., electing representatives from one body to the next), to establish such working mechanisms which generate real-life impacts on young people (i.e., working together with public bodies in different ways that enable youth councils to have a say in the outcome), and to enable youth councils to operate on different levels in synchrony with each other (i.e., creating local, regional, and national youth councils with communication mechanisms across all levels). Last but not least, financial stability of such systems is key, as can also be seen in case of Germany, and therefore any such Multilevel System of Youth Councils should be funded in order for them to provide quality representation and expertise in youth matters.

## 96 Case study 5: The Lithuanian youth capital / Lietuvos jaunimo sostinė

“The Lithuanian Youth Capital” (“Lietuvos jaunimo sostinė” in Lithuanian) is an initiative that, through its pilot phase in 2021-2023, aims to establish national youth capital scheme in Lithuania. Taking inspiration from the European Youth Capital initiative of the European Youth Forum and other similar national schemes across Europe, the Lithuanian Youth Capital encourages municipalities to boost their cooperation with youth organisations and young people in the domain of public policy implementation. By preparing an implementation plan for the Lithuanian Youth Capital, the municipalities create important partnerships with local youth organisations, get experience with co-management structures in the youth field and beyond, and even create opportunities for improving policy design and delivery of services to young people.

### Processes and principles

*“The questions of the application give municipalities and its young people the opportunity to present their perspective, visions, and an action plan...”*

(The Lithuanian Youth Capital Webpage not dated)

The Lithuanian Youth Capital presents municipalities and youth field actors in Lithuania with an opportunity to come together in a co-management cooperation, and compete for a title of a national youth capital which brings publicity and funds to support engagement of young people in municipal policymaking, to promote volunteering, to introduce new policy tools tackling existent challenges and needs, to invest in local youth field, and to boost cross-sectoral cooperation on the municipal level. This can be achieved via different activities: concrete events with, by, and for young people; co-management structures in various concrete domains; new policy and policymaking mechanisms (e.g., participatory budgeting, youth check, advisory bodies, etc.); and many other tools. *“Similar initiatives are underway in Moldova (since 2009), Romania (since 2016), Latvia (since 2016), and Ukraine (since 2018).”* (The Lithuanian Youth Capital Webpage not dated)

The Lithuanian Youth Capital has several stages:

- Competition stage,
- Preparation stage,
- Implementation stage, and
- Evaluation stage.

During the **competition stage**, an open call is published which lists all rules and legal

97 obligations for municipalities to enter the competition, such as engaging young people and youth organisations in all stages of the Lithuanian Youth Capital, involving young people in decision-making processes of the Lithuanian Youth Capital, identifying challenges and measures to address them, and cooperating with Klaipėda European Youth Capital team and the Youth Affairs Agency during the Lithuanian Youth Capital preparation and implementation. Municipalities in Lithuania are invited to team up with their youth field counterparts such as NGOs, youth clubs, or other youth field bodies, and to collaboratively compile a plan addressing the issues listed above. Cooperation of the Municipality with the youth sector is very strongly accented in all stages of the Lithuanian Youth Capital, as summarized at the official webpage: *“The participation of young people and those working with young people must be made clear both in the application phase and in the implementation phase of the program. Although the applicant for the Lithuanian Youth Capital competition is a municipality, both the preparation of the application and its implementation must be based on active and equal cooperation between the municipality, the city's youth, youth organizations, and youth work organisations. An equal partnership demonstrates the municipality's trust in the youth, the non-governmental sector, the municipality's commitment to investing in the youth field, quality youth work, and recognizing its importance in the city's development processes.”* (The Lithuanian Youth Capital Webpage not dated) The competition itself follows legal rules for public competitions in force in Lithuania.

The competition stage consists of two main phases, namely: submitting of a concept note and selection of candidates for final application round; and submitting a final application and selection of a Lithuanian Youth Capital winner. Firstly, the contestants submit a concept note in which they describe the basic ideas behind their candidacy to become the Lithuanian Youth Capital. Concept notes are assessed in detail by external evaluators in line with the legal regulations of the Lithuanian Youth Capital competition, focusing on areas such as programme description, experience of the implementation body, engagement of young people, and many other. A focus group with experts is also held in order to provide general recommendations on improvements of the concept notes, and all contestants receive detailed feedback featuring these recommendations. Once the concept notes are assessed, selected candidates are invited to submit the final detailed application in which they describe all key elements of the Lithuanian Youth Capital programme as well as background processes, budgetary allocation, and other aspects. Key domains to be addressed in the Lithuanian Youth Capital application are youth empowerment, youth participation, volunteering, cross-sectoral cooperation, and quality cooperation between local authorities and youth field actors. Applicants are invited to use various examples of good practices as inspiration, as well as to utilise international quality standards in youth policymaking, such as *“A toolkit on Quality Standards for Youth Policy”* by the European Youth Forum (European Youth Forum 2016). The final applications are, again, assessed by external evaluators, and the winner of the Lithuanian Youth Capital is eventually selected by a committee which consists equally of representatives of youth field organisations and representatives of state bodies. The competition stage lasts about a year.

98 Once the competition stage is finalised and the winner is selected, the one-year-long preparation stage commences. In this **preparation stage**, the winning municipality in cooperation with Youth Affairs Agency prepare all key processes in order for the Lithuanian Youth Capital programme to be implemented during the upcoming year. In this stage, strong cooperation between the municipality and local youth field stakeholders, including young people, is supported.

After the preparation stage is concluded, the **implementation stage** begins. The Lithuanian Youth Capital programme is implemented during a year-long period by the winning municipality, supported by the Youth Affairs Agency as well as local partners and young people. The implementation builds on the preparatory stage and aims to implement all elements outlined in the final application. These need to involve at least 350 young people in the Lithuanian Youth Capital activities consisting of at least<sup>1</sup>:

- 3 physical (live) and public projects presentations (or at least 3 remote (virtual) and public presentations of the project, if due to force majeure physical (live) deliveries are not possible due to force majeure), in which no less than 50 unique residents of the municipality take part,
- An approved and valid decision of the municipal council containing activity plan of the Lithuanian Youth Capital activities, and
- 1 international event

All of the abovementioned Lithuanian Youth Capital activities need to be based on the following principles<sup>2</sup>:

- Ensure that the planned activities are based on the needs of young people, explored via research on the situation of youth, and that activities proposed by young people are focused on the interests of young people,
- Create conditions for the young people to be motivated to participate in activities corresponding with their needs, and make sure they are encouraged to develop the skills necessary for entrepreneurship and the labour market,
- Create youth-friendly infrastructure and incentives to return to live in the municipality,
- Use the methods of smart youth work when implementing project activities, and
- Provide opportunities to engage in project activities for young people with fewer opportunities and to promote their social integration.

As all of the abovementioned obligations are clearly and explicitly stated in the legal rules of the Lithuanian Youth Capital scheme, these are also monitored and evaluated throughout the Lithuanian Youth Capital implementation year, and regular meetings between the winning municipality and the Youth Affairs Agency are held.

<sup>1 2</sup> This list is based on quantitative indicators for the Lithuanian Youth Capital implementation.

99 After the Lithuanian Youth Capital is implemented, the overall process (i.e., the competition, preparation, and implementation stages) is to be evaluated, and since the 2021-2023 process is a piloting project, the future of the Lithuanian Youth Capital is to be determined, and adjustments are to be made where needed.

## Establishing and maintaining the initiative

*“For us it is important to involve (young people) and to give floor, to provide legal basis to discuss and to make decisions.”* (Representative of the Youth Affairs Agency)

The process of establishing the Lithuanian Youth Capital started in 2018 and continued in 2019, with the agreement laying foundations of the Lithuanian Youth Capital signed in 2020 by the Youth Affairs Agency and the Klaipėda municipality. In 2021, the first open call and the Lithuanian Youth Capital website were launched, and in the same year, the first ever Lithuanian Youth Capital application process took place, resulting in selection of the first ever municipality to hold the title “Lithuanian Youth Capital”: Marijampolė. Year 2022 is dedicated to preparatory activities to ensure all building blocks are in place for year 2023 in which Marijampolė holds the Lithuanian Youth Capital title and implements a related programme.

Establishment of the Lithuanian Youth Capital was initiated by the team which prepared and implemented Klaipėda European Youth Capital (EYC) programme. The Klaipėda EYC team prepared for launching the national youth capital initiative already when designing the EYC application, and once the EYC title was secured for Klaipėda, the EYC team and the Youth Affairs Agency started discussing the concrete next steps. The Youth Affairs Agency supported the process of establishing the Lithuanian Youth Capital by analysing the European Youth Capital scheme and the Lithuanian Capital of Culture scheme in detail, and by creating space in which all important processual elements could be negotiated (e.g., a concept note, procedural rules, budgetary requirements, etc.). The Youth Affairs Agency also obtained approval on the political level by the relevant Ministry representative, paving the way of formally launching the Lithuanian Youth Capital in its pilot form in 2021. The Klaipėda EYC bore some of the initial expenses related to establishing the Lithuanian Youth Capital pilot run, such as promotion or design costs. Both the Klaipėda EYC team and the Youth Affairs Agency worked on disseminating information on the Lithuanian Youth Capital to the municipal bodies as well as to youth (work) organisations. This process was supported by a network of Youth Affairs Coordinators who are present at every municipality in Lithuania.

Apart from the Klaipėda EYC team and the Youth Affairs Agency, the Lithuanian Youth Council, and World Lithuanian Youth Association were also involved in establishing the Lithuanian Youth Capital. Opening the deliberations to a wide range of youth field actors aimed at establishing such structures which would be based on the co-management principle, bringing together both youth field actors and state actors on equal footing.



**100** This co-management principle is followed in the Lithuanian Youth Capital in general, and it is based on the overall approach that the Lithuanian youth field is based on since approving the Lithuanian Youth Law: co-managing key processes and institutions by state bodies and youth field stakeholders as equals. This also ensures young people are represented in the overall Lithuanian Youth Capital processes through the umbrella youth (work) organisations, and it is in line with the Child and Youth Friendly Municipalities (UNICEF not dated) concept developed by the UNICEF.

In order to fully establish the Lithuanian Youth Capital, a separate budget chapter was created by the Youth Affairs Agency. This budget chapter covers expenses related to running the Lithuanian Youth Capital competition (e.g., collecting applications, assessing them, providing feedback, holding selection committee meetings, etc.), as well as funding the Lithuanian Youth Capital title itself via a direct financial support between €20 000 and €30 000 (and obligatory additional co-funding of at least 30% from the municipality itself). The budgetary chapter not only supports implementation of the Lithuanian Youth Capital, but also creates a clear basis for legal establishment of the initiative, stating conditions under which the Lithuanian Youth Capital takes place. In particular, it enables the Youth Affairs Agency to become and stay a close partner to the overall Lithuanian Youth Capital winner and also to monitor and evaluate the Lithuanian Youth Capital proceedings, impacts, and outcomes.

## Impacts and transparency

*"If municipality organisations understand the value of youth work and youth participation, then we see examples of things moving forward."*

(Representative of the Youth Affairs Agency)

As previously mentioned, the co-funding budgetary setup of the Lithuanian Youth Capital in which the Youth Affairs Agency provides direct financial support between €20 000 and €30 000 and the winner of the title is obliged to add a minimum of 30% if this financial sum (i.e., at least €9 000) provides a basis for long-term cooperation between the Youth Affairs Agency and the winning municipality. This cooperation enables the Agency to support the winner in different ways, but it also enables the Agency to monitor and evaluate the Lithuanian Youth Capital in line with the rules explicitly described in the legal provisions of the Lithuanian Youth Capital. In that way, key milestones, outcomes, and impacts, can be noted and valued. This is especially important in the pilot phase of the Lithuanian Youth Capital in which the whole concept is tested, and key questions are asked: Is the Lithuanian Youth Capital useful for young people? Is it useful for regional or national youth policy? Is the municipality progressing in important areas outlined by the application itself?

There is potential for introducing innovative youth participatory mechanisms, such as participatory budgeting. In the pilot phase of 2021 – 2023, a possibility to introduce



**101** youth checks on the local level is probed together with the Marijampolė municipality. The youth checks would require every decision of the municipal council which is relevant to young people to be assessed in advance, identifying impacts to young people and suggesting adjustments of the decision if needed. Such youth check would be an obligatory mechanism to be used by the Marijampolė municipality, should it be established and approved.

The Youth Affairs Agency strives to avoid unrealistic expectations, aiming at promotion of activities, innovative mechanisms, and strategies which can be achieved within the given municipality, with the given budgetary constraints, and within a set timeline. This helps all actors proceed in such a way which is ambitious, but well anchored in the local realities, eliminating pressures to come up with programme elements which be so ambitious that they become counterproductive.

Dissemination of results is planned to take place in the same way promotion of the Lithuanian Youth Capital happened, with the umbrella youth organisations being seen as the key stakeholder who needs to be informed in order to subsequently convey the message directly to the young people. And since the primary audience of any communication are umbrella youth organisations, this happens efficiently through the Youth Affairs Agency, the Klaipėda EYC team, and through the network of Youth Affairs Coordinators who are present at every municipality in Lithuania.

## Aspects of youth political participation

**Are young people active in the process?** – Yes, they take part through umbrella organisations, youth organisations, youth work organisations, and other youth field bodies, and their contribution is expected in all phases of the Lithuanian Youth Capital: from drafting the concept note and the final application, through preparatory phases, and in the implementation and evaluation of the endeavour.

**Are young people participating voluntarily?** – Yes, the Lithuanian Youth Capital is a voluntary initiative in itself, and therefore youth organisations and young people need to engage of their own initiative and free will.

**Are young people participating in the role of young citizens?** – Yes, they are participating in the capacity of members of a local community and young citizens of Lithuania.

**Is the initiative targeting a policy domain?** – Yes, it is using public funds to create synergies between youth field and municipal bodies, to implement any necessary policy changes (e.g., to introduce innovative participation mechanisms), and to implement activities designed to empower young people and increase their participation potential.

## Meaningfulness of the youth political participation

### What does the initiative aim to achieve?

#### EMPOWERMENT AIMS

- Create favourable conditions and equal opportunities for young people to get involved in politics, social, economic, cultural life of the city, its formation and evaluation
- Support and promote volunteering, quality work with volunteers, creating conditions for volunteers to use their knowledge and experience, their self-fulfilment, get involved in work and participate in society, and develop the awareness of institutions working with volunteers, including the perception that voluntary work is not a substitute for paid work

#### EFFICIENCY AIMS

- Identify relevant challenges for the municipality in the field of youth and anticipate them accordingly and develop new, high-quality concepts, tools and programs to address them, ensuring inclusion of various youth groups and persons working with youth
- Invest in the development of the youth sector and quality youth work in municipalities, prioritizing inclusion and giving appropriate attention to what matters to young people

### What democratic environments is the initiative operating in and what concrete mechanisms is the initiative using?

#### PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

- Creating concrete original or updated policies, services, or activities for young people on the municipal level.

### How do the aims and mechanisms complement each other to create a meaningful youth political participation opportunity?

The aims are both empowerment-oriented (creating favourable conditions and equal opportunities for young people to get involved in politics, social, economic, cultural life of the city) and efficiency-oriented (developing new, high-quality concepts, tools and programs to address needs of young people), and the basic mechanisms that are used are those of participatory democracy (enabling young people to directly engage in creating, implementing, and evaluating local policy and practice). One of the key concepts of the Lithuanian Youth Capital is co-management in which young people and youth field organisations are on equal footing with their municipal counterparts, having the decision-making power to contribute to designing and implementation of the Lithuanian Youth Capital, and focusing on establishing such culture and co-management structures which might last beyond the Lithuanian Youth Capital, and which

**103** would even go beyond the traditional youth field actors and involve stakeholders on a cross-sectoral basis.

All in all, the aims are achievable through the methods that are utilized in the Lithuanian Youth Capital scheme, and hence this is a meaningful youth political participation opportunity.

## Conclusions: Strengthening the participation

### How can the initiative be improved?

Firstly, since it is a pilot initiative, setting up a continuous cycle of the Lithuanian Youth Capital competitions is the next logical step forward, provided it proves to be viable and beneficial to young people as expected and as experienced in other contexts (e.g., similar national schemes in other countries, or the European Youth Capital run by the European Youth Forum). In order to establish the Lithuanian Youth Capital to become a continuous process, permanent staff at the Youth Affairs Agency needs to be hired who not only know in detail all the processes within each of the distinct phases, but who are also able to create and accumulate know-how in efficiently running these processes.

Secondly, continuously running the Lithuanian Youth Capital may require some phases to be run in parallel and not after one another as is the case in the pilot run. Specifically, the open call and competition phase can run in parallel with preparatory phase for one of the winners, and also in parallel with implementation phase for yet another winner. This is the case, for example, in the European Youth Capital scheme where winners are selected 3 years ahead in order to provide enough space for annually running application phases, but also to allow for preparations to take place, and at the same time to oversee the implementation efforts of those winners who already hold their Youth Capital years and organise all necessary programme elements.

Third, the Lithuanian Youth Capital is, at the moment, focusing heavily on the formal bodies as the main vessels through which all processes are implemented (e.g., youth centres, NGOs, municipal bodies, etc.). In the future, however, space for unorganised youth should be created, using open calls to create pools of young people from the given municipality who are not in regular contact with any organisation, but still would be interested in engaging with the Lithuanian Youth Capital on some level. Such pool of engaged young people can be allowed to enter various processes, from consultative and advisory bodies, through implementation processes, all the way to creating one or several decision-making positions, potentially even in combination with internship opportunities, within the Lithuanian Youth Capital structures on the municipal level.

Similarly, communication of both the promotion and dissemination materials should, in the future, aim also at young people and wide public, not only at youth organisations

104 and municipal bodies. This will help establish the Lithuanian Youth Capital as a valuable and recognized tool beyond the circle of professional youth field organisations, but also among young people as such, and in the eyes of wide public. Creating, for example, an alumni network of Lithuanian Youth Capital winners could create an interesting opportunity both in terms of dissemination and communication channels, and in terms of accumulating good practice examples, know-how in terms of processes, and even knowledge in terms of various expert areas (e.g., inclusion, youth engagement, youth development, youth policy expertise, etc.). Such alumni network could be established with Klaipėda (due to their crucial role in setting up the Lithuanian Youth Capital and experience with the European Youth Capital) and Marijampolė (for their role as the winner of the pilot Lithuanian Youth Capital) as the founding members. Moreover, such alumni network could become useful beyond the Lithuanian Youth Capital environment, but could become an expert pool available to municipalities in Lithuania and abroad which are interested in boosting their youth participation domains, and engaging in co-management with their youth field stakeholders on a regular basis.

### **How can the initiative be scaled or spread?**

The Lithuanian Youth Capital itself is an example of an initiative which was scaled down from a European-level initiative (the European Youth Capital) to a national one. Inspiration in terms of aims and processes is clearly visible, and the fact that Klaipėda won the European Youth Capital was the key starting point for setting up the Lithuanian Youth Capital. This in itself can serve as a good practice example on how to scale down or up existent initiatives: not only in terms of getting inspired, but also in terms of using the existent processes (e.g., winning the European Youth Capital title) to actively establish new initiatives on different levels.

Potential for scaling down the Lithuanian Youth Capital is almost infinite: a similar scheme can be applied to the level of city quarters, school districts (or schools), or youth centres, and many other contexts. In all of these contexts, emphasis on youth participation, co-management, and cultivation of intergenerational dialogue in policymaking, is very much applicable and beneficial to local actors. Financial and expert support can be provided by local municipalities, especially those with direct experience winning the Lithuanian Youth Capital, inspiring new generations of young people to become active in various contexts.

The Lithuanian Youth Capital is also an initiative which can serve as yet another good practice example for state bodies in any other country interested in establishing such scheme. Despite specific mechanisms and context in which the Lithuanian Youth Capital is running, the main principles are widely applicable and can be rather easily and readily utilised in many different national environments.

## Case study 6: Austrian national youth council and policymaking / Bundes Jugend Vertretung (BJV)

“Austrian National Youth Council” (“Bundes Jugend Vertretung / BJV” in German) is a “legally anchored interest group for all children and young people in Austria” (BJV Web-page not dated) representing young people in Austrian national policymaking through its role of a social partner in law-making. BJV aims to explore needs and concerns of children and young people under 31 years of age, and advocate for potential solutions via commenting on legal norms under discussion on the national and regional level, via participating in governmental working groups on various topics, and via media communication targeting specific issues of interest to children and youth. BJV is also an organisation which brings together various local and regional bodies with different foci and expertise in the youth field. BJV itself is a member of the European Youth Forum, a pan-European platform advocating for youth interests, most notably at the EU level.

### Processes and principles

*“Our board is also very diverse from the folklore youth to the socialist youth, which is very normal, good, and healthy, and it is actually something that makes us as a non-partisan interest group very strong, that we have such diverse voices. And our task is bringing them together, trying to see what the children and youth perspective of a given issue is, and what is in best interest of children and youth.”*

(Representative of the BJV)

Austrian National Youth Council (BJV) is a body which is legally established by the Federal Youth Representation Act (Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes 2022), stating that the role of the BJV is to ensure “*the concerns of young people are represented vis-à-vis the political decision-makers at federal level*”. The Federal Youth Representation Act (ibid.) further states that anyone up to and including the age of 30 is covered by the term “young people”, and hence all young people of 30 years of age and younger are to be represented by the BJV in Austrian policymaking at the national and regional levels. This is especially important given that in Austria the culture of anchoring norms into the legal order is very strong (i.e., it is very likely that an outcome of a public debate will be anchored in the legal system as a law or a regulation). The BJV is, moreover, an organisation bringing currently together about 60 local and regional bodies representing various groups of young people. The BJV is also itself a member of the European Youth Forum, a pan-European platform which advocates for youth matters at the international scale, most notably at the level of the European Union.



106 The BJV is set up as one of the key advisory stakeholders in Austrian policymaking (ibid.): *“In matters that may affect the interests of Austrian youth, the Federal Youth Representation has the same status as the statutory interest groups for employees, businesspeople, farmers and the Austrian Council for Senior Citizens.”* In other words, the BJV has a status of a social partner. Social partners are an important element of Austrian policymaking as they are bodies which are invited to comment on newly prepared, modified, or updated legislative acts when these are affecting areas represented by these social partners. The BJV is therefore usually invited to take part in the commenting exercise when young people are potentially affected by the legal acts. These exercises can take place in the form of submitting written comments on the discussed legislative acts, or in the form of being nominated into committees and working groups that evaluate implications of certain legal norms (often together with other relevant social partners) or oversee implementation of certain policy tools (e.g., software solutions for the wide public, including youth). Using the aforementioned palette of interventions, the BJV was able to influence regulations during the COVID epidemic, for example, eventually allowing for youth work events under 10 people to happen face to face despite the otherwise restricting rules on social gatherings.



**107** The BJV also operates as an advocacy platform for young people, utilizing direct communication with decisionmakers, targeted media messages (e.g., press releases, media campaigns), monitoring what changes have or have not been implemented after the written commenting procedure is finished, and overall contributing to the public debate (e.g., by opening up topics perceived as controversial or at least highly innovative in the media or in the written legal procedures). All of these tools are also used on the regional level as some legal acts are region-specific. This was the case, for example, when debate on children and youth safeguarding law took place. This law regulates various aspects of lives of children and young people: alcohol consumption, but even at what time it is no longer possible for children and young people to be outside of their homes without an adult guardian. Since these rules used to differ across regions, it created not only an uneven and confusing legal terrain, but also practical problems when it came to young people living in areas where two regions with different regulations bordered, or when it came to young people studying in other regions. The BJV advocacy work facilitated bringing all but one of the Austrian regions to the same level of regulation, making the legal terrain much easier to understand and follow.

In order to represent young people, the BJV conducts its own consultancy activities (i.e., events and processes focusing on learning the needs and concerns of young people), and research (i.e., monitoring of various aspects of life of young people in Austria), names and cooperates with youth delegates, and is in regular communication with local and regional youth organisations (both those that are members of the BJV, and those who operate outside of this network). The advocacy activities are both being designed as standalone BJV initiatives, and as cooperated efforts in line with initiatives of local and regional youth organisations. Furthermore, the BJV also utilizes both internal and external expertise in various youth-related fields. Internally, the BJV employs staff with expertise in different fields, but especially in case of complex cross-sectoral matters, external experts are sought. The external expertise can come from member organisations of the BJV, or also from other organisations, either NGOs in a given field, or even from private sector as a pro bono consultancy. To state two examples of such complex matters, the BJV dealt with legal regulations in case of surgeries for intersex children and youth, or in case of underage crime perpetrators with mental conditions. Both of these examples well illustrate the need for a specific expertise, often from more than one field at a time.

The BJV is itself governed by young people who are nominated by the BJV member organisations and who are voted into its internal bodies in line with internal regulations. The nominated young people need to align with the overall definition of youth as stated above (i.e., 30 years old or younger), and the overall composition of these internal bodies also follows rules on gender balance in order to allow for representation of males and females (and debating on how to ensure equal participation of non-binary youth as well). While this role brings opportunities to young people, empowering them to become members of a strong advocacy organisation with an opportunity to directly comment on legal acts under development, it is also a highly demanding role, and as





**108** such requires young people to already come with substantial expertise, usually gained through their work in the BJV member organisations.

All in all, there are several ways in which the BJV represents young people in Austrian policymaking, creating a national advisory platform as well as an advocacy body, and building not only on the fact that there are tens of member organisations that gather under the BJV umbrella, but also on numerous standalone processes, initiatives, events, and activities aiming at exploring opinions, needs, and concerns of young people, and translating these into policymaking processes on the national and regional levels.

## Establishing and maintaining the initiative

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the Austrian Federal Youth Council was established, an organisation which was a predecessor to the current Austrian National Youth Council (BJV). The Austrian Federal Youth Council was an umbrella organisation for youth organisations, and during its functioning in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this organisation was receiving state funds for the youth organisations and was responsible for redistributing these funds to the youth organisations which were members of the Youth Council.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the Austrian Federal Youth Council ceased to exist, and the current Austrian National Youth Council (BJV) was established as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2001 by the Federal Youth Representation Act (BJV Webpage not dated). The BJV is a state-funded organisation with a clear, legally anchored, role in Austrian policymaking, and transparent internal proceedings and bodies. The bodies of the BJV anchored in the law are the General Assembly and the Presidium. However, in accordance with §10 of the Federal Youth Representation Act, the Presidium is empowered to entrust an established association with the daily running of the organisation. To follow democratic standards and ensure a practical legal entity the association "Österreichische Kinder- und Jugendvertretung - ÖJV" (Austrian Children's and Youth Representation) was founded and entrusted by the presidium to manage the functions of the BJV. The board of the ÖJV and the office thus take care of the day-to-day work of the Federal Youth Representation (BJV).

As of 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021, the new so-called "parliamentary review procedure" enables all citizens and experts to submit comments on all legislative acts, citizens' initiatives, and petitions. In theory, young people can now also submit their comments directly to the parliamentary process. Nevertheless, the expertise and direct involvement of the BJV in combination with its ability to keep the finger on the pulse of the Austrian youth still ensure a rather unique and undisputed position of a youth representative in Austrian national and regional policy and law making

## 109 Impacts and transparency

*"You know, in total, we have 13 employees, and the other social partners have... I don't even know how many employees they have"* (Representative of the BJV)

The BJV admits that, despite the official wording of the law establishing the BJV as a representative body for Austrian youth, the BJV is not on equal footing with the other organisations which take up the roles of social partners and advocate for different interest (e.g., employees, businesspeople, farmers, etc.). This is largely due to the size of these organisations and given that the BJV is a rather small-scale body, the number of initiatives it is able to implement at any given moment is simply limited, as well as any coordination efforts with external partners and experts. In other words, impact that the BJV is able to generate is proportional to the human and financial resources that are available to the BJV.

The BJV can comment on laws and policies which are being drafted, adjusted, or updated, via a written procedure. It is necessary to notice, however, that the governmental bodies responsible for the given law do not have an obligation to respond to the written comments. Hence it sometimes happens that the comments by the BJV are not taken into account at all, and no feedback is provided as to why the comments were not implemented. Nevertheless, the BJV written comments are published at the BJV website together with other relevant information on the BJV initiatives, such as memberships in various governmental (and non-governmental) working groups and committees. That way, it is transparent as to what the BJV is commenting on and working at, providing young people and wide public, including media, with a clear picture of what efforts are made by the BJV.



**110** It is important to point out that the BJV is aware of the fact that the written comments are a deliberative tool through which a wider public debate is also co-created. Hence all BJV comments are fully in line with the values of the BJV and with the needs and concerns of the young people it represents, no matter how likely these are to be accepted by the responsible governmental bodies. Such comments serve a long-term purpose of opening up debates on certain topics which would, perhaps, otherwise not be opened at all. This is a valuable use of the commenting procedure as it allows to insert new topics into public and governmental debates.

The BJV also follows up on the written procedure and checks what changes have been made to the draft laws (if any), to assess impacts of the written comments the BJV provided. This is a complex process as the policy and law making is not a straightforward exercise, and these assessments are kept for internal purposes of the BJV only.

Interestingly, as there is no explicit list of topics to which the BJV would comment, or those to which it would not, the sphere of interest of the BJV is based on a continuous debate within the BJV itself. This is especially true in case of some complex matters (e.g., young offenders with mental health issues, as mentioned above), but it is also true in some cross-sectoral matters and new emerging topics (e.g.: Is energy crisis a topic in which BJV should advocate for youth interests, or not?). This approach seems to allow for a flexibility and autonomy of the BJV initiatives, and it is an approach worth keeping and further refining as it also strengthens deliberative capacities within the BJV and its member organisations through an ongoing debate on various issues.

## Aspects of youth political participation

**Are young people active in the process?** – Yes, they take part (A) in consultation processes run by the BJV and also (B) within the BJV itself as the governing bodies are only run by young people who are 30 years old or younger.

**Are young people participating voluntarily?** – Yes, the consultation processes are open for young people to take part in, but not mandatory. Similarly in case of the BJV internal governing bodies, young people are nominated by member organisations and then elected in an internal procedure, and one can step down at any moment.

**Are young people participating in the role of young citizens?** – Yes, they are participating in the capacity of members of various youth organisations, and of young citizens of Austria.

**Is the initiative targeting a policy domain?** – Yes, it is utilizing various processes to influence national policy and law making in Austria, namely written commenting on development of legal norms, membership in governmental working groups and committees that contribute to developing legal acts, and advocacy activities such as direct

111 contact with decisionmakers, media coverage, or media campaigns.

## Meaningfulness of the youth political participation

### What does the initiative aim to achieve?

#### EMPOWERMENT AIMS

- Enable young people to be elected to various internal BJV bodies and participate on BJV activities, including governmental working groups
- Enable young people to participate in consultancy events and processes, and to share their opinions, needs, and concerns
- Run regular campaigns to raise awareness for children and youth related topics

#### EFFICIENCY AIMS

- Advise on legal acts debated on the national or regional levels
- Provide expertise on various matters via membership in governmental working groups
- Advocate for youth needs via dialogue with policymakers, including public debates utilizing media coverage

### What democratic environments is the initiative operating in and what concrete mechanisms is the initiative using?

#### REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

- Representing voice of young people in national and regional level policymaking by commenting on legal acts which are under development.
- Enabling dialogue between young people and decision-makers.

### How do the aims and mechanisms complement each other to create a meaningful youth political participation opportunity?

The aims are both empowerment-oriented (enabling young people to take part either directly in BJV bodies or in BJV consultations) and efficiency-oriented (advocating for youth interests in Austrian policy and law making), and the basic mechanisms that are used are various forms of advocacy, especially the one in which the BJV fulfils the role of a social partner in policy and law making negotiations, allowing the BJV to directly feed the needs of young people into the legislative processes. This, in combination with consultancy processes in which young people can share their views, and with research through which living conditions of young people are explored, creates valuable representative process in which young people have a seat at the table when it comes to designing policies and laws in Austria.

112 All in all, the aims are achievable through the methods that are utilized by the BJV, and hence this is a meaningful youth political participation process.

## Conclusions: Strengthening the participation

### How can the initiative be improved?

There should be a legal obligation for the governmental bodies responsible for law or policy making, to respond to the written comments by the BJV. This could be the aspect that would distinguish between comments submitted by individual citizens, and those prepared by the BJV which is legally anchored as a social partner in policy and law making. In such a way, it would be doable for the official bodies to respond to the comments (as they would only need to respond to those by the social partners). The obligation to respond to the BJV comments could not only strengthen the position of the BJV as a representative of youth in Austria, but also improve deliberation processes within the Austrian national policy and law making by ensuring there is a real discussion going on during the process. The obligation to respond, i.e., to explain what comments were taken into account and how, and what were not and why, would also strengthen transparency of the policy and law making processes, leaving less space for political bargaining, and strengthening the emphasis on the merits and meaningfulness of the laws and policies.

In terms of transparency, publishing the assessments of impacts that the BJV comments had on given policies or laws might help young people understand the role the BJV plays. It would also help build public pressure to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the BJV in case not many of the BJV comments are taken into account. This could be done via short policy briefs, clearly stating the main points raised by the BJV during the written commenting procedure, and mark those which were fully or partially taken into account and influenced the final policy or law text, and at the same time mark those which were not taken into account at all. Such short briefs could be published at the BJV webpage where these could be available not only to the young people, but also to the media, and to the policymakers.

In the domain of impact, it would be beneficial if the BJV is supported by the Austrian government to such extent so that it is able to fulfil the legal basis stated in the Federal Youth Representation Act (Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes 2022), namely that: *“In matters that may affect the interests of Austrian youth, the Federal Youth Representation is on an equal footing with the statutory interest groups for employees, business people, farmers and the Austrian Council for Senior Citizens.”* In order for this to happen, financial and logistical support from the Austrian government would need to ensure the BJV possesses the same capacities as the other social partners, namely the same human resources. It is important to state that the scope of population the BJV represents is rather wide: it is about one third of the overall Austrian population. Hence



- 113 the BJV should have corresponding means at its disposal to fulfil its function to the same extent other social partners do.



### How can the initiative be scaled or spread?

The BJV operates mainly on the national level, with some work also done in the regions, and it focuses on both policy and law making. The principles observed by the BJV can easily be applied to local and regional policymaking by supporting creation of local and regional youth representative bodies which are guaranteed a seat at the table by creating space for these bodies to (A) meaningfully represent young people and (B) meaningfully contribute to local and regional policymaking. Meaningful representation of young people can be done, as shown by the BJV, by ensuring there are young people running the youth representative bodies: young people need to know about the opportunity to take part, and they need to be able to acquire necessary skills to meaningfully take part. Meaningful representation also consists of continuous work towards consultancy, research, and dialogue between the youth representative bodies and young people on the local and regional levels, therefore ensuring that the representation is done in line with the needs and interests of young people in these environments. Meaningful contribution to the local and regional policymaking can be done, again as seen in the BJV practice, by establishing clear guidelines on how and when the youth representative bodies should provide their input to the local and regional policymaking. This can be done by including them in written commenting procedures, it can also be done by involving them in advisory bodies of the local and

**114** regional state apparatus, and it can also be done via other mechanisms (e.g., regular consultations in the form of a round table where youth representative bodies are present together with the state representatives and officials from other relevant bodies, etc.). What is needed in order for such setup to not only exist, but also efficiently and effectively work, is structural and long-term financial support from the state structures, and clarity and transparency on the role of the youth representative bodies towards the local and regional state apparatus, as well as on responsibilities of the state apparatus towards these local and regional youth representative bodies.

The BJV can also be considered a good practice example worth considering in other countries around Europe. There are National Youth Councils in many European countries, but the way they operate differs greatly. The BJV approach offers an interesting and functional view on how the role of the National Youth Councils can be conducted in a way that the national government recognizes its role as a representative organisation, utilises its expertise in youth matters, and allows for the opinions, interests, and needs of the young people to reach the law and policy making processes.





## Case study 7: Youth parliament at KVP district of Košice city / Mládežnícky parlament Mestskej časti Košice – Sídliisko KVP

“Youth Parliament at KVP District of Košice City” (“Mládežnícky parlament Mestskej časti Košice - Sídliisko KVP” in Slovak) is an initiative taking place at a concrete district of the city of Košice, Slovakia: city quarter called “KVP”. The Youth Parliament at KVP Quarter of Košice City initiative (hereinafter YP KVP) is an official advisory body of the Municipal Council, and as such represents interests of young people in municipal policymaking. The YP KVP also implements original activities and events for young people and local residents in general, supports municipality in implementing selected processes, and engages in local participatory budgeting scheme.

### Processes and principles

*“Young people have to understand that if they want to get engaged in YP KVP, they also need some time flexibility and they need to be willing to give it their best so that it works at least as well it has until now. Because despite this being the first year of the YP KVP, and perhaps not everything ended the way we wanted to, I still know that at the end of the term, I will be able to calmly look back and tell myself: Yes, this first year was a really good one.”* (Representative of the YP KVP)

The Youth Parliament at KVP District of Košice City initiative (hereinafter YP KVP) is an official youth representative structure anchored in municipal structures in the city of Košice, Slovakia, at the level of one concrete city district named “KVP”. The main aims of the YP KVP are to represent young people, strengthen the position of young people, facilitate access of young people to municipal decision-making, and support participation of young people on public matters. In other words, the YP KVP aims to establish an equal position of young people in the local community based on the principle of equal partnership between the young people and others. Young people are defined in line with other youth parliaments in Slovakia as 12–30-year-olds, and these constitute both the main target group and the age group eligible to become an YP KVP member.

The YP KVP has an official statute which elaborates on the relationship between the YP KVP and the Košice Municipality, on the rules to be observed internally (e.g., internal voting procedures and session rules, etc.), and on the rights and responsibilities the YP KVP members. The statute of the YP KVP was created jointly by the young people and by the Košice Municipality, building on existent statutes of other youth parliaments in Slovakia.



There are 13 seats at the YP KVP (the same number as the number of seats at the Košice Municipal Council) which are filled by young people between 12 and 30 years of age. This is based on a voluntary candidacy of the young people, and on their subsequent appointment by the Košice Municipal Council. As of summer 2022, the youngest YP KVP member was 14 years old, and the oldest was 28 years of age. The YP KVP members are elected for a term of one year in order to allow for engagement of different young people on a yearly basis. The YP KVP term starts on 1<sup>st</sup> September of a given year and ends on 31<sup>st</sup> August of the next, copying the school year in Slovakia. The YP KVP elections are taking place slightly before the end of the term, allowing for some overlap between the standing and the newly elected YP KVP members so that a know-how transfer can happen to the fullest.

There are several key processes through which the YP KVP strives to fulfil its aim of representing young people at the local level, namely:

- Advising on local decision making via
  - Commenting on relevant debates, and
  - Membership in Municipal Commissions,
- Supporting local young people in pursuing their own initiatives,
- Engaging in the local participative budgeting scheme,
- Implementing original initiatives,
- Supporting Košice Municipality via volunteering, and
- Holding peer learning events for others interested in operations of youth parliaments.



**117** **The YP KVP is advising on municipal policymaking** by commenting on concrete agenda points of the Municipal Council sessions, and by being present at the Municipal Council sessions and contributing to the debates in person. The YP KVP receives contents of the upcoming Municipal Council session, enabling the YP KVP members to go over the contents and identify such points which are relevant to the local young people. Subsequently, there is a debate within the YP KVP on any content points which are of interest to young people, and based on internal voting, the relevant Municipal Commissions receive written comments dealing with the given agenda points (e.g., Social and Health Commission in case of mental health of young people, etc.). The YP KVP sessions are held about once a month at the offices of the Municipal Council. Providing a free of charge venue at which the YP KVP can work is one of the ways in which the Municipal Council supports YP KVP. The YP KVP members are also present during Municipal Council sessions, contributing to such debates in which youth interests are relevant. Furthermore, some of the YP KVP members are members of various Municipal Commissions (advisory bodies focusing on different domains of local policymaking), representing young people in these bodies directly as well.

**There are young people reaching out to the YP KVP members, suggesting their own ideas** as to what should change in the local district. For example, a young person came forward with an idea for a parkour playground. The YP KVP members asked him to provide them with details on the idea and promised to present the idea to the Municipal Council. The young person also received information outlining the next steps and was provided with a realistic timeline so that the young person would know what to expect happening and when. This is a very direct representation of interests of young people living in the KVP District of Košice city.

**The YP KVP is engaging in annual participative budgeting scheme**, using public funds gained through the participatory budgeting scheme to improve quality of local sports grounds and playgrounds. The YP KVP improved sports grounds and playgrounds by marking them with permanent paint so that various sports and games can be played there, and also by obtaining additional equipment such as football goals or benches and installing them at the sports facilities. This is done in line with the interest of the public as explored via an open online poll in which concrete sports facilities which are to be targeted were identified.

Apart from securing funding through the local participative budgeting scheme, the **YP KVP also created their own original events**: Easter workshops for families with children, Mothers' Day celebrations, public skating for free, sports tournaments, and other. In order to implement the YP KVP original events, the Municipal Council provides the YP KVP with a budget of €1000 per year. This amount can be renegotiated in case more events are planned by the YP KVP in the future. The YP KVP is directly improving social, cultural, and sport scene at the KVP city district.

Furthermore, **the YP KVP is also helping the local municipality via volunteering**. This

**118** is done, for example, when distributing the local municipal journal in which news from the municipality are shared to the citizens living in the KVP district. Volunteering helps to save the Municipality funds for professional delivery services, and it is increasing awareness of local population about matters under debate as well as about the YP KVP initiatives.

Lastly, **the YP KVP is also contributing to and organizing original peer learning activities**, striving to support other young people interested in establishing or participating in youth parliaments at the local level. In concrete terms, the YP KVP held a peer learning workshop, prepared a podcast, and hosted some young people from other local contexts at the YP KVP sessions in order to allow the young people to shadow their processes and learn from hands-on practice. Furthermore, the YP KVP applied to become a member of a regional youth parliament, further boosting the capacity of the YP KVP to contribute to the peer learning events, and to also learn from others in the region.

## Establishing and maintaining the initiative

*“We have started gradually putting things together in order to allow us as young people to voice our opinions of things that concern us and to implement interesting projects like the ones we are doing right now.”* (Representative of the YP KVP)

Establishing the YP KVP was done via several important milestones:

- Conceiving the idea,
- Piloting the idea,
- Adjusting the legal terrain, and eventually
- Establishing the YP KVP itself.

**The idea itself was conceived** by one of the YP KVP members in 2017 as a result of their participation in a workshop held by youth parliament umbrella organisation and focusing on exploring the idea of youth parliaments on the local level, their function, establishing, and benefits for young people. This was a key moment as the workshop not only provided insight into the domain of youth parliaments in Slovakia, but it also was a turning point at which a youth parliament in the city of Košice started to be debated among young people in 2017 and 2018, and an idea to have a youth parliament at the level of a city district was created.

**The idea of a city district youth parliament was put to the test in 2019** when a group of active young people created and piloted a non-formal youth group called “Municipal Youth Parliament”. This group consisted of four young people, and it actively contributed to initiatives in the KVP district of Košice city, such as participative budgeting, and hence proved that there is a potential for the youth parliament to be established

as an official entity.

In order to establish a youth parliament as an official advisory body to the Municipal Council at the level of city district, **legal norms had to be adjusted**. Since in Slovakia some large cities have their own statutes which are binding and influence many domains, the city of Košice is no exception, and hence the city statute had to be explored in the context of having a youth parliament at the level of a city district. It quickly became clear that the statute of the city of Košice did not allow for the youth parliament to exist on any other than a city level, and hence the city statute had to be changed in order to also allow youth parliaments at city district levels. This process took 7 months and was supported by a member of parliament based in Košice in order to facilitate the administrative and legal procedures. Once the city statute was changed, **the YP KVP was established immediately, by an official and unanimous decision of the Municipal Council in September of 2021**, naming the YP KVP as an advisory body to the Municipal Council. The YP KVP had six members at the moment of its establishing, and then the number of members increased to 12 at the end of 2021. The statute of the YP KVP was also created in cooperation of the young people and the municipality. The YP KVP statute defines all key aspects of the YP KVP functioning, such as holding official sessions, voting on official matters, terms of office for the members, or election and appointment procedures. The YP KVP was gradually also granted funding of €1000 per year to implement original initiatives such as celebrations of various important holidays or holding sports tournaments. There is potential to debate the funding again in the future with the Municipal Council, should it occur that the YP KVP is implementing more initiatives than the funding can cover. The YP KVP members have also been nominated to become members of various Municipal Commissions (advisory bodies





120 focusing on different domains of local policymaking), contributing directly to debates on various matters (e.g., social and health domain, etc.). This not only shows that the advisory role of the YP KVP can have different forms, but also that there is room for growth when it comes to young people supporting local municipalities in policymaking.

All of the stages of establishing the YP KVP played important roles, with the activity of young people paving the way to youth engagement via a non-formal group of young people, showcasing there is potential for further positive developments, overcoming legal hurdles, and eventually also finding new spaces in which to contribute, such as utilizing its own budget or contributing to the work of Municipal Commissions. What also seems to be key is a mutual understanding between the YP KVP and the Municipal Council, as it would not be possible to fulfil the role of an advisory body without being clear on what roles are taken up by the YP KVP.

## Impacts and transparency

*"It really is a great feeling to walk down the street and see how children and young people are playing sports and games at facilities that me and my colleagues marked with paint during hot summer evenings."* (Representative of the BJV)

There are three types of impacts the YP KVP demonstrates:

- Political,
- Practical, and
- Individual.

In terms of **political impacts**, the YP KVP provides advice on various Municipal decisions on a regular basis. The YP KVP receives agenda contents of each Municipal Council session in advance, providing written feedback on youth-related matters in case these are identified by the YP KVP. Furthermore, the YP KVP members also attend the Municipal Council sessions, contributing to public debates where needed. This means there is a seat at the table for young people in municipal decision-making on a regular basis, in the form of an advisory body, performed by the YP KVP. As an example of a concrete impact, advice of the YP KVP on further improvements of the local participatory budgeting scheme were accepted by the Municipal Council and suggestions were implemented by the Municipal Council. Moreover, the YP KVP members also became members of various Municipal Commissions (advisory bodies focusing on different domains of local policymaking), and as such are also members of different municipal advisory bodies where YP KVP, and hence interests of young people, are represented. This is an important step as it provides further insights into municipal decision making, influencing advisory bodies on the municipal level, and also supporting written feedback of the YP KVP by providing additional context and information on various matters. In terms of **practical impacts**, the YP KVP is repeatedly submitting proposals in the local

**121** participatory budgeting scheme. Via financial contributions from the local participatory budgeting scheme, the YP KVP is improving local sports and playground facilities by creating and maintaining paint markings, and by providing equipment for sports and leisure (e.g., football goals, park benches, etc.). The participatory budgeting scheme provides the total of €20 000 which are distributed among 7 different projects in 2 distinct categories. In the first category, the citizens submit project proposals and in case they are granted a financial support, the citizens themselves implement them. In the second category, the citizens create project proposals which, if funded, are implemented by the local municipality services.

Apart from securing funding through the participative budgeting, the YP KVP also helps the municipality in implementing various activities and events as volunteers, and the YP KVP also creates original events and initiatives. The Municipal Council provides YP KVP with a financial support of €1000 per year to implement such original initiatives, and these vary from Easter workshops for families with children, through Mothers' Day celebrations, to sports events such as free public skating or sports tournaments.

The YP KVP also organised a workshop and created a podcast for young people from other city districts, towns, and cities on how to establish and run a local youth parliament in a city or in a city district. The feedback to both the workshop and the podcast is positive and shows that there already are some groups of motivated young people who are inspired by this know-how sharing towards establishing new youth parliaments in different districts of Košice city. The YP KVP is in touch with these active young people and plans on cooperating with these newly established youth parliaments. Furthermore, the YP KVP plans on supporting restructuring of the Košice city Youth Parliament which currently operates more as a non-formal learning centre than an advisory body of the municipality, and it would be beneficial to both the young people and the city of Košice to turn into an official advisory body of the Municipality.

Bordering between the practical and political impacts, it should be mentioned that the fact that the statute of the Košice city changed in order to allow for establishing a youth parliament on the level of a city district, is in itself a very valuable and positive impact. This not only allowed the YP KVP to be established, but it also opens up the doors to all other similar initiatives in any other district of the Košice city. In combination with the good reputation of the YP KVP at the local level, both at the policymakers, and among local residents, contributes to creating a favourable environment in which similar youth initiatives can be created, and prosper. It also demonstrates the drive and determination of young people as well as their skills in navigating the complex legal terrain, finding partners who are able to support them in these processes, and persisting despite hurdles along the way. It also shows that such processes support activity of the young people, inspiring more and more to join: from four people piloting the non-formal group to 12 members of the YP KVP who were active in 2021.

In terms of **individual impacts**, members of the YP KVP can, through their hands-on



122 participation on various processes outlined in the previous paragraphs, develop valuable skills. These skills belong most notably to the domain of social and political participation (e.g., learning on specific municipal processes, etc.), but they also go beyond these areas and are well transferable to everyday and working life (e.g., communication, teamwork, administration, official correspondence, etc.). Furthermore, there can also be unique individual impacts which go beyond the abovementioned frameworks. As an example, one of the members of the YP KVP was inspired to run for office in the Municipal Council of the City of Košice in 2022 local elections. This is a result of many factors, but the YP KVP membership is definitely one of the key ones, as it also shows on the concrete motivation: to be able to help youth matters from another position and in another role, and to keep an eye out on the YP KVP as an YP KVP coordinator at the Košice city Municipality.

**Transparency of the YP KVP** is ensured via its position as an official advisory body. All of the communication between the YP KVP and other official municipal bodies is archived and available for audit. Furthermore, a section of a municipal webpage is to be dedicated to the YP KVP activities in the future, informing local residents on the basics of the YP KVP (e.g., a list of active members of the YP KVP, etc.), as well as on the advice provided to the Municipal Council (e.g., written feedback by the YP KVP to various Municipal Council session contents, etc.), and also on the original initiatives implemented and planned by the YP KVP (e.g., sports tournaments, etc.). The YP KVP is also using social networks to spread information on its activities, including those on upcoming YP KVP elections. The aim is to reach out to as many active young people as possible and inform them about the opportunity to become YP KVP members. This campaign will also clarify that being an YP KVP member requires time and flexibility, and that it also brings up new responsibilities for the young people who take up these roles, but at the same time provides with a unique opportunity to improve local reality by advising in local policymaking

An important domain in the transparency of the YP KVP is electing the YP KVP members. The election rules are still being refined in order to fit the needs of the YP KVP and also the timeline and processes of the Košice Municipality. Ideally, all young people of the KVP district would be eligible to vote for the YP KVP members, unfortunately, that is not currently feasible due to procedural obstacles (e.g., in case of low voting turnout, the elections would need to be held again until the turnout is sufficient, etc.). As of 2022, the YP KVP members are therefore voted in by the young people attending a public election event organised by the YP KVP at the end of the term.

Lastly, it should be highlighted that in Slovakia, there is a system of regional youth parliaments which serve as umbrella organisations for local youth parliaments, and as a communication platform towards the national youth parliament. In 2022, the YP KVP applied to become a member of the regional youth parliament in order to facilitate the cooperation between YP KVP and other similar bodies in the region, to build on the experience of others, to allow for good practice sharing, and to be able to easily hold

- 123 workshops and events which are of interest to other local youth parliaments. The YP KVP was also already recognized by the regional youth parliaments and received an award for activities it implements. This, yet again, illustrates the positive impacts for which the YP KVP is recognized not only locally, but also on a regional level.



## Aspects of youth political participation

**Are young people active in the process?** – Yes, they were the initiators of the YP KVP, they were active in adjusting the statute of the city of Košice in order to enable establishing the YP KVP, and they are active in all political and implementation processes of the YP KVP, including designing original initiatives in the local context.

**Are young people participating voluntarily?** – Yes, they were the ones actively engaging

**124** towards establishing the YP KVP, and their engagement as members of the YP KVP is based on their active willingness to take up such a role, and their membership in the YP KVP can end at any time, should they wish so.

**Are young people participating in the role of young citizens?** – Yes, they are participating in the capacity of members of a local community and young citizens of Košice.

**Is the initiative targeting a policy domain?** – Yes, the YP KVP is an official advisory body of a Municipal Council of the city of Košice, enabling the YP KVP members to actively comment on ongoing discussions on the municipal level. Furthermore, some of the YP KVP members are engaged in Municipal Commissions, yet another set of advisory bodies of the Municipal Council, further widening the sphere of influence of the YP KVP, and also providing the YP KVP with additional expertise and insight into the local policymaking.

## Meaningfulness of the youth political participation

**What does the initiative aim to achieve?**

### EMPOWERMENT AIMS

- Enable young people to voice their needs directly to the Municipal Council of the Košice city
- Enable young people to initiate, create, and implement their own original activities, events, and projects

### EFFICIENCY AIMS

- Advise local policymakers in youth-related matters
- Assist local Municipal Council in implementing selected local events and processes

**What democratic environments is the initiative operating in and what concrete mechanisms is the initiative using?**

### REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

- A local youth parliament as an official advisory body of the local municipality, representing young people by young people.

**How do the aims and mechanisms complement each other to create a meaningful youth political participation opportunity?**

The aims are both empowerment-oriented (enabling young people to influence local policy development and policy implementation) and efficiency-oriented (both advising on local policies and assisting the local municipality in implementing selected

125 activities), and the basic mechanism that is used is a local youth parliament as an official advisory body of a local municipality (which enables young people to act directly affect policymaking and policy delivery in local community). Young people were also actively involved in establishing the YP KVP to such extent that they helped changing the legal statute of the city of Košice. Young people continue being active within the YP KVP, but also look for other opportunities to represent youth in local policymaking, for example by their membership in Municipal Commissions (advisory bodies focusing on different policy domains). YP KVP also supports young people in other city districts, and beyond, in establishing their own youth parliaments, hence empowering young people in other geographical locations as well.

All in all, the aims are achievable through the methods that are utilized in the YP KVP initiative, and hence this is a meaningful youth political participation opportunity.

## Conclusions: Strengthening the participation

### How can the initiative be improved?

There are two key aspects of the YP KVP which can be further improved in order to better represent young people in local policymaking: election procedures, and consultation procedures.

Currently, the **election procedures** through which members are voted into the YP KVP are still under development, and it is likely they will still be further refined in the future. As they stand at the time of writing this case study, they are based on an ad hoc public election event at which young people who would like to run for office present themselves and, subsequently, young people who attend the presentations vote to establish which candidates are selected for the upcoming office term.

This process can be improved in the future by running the local campaign for a longer time period, thus allowing more young people to get informed about the overall YP KVP mission and achievements, and also about the profiles of the individual candidates. This enables to create not only a more transparent and wider election process but can enhance visibility of the YP KVP, its mission, achievements, and current direction. This is, to some extent, done via a social network campaign, but can still be widened beyond the online environments.

Furthermore, a registration for young people to become eligible to vote in the YP KVP elections can be created, hence establishing a pool of young people who are willing to come to the YP KVP elections. Such an approach would also create a pool of young people who are active enough to be interested in the local youth initiatives, but not necessarily as active as to run for office at the YP KVP directly. Such engagement, that is being registered for voting in YP KVP elections, can in itself boost activity of young

126 people, and empower them in running for an office in the future, or get engaged in public matters in other ways as they meet other active young people during the YP KVP elections. It can also help organise wider elections while minimizing the risk of holding elections which are not valid due to low turnout.

As for the **consultation procedures**, these are currently non-existent beyond the scope of ad hoc initiatives of young people themselves (i.e., taking into account needs of young people who approach the YP KVP directly). This results in a situation in which the YP KVP represents the needs of young people to the best of knowledge of the YP KVP members. The needs of local youth, and the opinion of the YP KVP, however, do not need to always align, and hence establishing regular consultation processes would boost the ability of the YP KVP to truly represent local young people when advising the Municipal Council. Such processes can have different forms, from regular meetings with young people on different topics, through surveys and workshops through which young people can share their opinions on different matters.

All in all, improving the election system of the YP KVP to engage and include as many young people as possible, and introducing regular consultancy processes to stay as much in touch with the local youth as possible would both improve the ability of the YP KVP to represent local young people.

#### **How can the initiative be scaled or spread?**

The YP KVP is itself a good practice example of an initiative which was scaled down: from the level of a municipal youth parliament to the youth parliament at the level of a city district. This shows that the potential to scale this initiative up or down exists. It is, however, necessary to use caution when establishing new youth parliaments so that clear boundaries are set among these bodies. Such boundaries should be observed namely in case of what governmental bodies the youth parliament is attached to, and hence whom the youth parliament is advising. This, at the municipal level, applies to the position of a city youth parliament and a youth parliament of a city district. These are, nevertheless, merely potential practical obstacles, not arguments against setting up such valuable advisory structures.

As mentioned in this case study, the YP KVP is actively contributing to spreading this initiative to other locations by holding workshops and creating podcasts which capitalize on the experience of YP KVP members. Creation of the YP KVP together with this initiative of the YP KVP correctly suggests that there is potential for creating youth parliaments in other locations. The YP KVP experience also suggests that legal norms should be explored in advance, as in each country, but also in each city, a different and unique legal terrain can exist. In some countries, such as Slovakia, a law governing school parliaments and youth parliaments exists. In other countries, this can be very different, and the position of a youth parliament as an official advisory body in a municipality can be more difficult to establish. At the same time, the range of activities

- 127 which the YP KVP is performing (advisory roles, but also implementation ones) are unique, and in other contexts only some of these can be possible. In any case, the YP KVP provides a very good practice example when it comes to the types of activities a youth parliament can perform.



## Case study 8: EU youth test

“EU Youth Test” is an initiative of the European Youth Forum (Youth Forum Jeunesse, YFJ) which was created as a result of consultations with its member youth organisations. The EU Youth Test initiative is a process that aims at establishing an impact analysis tool with a participation component which would help EU institutions to assess policy drafts and adjust them in such a way so that the final policies reflect needs of young people. The EU Youth Test should be applicable across policy fields, hence strongly supporting youth mainstreaming in EU policymaking. The EU Youth Test initiative was started by the YFJ, but it has also been supported and actively promoted by some of the EU institutions as well. The interplay between the YFJ initiative and other processes is one of the important aspects of this initiative as it showcases collaboration and co-creation opportunities between the youth sector organisations and policymaking bodies.

### Processes and principles

*“We are proposing a framework which needs to be tailored by the users. And so, the EU institutions need to do their own stakeholder mapping and establish their own processes when implementing the EU Youth Test.”* (YFJ Representative)

The EU Youth Test is a complex impact analysis tool proposed by the European Youth Forum (YFJ) to the EU institutions to allow for youth mainstreaming, i.e., to take needs and interests of young people into account in all policymaking processes, not only in those traditionally linked to the youth domain, such as education or youth work. The EU Youth Test is still, as of 2022, under development and it is supposed to be based on three pillars:

- meaningful engagement with youth stakeholders and experts,
- impact assessment of proposed policies, and
- mitigation measures in case negative impacts of the assessed policy proposals are identified.

In concrete steps, the EU bodies drafting different policies should first use a checklist to determine relevance of a given policy proposal to the young people and to the generations not born yet, strengthening the intergenerational justice aspect of policymaking. Once a policy draft is identified as one that is relevant to young people, then youth representatives, experts, and other youth stakeholders should be consulted to enable their voice to enter into the policymaking processes. In this step, it is vital that the EU Youth Test supports policymakers in meaningfully engaging with the young people, and with the youth representatives and experts.

Subsequently, an impact assessment should be conducted which identifies impacts



129 of the proposed policy to young people. The impact assessment should be based on both quantitative data (e.g., Youth Progress Index), and qualitative inputs (e.g., results of the consultations conducted in the previous step), and it should focus on short-term, mid-term, and long-term impacts. In case negative impacts are identified, then the impact assessment should also include a section on proposed mitigation measures. The proposed mitigation measures should outline potential changes in policy proposals to address negative impacts identified towards young people. Finally, the EU Youth Test results should be always published so that any (young) EU citizen can explore how their interests are taken into account in EU policymaking, enhancing transparency of the policymaking processes on the EU level. (European Youth Forum, not dated[a])

The overall aim is to establish such a tool which will be applicable to different policy contexts, and hence useful to various Directorate-Generals of the European Commission when outlining new or updated policies. In concrete terms, each Directorate-General should conduct their own stakeholder mapping, identify the most relevant youth experts and youth organisations, and set up the most fitting consultation structures, as well as use such indicators that are appropriate and relevant for their own policy domain. Flexibility of the EU Youth Test is one of key aspects that would allow for the tool to enable youth mainstreaming, i.e., reflecting needs and interests of youth across different policy domains.

The EU Youth Test is, as already mentioned, an original initiative of the YFJ. As such, the EU Youth Test was not, as of 2022, established yet. There are, however, processes in place through which the YFJ is striving to make the EU Youth Test reality in the future. In particular, YFJ has been:

- approaching relevant EU institutions and presenting them the EU Youth Test,
- disseminating information on the EU Youth Test at the EU level and at national levels, and
- supporting EU institutions in establishing the EU Youth Test.

After the YFJ formed the initial EU Youth Test idea which was based on consultations with its member youth organisations, **the YFJ approached selected EU institutions and presented the EU Youth Test** idea for their consideration in mid-2021. In concrete terms, the EU Youth Test was presented to the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC; European Commission 2022a), as well as to the Commissioner responsible for DG EAC. After the presentation, the DG EAC and the Commissioner decided the EU Youth Test is a worthwhile initiative and outlined ideas for further elaboration of the EU Youth Test, such as its presentation at one of the EU Youth Conferences, and also starting a deeper collaboration between the DG EAC and the YFJ on elaborating the concrete form the EU Youth Test would take up. These initial plans were put on hold after the 2021 State of the Union Address by the President von der Leyen (European Commission 2021a) in which 2022 was named as “Year of Youth”, and hence relevant actors on the EU level, and prominently also DG EAC, had to dedicate

130 substantial resources to the 2022 Year of Youth preparations.

Using the opportunity of the Year of Youth, the YFJ kept presenting the idea to a wide range of stakeholders (including DG EAC) and work together with those Member States that already implemented a youth impact assessment tool, such as Austria, France and Belgium-Flanders. The aims were to support the EU Youth Test development, as well as to communicate the general youth test idea to the EU Member States. Support of the EU Member States is crucial not only for the EU Youth Test establishment, but also for developing similar tools on the national levels in collaboration with National Youth Councils. The YFJ uses meetings with various stakeholders from the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, and the European Parliament, as opportunities to present the EU Youth Test idea, and to start debates on what concrete form the EU Youth Test could take, as well as looking for synergies in establishing the EU Youth Test as an official tool used by the EU bodies. The YFJ is also communicating these processes to its member organisations, and it is also using its contacts with the National Youth Councils to seek synergies when pursuing the youth test idea on the national levels. A cooperation between the YFJ and the OECD youth unit has also been established as there is both interest and expertise within the OECD team that can support establishment of the EU Youth Test. At the same time, the YFJ is in touch with Presidencies of the Council of the European Union. The Presidencies are rotating trios of the EU Member States which hold their own policy-shaping deliberations through the Council Conclusions and are hence also able to potentially contribute to the EU Youth Test creation. All of the aforementioned negotiations help not only spread the general youth mainstreaming idea and the concrete outline of the potential EU Youth Test, but they also support different stakeholders in finding their position towards the EU Youth Test proposal. Deliberations can be very difficult as some bodies can see the EU Youth Test in a very positive light, while others take an opposing stance. There also can be very different concrete proposals as to what the EU Youth Test should look like, presenting alternative views to the design suggested by the YFJ and described above.

As a result of the aforementioned processes, namely the initial negotiation with the DG EAC and subsequent work in disseminating the idea and refining it through deliberations with different EU stakeholders, the YFJ was also invited to take part in some concrete processes on the EU level. **In 2022, there were concrete EU institutions which were consulted about the EU Youth Test as part of the EESC own-initiative opinion drafting process, namely: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC; European Commission 2022a), Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL; European Commission 2022b), Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA; European Commission 2022c), Secretariat-General of the European Commission (SG; European Commission 2022d) which “is responsible for the overall coherence of the Commission’s work – both in shaping new policies, and in steering them through the other EU institutions”.** Several other institutions expressed their support for the implementation of the EU Youth Test, such as **the European Committee of the Regions (CoR; CoR 2022) which is “The EU’s Assembly of**

131 *Regional and Local Representatives*"; and **the European Economic and Social Committee** (EESC; EESC 2022a) which is an advisory body of the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the Council of the EU. It is apparent that these concrete bodies deal with complex policies in which needs of the young people should be reflected as much as possible, and therefore the EU Youth Test could be of immediate interest to these institutions.

In concrete terms, a constructive cooperation between the YFJ and the EESC can be described. Initiated by the EESC itself, the YFJ was invited to provide expertise on “*own-initiative opinion*” of the EESC which probed potential of the EU Youth Test (EESC 2022b, 2022c). As a result of a process which reviewed various information sources on the EU Youth Test and other similar initiatives, a public hearing was organised by the EESC at which experts were invited to share their opinions of the EU Youth Test (EESC 2022b). Subsequently, an own-initiative opinion was drafted and adopted by the EESC in 2022 in which the EU Youth Test is suggested to become part of the Better Regulation Toolbox (European Commission 2021b) as a separate policymaking tool (EESC 2022c). The adoption of the favourable opinion by the EESC opens up further avenues to negotiate with other EU bodies on establishing the EU Youth Test, and it can even be further pursued by the EESC itself, for example as a pilot project.

## Establishing and maintaining the initiative

The EU Youth Test initiative started in 2021 as a result of consultations between the YFJ and its member organisations. The consultations aimed at preparing inputs for the Conference on the Future of Europe, an innovative initiative of the European Commission, European Parliament, and the Council of the EU, structured to provide citizens of the EU Member States a space to voice their opinions on various challenges (European Union 2022). Youth mainstreaming was seen as one of the pressing matters by the YFJ member organisations, and therefore the YFJ explored possibilities to further this agenda at the EU level.

The YFJ analyses showed that there are tools used on national levels which ensure that youth interests and needs are taken into account across policy domains: youth checks, youth tests, youth impact assessment tools. Such examples can be found in Austria, Belgium-Flanders, France, Germany, or Italy. Despite using different processes and having different names, all of these tools aim at including youth interests into policy-making processes. The tools are also implemented by different bodies: some are the responsibility of a given ministry, some are implemented by a specialised institution, for example. These national-level examples of “youth tests” suggested this is a domain which is to some extent developed already, and the examples themselves can also serve as good practices to inspire establishment of the EU Youth Test. The YFJ summarized results of this mapping exercise in a publicly available online document (European Youth Forum, not dated[b]).

**132** The YFJ analyses also showed that there is a potential for such a tool to be incorporated into the Better Regulation Toolbox (European Commission 2021b) which is a set of guidelines for EU institutions that are to be used in policymaking and strategic planning across policy domains in order to take into account various important views. The EU Youth Test could, hence, become one of the tools within the Better Regulation Toolbox, readily available to various EU bodies, alongside, for example, “The ‘SME Test’” (Tool no.23; European Commission 2021b: 181) or the tool exploring “*Education and Training, Culture and Youth*” (Tool no.31; European Commission 2021b: 267).

Based on the input from the YFJ member organisations, a rather concrete proposal was developed by the YFJ. This proposal entered initial deliberations between the YFJ and DG EAC representatives, and potential for establishing the EU Youth Test was debated still in 2021. As described in the previous chapter, the YFJ has been trying to support the establishment of the EU Youth Test through various means, namely through opening debates with various EU institutions, seeking and boosting interest of various EU bodies and Member States, and gathering and providing expertise on the topic. The YFJ also proposed the EU Youth Test to be one of the suggestions from the young EU citizens to the EU officials through the Conference on the Future of Europe, and the EU Youth Test was included in the official Conference Report in early 2022 (European Union 2022: 89). Nevertheless, there is no formal agreement between the EU bodies and the YFJ on the process, and the YFJ activities are therefore ad hoc. It is through these ad hoc activities and search of synergies that the YFJ uses to fulfil its aims in relation to the EU Youth Test.

The YFJ aims for the EU Youth Test to be further developed by the end of 2022, and the YFJ will also advocate for the inclusion of the EU Youth Test as a separate tool in the Better Regulation Toolbox in 2023. Another YFJ aim is also to create a multiplication effect, and to inspire different bodies on national, regional, or even local levels to either use a modified EU Youth Test in their contexts, or to establish their own processes using similar principles the EU Youth Test is based on. The ultimate YFJ goal is to support youth mainstreaming in policymaking on the EU level and beyond.

## Impacts and transparency

*“When the Youth Test is implemented, it means that youth mainstreaming is happening in a meaningful way, and to do that, the EU Youth Test needs to be visible, and needs to be transparent.”* (YFJ Representative)

All in all, as this is an ongoing initiative, it is yet unclear in what form and whether at all the EU Youth Test will be established on the EU level. While some EU institutions have already expressed their interest in the EU Youth Test (DG EAC, DG EMPL, DG CLIMA, EESC, and others), seeing concrete results can still take some time beyond the scope of 2022. There are, however, impacts which can be traced even now, in 2022.

**133** First and foremost, the EU Youth Test initiative contributes to opening up debates on youth mainstreaming on the EU and other levels in policymaking. This is one of critical discussions that need to be had, as there are more and more vital matters which need to be treated now, but the results will only be felt tomorrow: climate emergency, new and emerging occupations, reshaping of the labour market and economies as such, and many others. In this context, the EU Youth Test is a logical step to take, but possibly not the last one, as it is needed that current and future young generations are represented when looking for solutions of these key global challenges.

Secondly, the EU Youth Test initiative is a good practice example of youth organisations ensuring voices of the young people are heard on the EU level. The YFJ represents tens of millions of young people across Europe through its member organisations (European Youth Forum 2022), and as such is capable of hearing the voices of young people and presenting them to the EU institutions in such a way that they are taken up by the EU institutions themselves. Moreover, in this case the YFJ initiative led to a co-creation process in which the YFJ is engaged in numerous processes either directly (i.e., drafting texts or providing expertise) or indirectly (i.e., spreading information to relevant stakeholders on both the EU and national levels). The initiative also helped the YFJ to establish communication channels with EU institutions which, in the past, were not frequently in touch with the YFJ.

Lastly, as there are similar tools on the national levels, some of the EU Member States are watching the EU Youth Test processes closely in order to get inspired and to refine or establish their own similar national tools. This showcases how the EU level debate can spill over to the EU Member States, creating a potential for positive changes on the national levels as well.

The YFJ is striving to keep the whole long-term process transparent via web-based publications and texts (European Youth Forum, Not dated[a, b]), but also by clearly designating a contact person with whom one can get in touch in case further questions arise or potential for collaboration occurs. The YFJ is also consulting regularly with its member organisations at quarterly meetings, using these opportunities to both inform them about the progress, and to refine the EU Youth Test processes in such a way so they are as much in line with the needs of the member organisations as possible (e.g., key elements of the EU Youth Test, etc.). The YFJ member organisations were also asked via different tools (e.g., a survey) to provide further input on the EU Youth Test. Impacts of various policies to young people have been explored through such survey inputs from the YFJ member organisations, and that helped the YFJ to better formulate the reasoning for EU Youth Test establishment. Moreover, three of the concrete results of visibility and transparency processes are: (A) mentioning of the EU Youth Test explicitly in the Final Report of the Conference on the Future of Europe (European Union 2022: 89), (B) the adoption of the EESC own-initiative opinion (EESC 2022c), and (C) explicit mention of the EU Youth Test in a Resolution adopted by the European Parliament on legacy of the European Year of Youth (European Parliament 2022).



## 134 Aspects of youth political participation

**Are young people active in the process?** – Yes, indirectly as they are represented by the YFJ member organisations, and directly as the YFJ staff and Board consists of young people, and hence the whole EU Youth Test initiative was based on voices of young people and implemented by young people at the YFJ.

**Are young people participating voluntarily?** – Yes, the EU Youth Test initiative was based on voices of young people and initiated by young people at the YFJ who took up the opportunity to strive for establishing of a new youth mainstreaming tool at the EU level.

**Are young people participating in the role of young citizens?** – Yes, they are participating in the capacity of EU citizens striving to support young people in all EU Member States.

**Is the initiative targeting a policy domain?** – Yes, it is utilizing deliberations with various EU institutions as well as collaboration and expertise provision towards establishing a new policy making tool supporting youth mainstreaming: the EU Youth Test.

## Meaningfulness of the youth political participation

**What does the initiative aim to achieve?**

### EMPOWERMENT AIMS

- Enable young people to contribute to the EU policymaking via the EU Youth Test tool (namely through its consultation component).

### EFFICIENCY AIMS

- Ensure the EU policymaking takes needs and interests of current and future young people into consideration in all policy domains.
- Support youth mainstreaming in the EU Member States via establishing the EU Youth Test and facilitating deliberation processes on establishing similar tools on national levels.

**What democratic environments is the initiative operating in and what concrete mechanisms is the initiative using?**

### COUNTER-DEMOCRACY

- Advocacy role of the YFJ enables voices of young people to be heard by EU institutions.

### DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

- The YFJ runs continuous consultations with its member organisations



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representing young people across Europe, and through these consultations, the EU Youth Test idea was created.

- The YFJ is engaging in dialogues with various EU institutions, creating and supporting deliberation processes in which youth mainstreaming is debated and the EU Youth Test is refined.

#### **PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY**

- The YFJ engages in collaboration processes through which it directly influences what the EU Youth Test will look like, together with the EU institutions.

#### **How do the aims and mechanisms complement each other to create a meaningful youth political participation opportunity?**

The aims are both empowerment-oriented (to enable young people to contribute to EU policymaking) and efficiency-oriented (supporting youth mainstreaming on EU and national levels), and the basic mechanisms that are used are advocacy (amplifying voices of young people to the EU institutions), consultations (with YFJ member organisations), deliberations (in opening up the topic of youth mainstreaming with different EU institutions), and collaboration (in co-creating the EU Youth Test itself). Young people were at the centre of the EU Youth Test idea, and they are also the ones implementing all processes which, hopefully, will lead to establishment of the EU Youth Test.

All in all, the aims are achievable through the methods that are utilized in the EU Youth Test initiative, and hence this is a meaningful youth political participation opportunity.

### **Conclusions: Strengthening the participation**

*“I think it is a successful process already because it led to a discussion about meaningful ways of engaging with young people, and the very concept of the youth mainstreaming, which in itself is really good, and the EU Youth Test is used as an example of youth mainstreaming more and more frequently, which is even better.”* (YFJ Representative)

#### **How can the initiative be improved?**

This is a very organic initiative in which many processes cannot be designed in detail in advance as they rely on many actors and on timetables of various other processes. To help others create and manage similar demanding and organic processes, the YFJ could publish a summary of steps it took within the EU Youth Test initiative. Such a summary should aim at National Youth Councils and similar audiences, as these would most benefit from such know-how, and they would also be best positioned to make use of it in their own national contexts. Consultations and mentoring by YFJ for National



**136** Youth Councils in support of efforts towards establishing youth mainstreaming tools on national levels might be yet another way to utilise experience gained by the YFJ during the EU Youth Test initiative.

The YFJ is also in a unique position to offer support to such EU institutions which will start implementing the EU Youth Test. The EU Youth Test will require each EU institution to establish processes which fit its functioning, and in some of the key steps the YFJ (A) possesses valuable expertise and (B) is in a position of a gatekeeper who can provide valuable connections to other organisations with desired expertise. In terms of expertise, there are numerous fields in which the YFJ can directly supply experts from its own ranks. In terms of gatekeeping, the YFJ member organisations, but also other networks and stakeholders that the YFJ is in touch with, create a wide pool of valuable contacts which YFJ has at its disposal. As a gatekeeper, the YFJ might therefore be able to support the EU institutions in establishing contacts with concrete stakeholders and youth representatives. All in all, the role of the YFJ does not need to stop when the EU Youth Test is officially established but can turn into supporting implementation of the EU Youth Test processes across the EU institutions.

#### **How can the initiative be scaled or spread?**

The potential for scaling the EU Youth Test initiative to lower levels of governance is apparent. There already are national tools similar to the EU Youth Test, and there is potential for creating those also on regional and local levels to strengthen youth mainstreaming across not only policy domains, but also policy levels. The YFJ is already in communication with National Youth Councils as these are in key positions to support creation of such tools in the respective EU Member States and beyond.

When it comes to spreading the EU Youth Test, that might mostly be done in countries outside of the European Union. Again, the YFJ is in touch with some National Youth Councils in these countries as well, and given the open communication of the YFJ on the EU Youth Test topic, there might be space for collaboration beyond these established channels, should similar bodies from other countries, potentially also beyond Europe, be interested. This would be much valuable, as spreading the youth mainstreaming idea beyond Europe might help tackle the most pressing global challenges of today (e.g., climate emergency) while taking youth interests into account globally as well.

In both cases (scaling and spreading the EU Youth Test initiative), the processes in which the YFJ engaged can serve as a good practice example, showcasing that deliberations, open communication, co-creation, and expertise provision are strengths that youth organisations can use to support establishing of youth mainstreaming tools. Similarly, the structure of the EU Youth Test, as well as other national tools explored by the YFJ (and those potentially created in the future), can serve as concrete inspiration as to what a youth mainstreaming tool can look like. All of the above can be easily found in various materials published by the YFJ (European Youth Forum, Not dated[a, b]), as well as by relevant EU institutions (European Union 2022: 89; EESC 2022c).

## Case study 9: The democratic school CoLibri / Základní škola CoLibri”

“The democratic school CoLibri” (“Základní škola CoLibri” in Czech) is an initiative providing basic schooling to young people in line with the ideals of democracy and personal responsibility of an individual. The school was founded in 2018 and offers space to tens of young people primarily at the age of 6-13 with the aims of providing such learning environment which builds on democratic values and promotes development of trust, respect, freedom, and responsibility in young people. Through the School Council, which is the main democratic mechanism and which allows all children, young people, and adults to meet and make common decisions, the school is taking care of all vital areas: day to day rules, contents of education, and even future directions that the school is taking.

### Processes and principles

*“The meetings of the School Assembly take place in an atmosphere of great respect to each other. I see that when children get trust and responsibility and power to make decisions on public matters, they do it knowing that what they do influences lives of others. I am really excited as to how well these meetings work.”*

(CoLibri School Representative)

“The democratic school CoLibri” (“Základní škola CoLibri” in Czech) is a basic school located in the Southern Moravian Region of the Czech Republic. It is registered with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, and as of 2022 offers basic compulsory education to 26 children and young people between the ages of 6 and 13, with an ambition of widening the educational offer also to high-school curriculum in the future, and hence offering space for education also to 14- to 19-year-olds. It needs to be noted that there are no age-based study groups, but that all children attend various classes, workshops, and other learning opportunities with no regard to their age in order to utilize peer learning and intergenerational dialogue to the fullest, adhering to the principles of self-directed learning as described by Peter Gray (2011). CoLibri school consists of a community of adults and children and young people, all of whom refer to themselves as Colibris. There are, as of 2022, six adult-Colibris who call themselves “Guides”, stressing their role of supporters of learning processes, not bearers of knowledge and power. Moreover, the CoLibri school also hosts international volunteers, two of whom were actively engaged at the school in 2022.

Self-directed learning and equality between adults and children and young people

**138** are two key principles of the CoLibri school. All Colibris are responsible for fulfilling their time and for co-creating the rules of the school. All Colibris also need to adhere to four basic rules:

- attend school classes,
- follow laws of the Czech Republic,
- follow school rules, and
- become a member of a Judicial Committee when needed and attend a Judicial Committee session when invited by the Judicial Committee.

CoLibri is a democratic school which provides concrete and very specific democratic mechanisms to all Colibris, to adults and to children and youth, namely:

- Book of rules,
- School council,
- Judicial committee, and
- working groups.

**The book of rules** is a physical as well as an online document which is binding to all Colibris (adults and children alike) and provides the community with guidance on day-to-day functioning as well as codifies democratic processes such as School Council or Judicial Committee. The Book of Rules is accessible to the Colibris only (hence it is not a public document, not meant for parents, for example), and its contents are continuously developed using the democratic mechanisms of the school, namely the School Council.



**139** **The school council** is the most vital democratic mechanism of the CoLibri school. All children-Colibris and adult-Colibris can attend the School Council meetings which are held twice a week (on Mondays and on Wednesdays). Anyone can also choose not to attend if they so wish, with no intentional repercussions (e.g., no punishments of any sorts). That means that no one is taking stock of who attends and who does not, but at the same time decisions taken at any School Council session are binding to all Colibris, for those who are present at the session and those who are absent as well. At the School Council, all Colibris, the adults and the children alike, have the same vote, and they also have the same right to propose topics for debate and to participate in these debates. In practice, Colibris note proposals for debates at a public board, and these are collected before the School Council meeting. At the School Council meeting, topics are debated one by one, always introduced by the author of the proposal so that all present Colibris understand the issue at hand. The proposals can be anything from changing some of the school rules, through suggesting a new working group, or a new educational environment, to also suggesting a concrete field trip to be organised, etc. The School Council meeting is led by a **main colibri**, a person who volunteers and is elected at the beginning of each week to overlook the proceedings at two upcoming School Council sessions by all present Colibris. The Main Colibri is assisted by an **order keeper**, a person who is responsible for keeping the atmosphere of the School Council session suitable for deliberations, ensuring noise is at acceptable levels and that Colibris listen to each other. Both of these roles are usually taken up by children-Colibris, and they can be assisted by adults if such assistance is asked for (e.g., in case writing or reading might be an issue due to low age of the child). The last important role at the School Council is a **rapporteur**, a person who takes notes and meticulously creates a report of the concrete proposals and decisions taken by the School Council. The Rapporteur is, as of 2022, usually an adult-Colibri, but it can change in case children-Colibris wish so. The effort is made for the wording of the proposals to be as unambiguous and clear as possible so that all Colibris know what they debate and what they vote on.

During the School Council session, the Main Colibri reads out the proposals collected from the board, and these are subsequently presented by their authors. In case the authors are not present, they are set aside until the authors are present and able to introduce them to the School Council and take part in the follow-up deliberations. Once the proposal is introduced by the author, a deliberation starts on why the proposal should or should not be accepted by the School Council. The deliberations take place until such time when a wide agreement is reached. That does not mean that all Colibris need to be enthusiastic about the agreement, but they should be able to accept it. Hence the deliberations are focusing mostly on voicing worries related to the concrete proposal, and on dealing with such uncertainties in the debates, exploring implications and ramifications of proposed agreements and decisions. The voting is taking place as the last step of the process, and it is firstly taking stock of those who oppose the proposal, as the aim is to have no Colibris who vote against. In case there are still some opposing votes, the deliberations are resumed, or even postponed to another School Council meeting in order to give all Colibris space for reflecting on



140 the arguments. Nevertheless, this happens only very rarely, as the deliberations are a very effective tool to explore worries and ramifications, and to deal with them among the Colibris during one School Council session. This approach is called a “sociocracy principle”, and it is typical of deliberative democracy. The aim is not to find a voting majority to push for a given proposal, but rather to find arguments as to why this concrete proposal should (not) be accepted. As a result, the voting is rather a measure of success of the deliberations, and not the only key decision-making tool. At the School Council, both children-Colibris, and adult-Colibris who are present for the whole duration of deliberations concerning the concrete agenda point at the School Council session have equal voting rights to that particular agenda point. That means that each Colibri can cast one vote in case they were present for debates leading to the voting on a concrete matter. In case some Colibris were not present for the whole duration of the debates, they do not vote on that particular matter, but they can attend upcoming debates and vote on another matter later on during the School Council session. All adopted decisions are therefore acceptable to all Colibris present at the given School Council session, and they are binding for all Colibris in the CoLibri school (i.e., even for those who are not present at the given School Council session).



**141** **The judicial committee** is a body which deals with breaking rules or conflict reconciliation among the Colibris. Despite the fact that most situations in which rules are broken or when Colibris find themselves in conflicting situations can be sorted on the spot, using deliberations and transposing the situation into a learning moment, there are situations which are more complex, and which need to be dealt with differently. When a Colibri feels the situation is beyond the regular reconciliation process on the spot, they can call for the Judicial Committee to hold a session. The Judicial Committee consists of Colibris who are named on a roster on a bi-weekly basis, and these Colibris need to come to sit as the Judicial Committee members (i.e., they cannot refuse this role, it is one of the basic responsibilities at CoLibri school). Two documents are presented to the Judicial Committee: Motion to Convene the Judicial Committee, and a Report from the Judicial Committee session. The Motion to Convene explains what happened and what are the reasons for the Judicial Committee to hold a session. The Report from the Judicial Committee clearly states the proceedings and outcomes of the Judicial Committee session. The Judicial Committee session is held as soon as possible after the Motion to Convene has been submitted, and it can be either private or public (i.e., allowing other Colibris to attend), based on the decision of the Colibri who filed the Motion to Convene. Once the Judicial Committee is concluded, a Report is compiled. Lastly, it needs to be noted, that all Colibris are also obliged to attend a Judicial Committee session when invited by the Judicial Committee.

The last mechanism of the CoLibri school is **working groups**. Any child-Colibri and adult-Colibri can become a member of working groups which are devoted to processing various matters. For example, a “Selection Committee” is a working group which takes care of selecting Colibris: both adults (i.e., potential employees), and children (i.e., potential schoolmates, new children-Colibris). Another working group deals with field trips, yet another one prepares various celebrations (e.g., birthdays, or important state holidays, etc.), and yet another one takes care of finances (i.e., takes care of buying school materials, or funding school trips, using a simple rule of making direct decisions at small purchases of up to 1000 Czech Crowns, and bringing larger purchases of over 1000 Czech Crowns to the School Council to make a decision). Working groups take day-to-day decisions and implement activities they have been created to care for, but they also can come up with matters that a School Council should decide on. There is an online and offline document which states what working groups are currently in operation and what issues they take care of. There is a mix of children-Colibris and adult-Colibris who constitute the working groups, and the membership is voluntary and based on interests of Colibris themselves. Anyone can join or leave a working group at any time. The working groups also take care of their own management, create their own internal rules, meeting schedules, set a maximum number of members, and so on.

All in all, CoLibri is utilizing a rather wide range of mechanisms which allow children and young people to influence the overall environment of school. Young people in CoLibri school hence use their right to political participation in matters that influence them, mostly through direct democracy mechanisms.

## Establishing and maintaining the initiative

*“It is absolutely crucial, and we are stressing this point when accepting the children and their families to the school, that the parents have full trust in their child.”* (CoLibri School Representative)

The CoLibri school was established by a group of teachers who felt the contemporary societal challenges are not sufficiently dealt with by traditional Czech schools. The school is officially registered with the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MEYS) and as such follows the general Czech basic school curricula and offers a nationally recognized basic education. It is funded by a mix of state financial contributions (operated by MEYS), school fees (set by the school itself), and occasional project funding which allows the school to engage in international activities, such as hosting volunteers from abroad (CoLibri 2022).

While the CoLibri school was originally established as an institution which drew inspiration from other similar schools in the Czech Republic and abroad, the school itself is continuously developing together with the children and young people. This can be seen most notably at the School Council mechanism, where young people can add or adjust rules in the Book of Rules as well as directly influence how the school curriculum is implemented (e.g., via suggesting specific topics for workshops, presenting ideas for field trips, etc.), and also at the openness with which young people are invited to all school-related meetings. There are, on top of those mechanisms mentioned in the previous chapter, also team meetings of adult-Colibris where questions dealing with practical running of the school are dealt with. This meeting is also open to children-Colibris, should they wish to attend. Moreover, when a topic is identified at the team meetings of adult-Colibris which ultimately influences all Colibris in a significant way, it is put forward to the School Council to deliberate and decide upon.

This drive to further develop the CoLibri school together with the young people is the most notable sign of applying democratic processes with real impact: It is the whole community, the adult-Colibris and the children-Colibris alike, who decide on its internal proceedings, rules, and contents. This becomes especially visible when probing the role of parents in CoLibri school. Parents are not considered part of the CoLibri internal community (i.e., they are not Colibris), and as such they are asked to put trust in their children and their ability to make their own decisions in the school. This can be hard for parents as almost none of them grew up in such a democratic and free environment, but it is how CoLibri school operates, and parents are aware of this in advance. Parents are also part of a wider school community, and there are events which are held for them specifically, such as School Café (i.e., informal meetings where some information is shared and worries of parents are dealt with). Parents can also come to visit the school, and even attend a School Council session, but they do not have the voting right, they can only attend the deliberations.



**143** It is the interest of parents and children that keep the CoLibri school up and running as well as probing possible future developments. As mentioned earlier, CoLibri school has an ambition to start providing also higher secondary education, to complement the currently provided primary and lower secondary levels of education (i.e., basic school). This would allow the CoLibri school not only to grow in terms of what educational opportunities would be offered, but also in terms of the community of Colibris. In case this plan materializes, there would be an educational environment in which children from ages 6 and young people up to ages of 18 would learn, deliberate, and live together. As also mentioned above, self-directed learning and peer learning is one of key pillars of the CoLibri school and widening the age group that is able to participate in this vital learning mechanism might be both a challenge and an advantage for the community of Colibris.

Nevertheless, all of these ambitions are fully in line with the mission of the CoLibri school: to let the children develop based on their own needs, talents, and interests, and to give them space to get to know themselves and to try on their own what it is like to take decisions on public matters in co-managing a wider community.

## Impacts and transparency

*“Everyone, adults and children alike, have an equal opportunity to participate on the development and maintenance of the community.”* (CoLibri School Representative)

It is important to also track down concrete impacts of the democratic mechanisms which are in place at the CoLibri school. Some of these impacts lay in the area of general rules, and some are rather concrete, and aim at developing school and learning environments. The examples below are not a complete and exhaustive list of impacts, but rather a selected list of concrete impactful outcomes related to democratic mechanisms at the CoLibri school.

First example focuses on maintaining and widening the community of Colibris. When a new adult or a child want to join, then all Colibris take a vote on whether they do or do not want the individual to join the school. This happens after a trial period took place (hence all Colibris had a chance to meet the potential new community member) at a School Council session, and all Colibris are allowed to cast their votes. The result is not marked in the School Council report due to its delicate nature, but it is passed on to the Selection Committee as an advisory information. The Selection Committee is a working group which takes care of recruiting, including interviewing candidates, and it is free to make a final decision, however, it is aware there should be very serious reasons for taking a decision contrary to the one suggested by the School Council vote.

Second example outlines changes in rules on cleaning the CoLibri school. All Colibris clean the school premises on a regular basis and there are groups which are responsible

144 for cleaning different parts of school grounds. At one of the School Council sessions, a decision was taken that the groups will also be using a vacuum cleaner, and the new rule specifically suggests how the vacuum cleaner is passed from one cleaning group to another, so the cleaning goes smoothly. This concrete rule was suggested, deliberated upon, refined, and adopted at one of the School Council sessions.

Third example showcases how Colibris are able to change their learning environments and processes. As a suggestion which was presented, deliberated upon, and adopted at one of the School Council sessions, children-Colibris wished to include a NERF gun game in one of their physical education slots. Since the space available at the gym was not large enough to accommodate this new activity, and still provide enough space to other physical education activities, it was adopted that an additional gym space is to be rented. Based on this decision, a new sports facility was found and rented, and hence children-Colibris who wish to enjoy a NERF gun game can do so, while others can focus on different physical activities. Similarly, new education modules can also be proposed at the School Council sessions, such as one-off or long-term workshops. In case these suggestions are adopted, the workshops are subsequently prepared and implemented. Children-Colibris can also propose to run a workshop themselves, and they either run the workshop singlehandedly, or they can ask an adult-Colibri or an external expert (i.e., someone from outside of the school) to help them.

Apart from the decision-making purpose of the School Council, the developmental purpose is explicitly acknowledged as well. Each of the roles has its learning opportunities. The Main Colibri learns to facilitate a democratic meeting, the Order Keeper learns on how to manage disturbances in meeting proceedings, and generally all Colibris learn to create logical arguments, present them to a group of peers, and listen to and analyse arguments of others. Even by proposing topics for the School Council, the Colibris learn to clearly formulate ideas, proposals, or new rules. The learning is a hands-on, intergenerational and peer learning process which takes place during many different moments at the CoLibri school. This happens by mixing children and young people of different ages, and also setting up an environment based on equality which includes also child-adult relationships. This manifests, for example, by all of the communication being on a first name basis regardless of whether it is aimed at children or at adults. This principle is also rooted in the Book of Rules which applies to both children-Colibris and adult-Colibris equally.

In order to keep track of the school developments and their impacts on lives of all Colibris, a regular monitoring is in place of how content the members of the school community are. Within the team of the adult-Colibris, continuous daily feedback takes place and parents are asked to fill in surveys. Moreover, the deliberations which take place during the School Council sessions are also providing space in which all members of the community are able to voice their opinions on current school developments.

All in all, Colibris learn both specific skills (e.g., working in groups, presenting, arguing,

145 etc.) and general democratic skills (e.g., to make a motion, to prepare a proposal for a debate, etc.), but they also foster values and attitudes which are key to operating in a democratic society. Doing all this via political participation mechanisms implemented in a basic school setting provides a unique opportunity to equip the young generations with such values, attitudes, and skills, which have potential to help them support democracy in the wider community and society in the future.

Transparency is built on the important internal documents: the Book of Rules, and the reports from various sessions (e.g., School Council, working groups, etc.). These are available, both online and offline, to all Colibris, but they are not spread beyond the community of Colibris. This ensures the rules, processes, and current topics are available to all Colibris, but they are not influenced by actors from outside of the CoLibri school. The CoLibri school also implements specific transparency mechanisms towards the wider community, namely towards parents of the children-Colibris. This is done via various meetings, via the option of visiting the school, and even of attending the School Council.

Moreover, the CoLibri school is part of a nation-wide association of similar schools, and this network provides regular meeting spaces in which good practice is shared. The CoLibri school also organises round tables and debates in which their alumni or young people from similar educational backgrounds (e.g., unschooling alumni) are provided with space to share their thoughts and engage in debates. These debates are recorded and can be accessed online via a public online video channel. The video channel also shows how the school itself operates and there are occasional articles in public media, ensuring information is spread to the public domain. Last but not least, international volunteers who are hosted at the CoLibri school take their lived experience with them back to their home countries, enabling them to share their experience also internationally and in their home contexts.

## Aspects of youth political participation

**Are young people active in the process?** – Yes, they take part in organizing different mechanisms within the CoLibri school (e.g., active roles within the School Council), and they actively participate in the mechanisms themselves (e.g., deliberations and voting of the School Council, working groups, etc.).

**Are young people participating voluntarily?** – Yes, they are free to opt out from any participation mechanism with the only exception being the Judicial Committee in which the participation is mandatory. The Judicial Committee, however, is not a participatory mechanism itself, but rather a process through which conflict resolution is done.

**Are young people participating in the role of young citizens?** – Yes, they are participating in the capacity of members of the CoLibri community, they call themselves

**146** Colibris. At the same time, their role of citizens of the Czech Republic is also stressed in four basic rules of the CoLibri school which clearly state that all Colibris need to follow the rules of the school as well as the laws of the Czech Republic.

**Is the initiative targeting a policy domain?** – Yes, all decisions taken through the participatory mechanisms in the CoLibri school have a direct impact on the school environment, processes, and contents. The decisions directly influence rules of the school, composition of the learning opportunities, and also processes happening within the school on other levels (e.g., school cleaning processes or organisation of field trips, etc.).

## Meaningfulness of the youth political participation

**What does the initiative aim to achieve?**

### RIGHTS-BASED

- The CoLibri school gives young people and children the right to take part in decision-making and proposal-making in a vast majority of matters that concern them in the school environment

### EMPOWERMENT

- The CoLibri school enables young people to make decisions on all vital school proceedings

### EFFICIENCY

- The CoLibri school enables young people to come up with proposals to improve and change school proceedings, and subsequently also deliberate and vote on adopting such proposals

### DEVELOPMENTAL

- The CoLibri school enables young people and children to gain hands-on experience with making democratic proposals, deliberating on such proposals with other members of the community, adopting and observing the newly established rules

**What democratic environments is the initiative operating in and what concrete mechanisms is the initiative using?**

### DIRECT DEMOCRACY

- The main principle of the CoLibri school builds on the School Council in which all members of the school community (i.e., all Colibris, children, young people, and adults alike) come together and take decisions which influence all school processes.

**DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY**

- The main mechanism of the CoLibri school, the School Council, is based on the deliberations as the main method of finding agreements, allowing children and young people to voice their arguments, and to find the most suitable way forward.

**How do the aims and mechanisms complement each other to create a meaningful youth political participation opportunity?**

The aims combine all four categories: rights-based (providing young people with access to participatory mechanisms which take place directly in the school with no need to find extra time or space to participate), empowerment (enabling young people to make decisions at the School Council), efficiency (enabling young people to make proposals to improve their lives, and to submit these proposals to the School Council for consideration), and developmental (providing young people with opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes via participation in democratic political participation processes, such as working groups, or the School Council). These aims are implemented via different mechanisms of direct democracy (i.e., working groups or voting in the School Council), and deliberative democracy (i.e., enabling young people to deliberate on various proposals during the School Council), with the adopted decisions immediately put in place and affecting how the CoLibri school runs forward.

All in all, the aims are achievable through the methods that are utilized in the CoLibri school, and hence this is a meaningful youth political participation opportunity.

**Conclusions: Strengthening the participation****How can the initiative be improved?**

One of the key advantages of the CoLibri democratic school is the ability to develop the school together with the children and young people. This is the greatest strength, and whatever future decisions need to be taken (e.g., widening the educational portfolio to also include high school students, etc.), these should stay true to this tradition, and include all Colibris equally.

Given the usefulness of the overall concept of the democratic school, the CoLibri school might prepare professional educational offers for teachers from regular contemporary schools. Such offers might vary from job shadowing to workshops and other educational opportunities through which the know-how on setting up democratic processes in school environment is spread beyond the walls of a democratic school.

In a similar fashion, the CoLibri school might engage in research done by professionals and universities in the Czech Republic and beyond. Both primary and applied research

148 may help not only clearly demonstrate the value of the processes used in democratic schools, but also refine these processes and enable their applicability beyond the democratic schools, and to different levels of education (e.g., to higher secondary or to tertiary education).



### How can the initiative be scaled or spread?

The CoLibri school can be scaled up to encompass further age groups and to provide primary, lower secondary, and higher secondary education. The CoLibri school itself plans on scaling up this way, and other schools could build on the experience of the CoLibri school, or also establish standalone higher secondary educational institutions (e.g., high schools).

An interesting development would be creating a university which would build on the same principles as the CoLibri school, allowing students not only to gain tertiary education, but to very actively shape directions in which such an institution moves. Such a “democratic university” might also allow students to shape research domains, and hence to actively influence not only processes within the university, but also results it produces for the wider use. As universities are often playing an important role in (A) local community, (B) regional politics, and (C) national and international debates, young people would gain an important voice on many different levels. Furthermore, such democratic universities could also include the older generations via engaging in



149 “university of the third age” programmes. Such programmes offer education for older generations, and these might offer a unique opportunity to provide a truly intergenerational experience when engaging in democratic mechanisms on the university level, bringing together young university students, university professors, and older students from the university of the third age.

Spreading the idea of democratic schools can be done not only based on the concrete example of the CoLibri school described in this case study, but also based on experience shared within networks that bring similar schools together. Spreading the democratic schools can be done as standalone providers of various educational levels (e.g., primary, lower secondary, higher secondary, tertiary), but it can also be done as a combination of subsequent educational levels (e.g., a combination of basic school and high school which provides primary as well as lower and higher secondary education). The concept is viable in the Czech context as it is officially recognized as an educational provider and listed in the registry of schools of MEYS, and therefore spreading the concept within the Czech Republic seems unproblematic. Inspiring establishment of similar schools in other countries is not unrealistic, providing the school fulfils all expectations of given national laws.

An interesting development might be to establish an international democratic school. Similar to double-degree or joint degree study programmes at European universities, students at democratic high schools might spend an initial year at a school in the Czech Republic, another year at a democratic school in Spain, and a subsequent year at a democratic school in Denmark, only to return to the Czech Republic for their final high school year. This would not only add the international schooling dimension, but also the international democratic dimension where young people would learn how to work in different democratic traditions, adding not only to their skillset, but also to inspirations they would draw on later in their lives.

The CoLibri school can also be used as a toolbox of good practices, and other schools could try to adapt and use different tools, that the CoLibri school is utilizing, in their own everyday practice. Some smaller institutions can go for a School Council as a gathering of all students and teachers, similarly to what the CoLibri school implements. In larger school institutions, the School Council might need modifications in either limiting the frequency of the sessions (e.g., similar to town hall meetings which only take place once a year and only the most important matters are decided upon), or to establish a few smaller School Councils that operate at different levels (e.g., one for freshmen, one for sophomores, and one for older students, etc.). In any case, even utilizing some of the mechanisms which are in place at the CoLibri school would greatly improve the democratic deficit of the contemporary schools.





## Case study 10: Vision for Spořilov / Vize pro Spořilov

“Vision for Spořilov” (“Vize pro Spořilov” in Czech) is a bottom-up initiative implemented by a team consisting of architects, sociologists, representatives of a local NGO, and municipal workers. Participatory spatial planning activities for young people and children were designed and implemented in local schools in Spořilov area. The input collected during the activities served as a basis for creation of Vision for Spořilov study (Stará, Veselý 2018), a document presented to the local government and used by the local government as one of background documents to inform local spatial developments. Concrete spatial developments were implemented in the Spořilov area, in line with Action Plan which used the Vision for Spořilov study as one of important sources (Stará, Veselý 2020).

### Processes and principles

*“The participation in this domain is about bringing these people together: an architect who is an expert on how to do spatial changes; local municipality which is an expert on how to administer the spatial changes; and local inhabitants including youth and children who are experts on local knowledge. All of them need each other.”* (Architect Working with Youth)

In Prague, Czech Republic, a series of participatory processes aimed at wide public took place to advise and influence spatial planning in different locations in years 2016 and 2017. As one of the results, an active local school principal and a group of architects, together with local NGO and municipality representatives, teamed up. They created a bottom-up initiative to allow youth and children to also have their say in local spatial developments: Vision for Spořilov (“Vize pro Spořilov” in Czech). This bottom-up initiative aimed at collecting lived experience and local knowledge of youth and children, and also at increasing their knowledge of various local decision-making processes. The initiative took place in local schools in the area of Spořilov, part of one of the larger city districts in Prague: Prague City District No.4 (“Městská část Praha 4” in Czech), and it was implemented by a team consisting of architects, sociologists, representatives of a local NGO, and municipal workers. The main participation tool designed for youth and children were participatory workshops. Young people and children were given a chance to express their views on what the Spořilov area should look like in coming decades in order to create a welcoming living environment. (Stará, Veselý 2018)

The participatory workshops took place at all four schools in Spořilov area: at 2 basic schools and at 2 high schools. There were three main aims of these workshops (Stará, Veselý 2018):



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- to provide space for consultations with youth and children on spatial planning in the area of Spořilov,
  - to develop know-how of youth and children in the domain of local policymaking, decision-taking, and spatial planning, and
  - to support active citizenship of youth and children.

In order to achieve these aims, a series of two interlinked workshops was implemented with youth and children of different ages, reaching out to four different schools (two basic schools, and two high schools), and being held in 7 different classrooms. Participation of youth and children in the workshops was voluntary: they could take active part or they could devote the time in the workshops to working on other school tasks, and not engage in the workshop at all. The decision of the children and youth not to take part did not bear any consequences, young people were simply asked to be considerate towards those who did take part (e.g., keeping the noise to a minimum, etc.). Implementing the workshops during school hours was beneficial for the young people and children as they did not need to cut time from their leisure time activities. Moreover, the age-specific school classes made preparations for the workshops easier as the language and overall proceedings could be adjusted to one particular age group.

During the first workshop, youth and children were invited to share their thoughts on the public space in Spořilov area generally, leisure time spending in the public space, and safety of the public space and traffic corridors. The ideas of the young people and children were marked into a map as the debates progressed, allowing for the debate to be structured as well as for the workshop facilitators to ensure that the ideas are correctly localized and described. During the second workshop, a role-playing game was introduced in which youth and children played parts of local political parties, dividing into teams, and trying to attract different groups of voters: families with children, local entrepreneurs, and retired inhabitants. The teams created bullet point lists of concrete changes they suggest being implemented in Spořilov area, focusing on the specific needs of one of the aforementioned groups of voters. The bullet points were presented to other teams in the form of election posters. Subsequently, the task of collaborating on creation of a common spatial planning strategy for Spořilov area was set. Youth and children were able to see that despite their differences, there were some common ideas which could be pursued across teams which represented different local political parties, and there were some domains in which much deliberation was needed to establish a common ground. Outcomes of these deliberations also created another input which was diligently collected by workshop facilitators and used in the following phases of the initiative.

Workshops were implemented in a school setting and during school hours. As such, facilitators also tried to tailor-make them not only to a particular age group (e.g., using appropriate language, etc.), but also to needs of teachers whose sessions were used for workshop implementation. Different concrete methodologies were therefore used: working with large maps and putting stickers on the map to reflect the debates; rol-

152 eplaying game described above; artistic methods to communicate ideas; connecting the spatial planning to local history; and others.

## areál městských sportů Na Chodovci

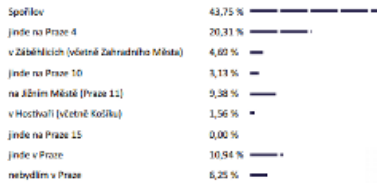
výsledky ověřovací ankety

Cílem ankety bylo získat zpětnou vazbu k dlouhodobé revitalizační a rozvojové akci městských sportů při ulici Na Chodovci. Zúčastnilo se jí 83 respondentů na jednu otázku odpovědělo 83 respondentů.

Mezi respondenty výrazně převládají muži (78 %) a lidé starší 26 let (rovněž 78 %). Ohlas tohoto typu ankety je tedy výrazně vyšší než v případě sběru poznětí před vznikem via (325 respondentů). Anketa také výrazně méně oslovila respondenty do 18 let (25 % v první anketě, 6 % v této).

→ bydliště respondentů

Sbění respondentů podle bydliště je následující:



→ hodnocení kvality

Vše je naprosto většinou respondentů hodnoceno výborně nebo velmi dobře. V tabulce níže uvádíme průměrnou známku (na stupnici 1 až 5, jako ve školě) a počet respondentů, kteří s celkovou vší nebo některou částí návrhu nejsou (příliš) spokojeni (známka 3 a horší).

část návrhu	známka	%
celkové vize	1,51	10,84
skatepark	1,7	18,46
zóna pro sport a volný čas	1,41	10,61
parčíková relaxační zóna	1,5	10,61

→ co ocenit?

Na celkové vizi nejvíce respondentů potěšilo, že součástí návrhu je nový, elegantní, mírně nadsazený skatepark. Vzhledem k převaze dospělých lidí mezi respondenty, často již rodiči s dětmi, bylo oceněno vícegenerační zaměření areálu, ve kterém budou moci příjemně trávit volný čas se svými potomky různého věku. Respondenti také přivítali relaxační část areálu a vytvoření nové vodní plochy (tření nádrží), důstojné WC a ostatně možnosti posazení ve stínu. Několikrát zaznělo i to, aby byla parčíková plocha zelená co nejvíce oddělena od poměrně rušné ulice Ke Spořilovu.

→ přiblížit občanským přirovnáním koncepty?

Několik respondentů se ptalo, jestli bude součástí areálu příloha a bude-li možné zahrnout u zón obklopených. S oběma návrhy počítá. Diskutivně také bylo, zda by neměl být areál oddělen kompaktní zelení od ulice Na Chodovci a okolcen. Smyslem návrhu je vytvořit v pravém smyslu otevřený městský relaxační prostor, který láká návštěvníky různého věku a různě, nikoliv uzavřený aktivní areál. Zaměření je však podpořit přírodnou vzdušnou kontrolou otevřeného areálu vůči vnitřnímu okolí. Správné je pro areál tohoto rozsahu a zaměření nutný, kamery systém lze doporučit.

design architekt  
10/2021

Diskutivně také bylo, zda má být součástí areálu psi louka (v městech, kde se nachází již nyní). Psi louka je situována na okraji areálu, poměrně daleko od skateparku a dalších sportovních aktivit. Při zachování základní ohleduplnosti ze strany všech návštěvníků, zejména dozorčnických, že mimo psi louku musí být pes v areálu na krátkém vodítku, by neměl docházet ke kolizním situacím.

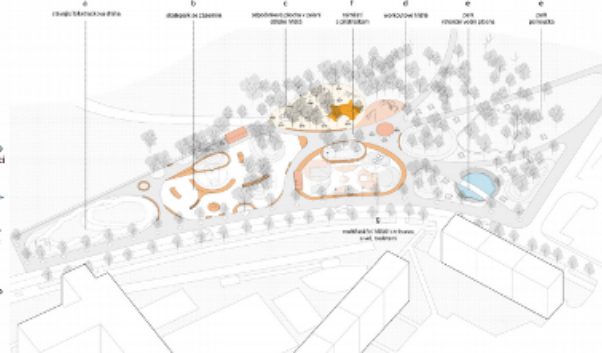
→ psi louka?

Skateboardisté se dotazovali, proč není plocha skateparku větší. Důvodem je, že na západní straně jsou limitovány plochy pumptracku a na východní straně hranici pozemku svěřeného do správy městské části. Rozšíření areálu východním směrem (do prostoru panelové plochy, kde se v minulosti nacházely autobusové výhledy) souhlasí blávného města Prahy, a především nemalou investici do regenerace pozemku. Vzneseiny byly také dotazy na konkrétní skatové prvky, které byly předány autorům vize. Konkrétní prvky jsou otevírájí podoba pro ideovou studii celého areálu a budou ještě diskutovány v dalších fázích projektu.

→ velikost prostoru pro skateboardisty a jiné aktivity?

Fotografické záměří také dotaz, kdy dojde k rozšíření vize (návrhu), je třeba znovu připomenout, že se jedná o dlouhodobou vizi vyžadující souhlas více subjektů – hlavněho města Prahy (rozšíření na sousední pozemky), PHE (ochranné pásmo vyhledáho napáje) a Městské části Praha 10 v rámci snahy o co nejlepší propojení se sportovním areálem hlavy. Ke realizaci první etapy (revitalizace skateparku v hraničních stávkách areálu) může dojít během několika příštích let. Časový horizont případné realizace dalších etap teprve vyplyne z dalších jednání a výše uvedenými subjekty a je podměrně zajištěním odpovídajícího financování (jedná se o investiční akci mimo rozpočtové možnosti MČ Praha 4).

→ realizace areálu?



Once the workshops were implemented, the collected inputs from the youth and children were analyzed by a team of architects, and it constituted a basis on which a study “Vision for Spořilov” was created (Stará, Veselý 2018). This study was presented to the local government, and it was made available to school officials, and through them also to the young people and children attending the schools in the Spořilov area. The study “Vision for Spořilov” was subsequently used as a background document for further strategic planning of spatial developments. Wider processes were started that built on this study, and hence took into account the views of youth and children on spatial planning matters.

As part of wider processes, the Vision for Spořilov was used to determine concrete revitalisation and construction projects in the Spořilov area. These concrete projects were listed in detail, for example, in the “Action Plan for Public Space Regeneration of New Spořilov” (Stará, Veselý 2020). The Action Plan described concrete issues linked to concrete spots of the Spořilov area and offered rough description of and financial estimates of implementing revitalisation and construction projects designed to address these issues. The local government used the Action Plan as one of background

**153** documents and started working towards detailed planning and implementation of projects described in the Action Plan. As part of the detailed planning and implementation, follow-up and complementary participatory activities were implemented to determine more details of these upcoming projects, for example:

- surveys and polls, or
- guided walks with architects.

There were several **polls and surveys** serving different purposes and implemented in different stages of spatial planning processes. Some of the polls and surveys focused on prioritisation of areas and suggestions proposed by the young people and children, to determine priorities of the wider community of local inhabitants. Prioritisation polls and surveys facilitated creating a concrete order and timeline of planned spatial development projects in line with expectations of local inhabitants. Further polls and surveys mapped challenges and needs connected to the concrete spatial development projects. And even later on, surveys and polls validated the design of spatial development projects, ensuring that the designs were in line with the needs of the local inhabitants. The validation phase offered space to add more details to concrete spatial development projects (e.g., what concrete sports equipment is preferred at different spots in the park, etc.).

**Guided walks** brought together local inhabitants, architects, and other actors of the spatial planning process (e.g., local government representatives). In the Spořilov area, the walks were implemented in different concrete spots in relation to concrete spatial development projects. The walks aimed to show potential of various upcoming revitalisation projects to local inhabitants, as well as to deliberate on details of these projects, and to communicate next steps in the implementation process.

## Establishing and maintaining the initiative

*“When creating a spatial development strategy, I think participation of youth and children should go hand in hand. The youth and children talk about the space based on their immediate experience, and that experience has different levels. At some spots, they have trouble crossing a road because of missing pedestrian crossings. In some places, there is too large a bush and they cannot see incoming cars properly. At some spots, cars park where they should not have, and create barriers. At other spots, they would like to play because it can be a great spot, but now it is not maintained properly, or not equipped properly...”*

(Architect Working with Youth)

Participatory spatial planning activities for youth and children were initiated by an active principal living in the Spořilov area who took part in participatory spatial planning activities designed for wide public. A proposal to prepare similar spatial planning

154 activities for children and youth at school was made to a team of architects and sociologists who led the wide public participation activities, and together they created a team which, eventually, included also local municipality representatives (who helped with co-funding and public relationships) and an NGO Pražské forum, z.s. (which was a project management body). Starting with spatial planning activities in one school in the Spořilov area, the project snowballed to include all local basic and high schools, offering youth and children of different ages an opportunity to take part in spatial planning, and to share their ideas on what the public space should look like: what they see as valuable, where there are problems, and where potential for development can be identified. At each school, one to two classes were engaged due to funding limitations and also due to the fact that for spatial planning purposes, the two classes constituted a sufficient number of young people and children to provide their perspectives: at some point, the ideas start to repeat. The participatory spatial planning activities built on the daily life of children and youth: they move around a lot, walk, use the public transport system, and therefore they know the whole neighbourhood, and even the whole city district very well from their perspective.





**155** The Vision for Spořilov was a bottom-up initiative which took place in 2018 and which depended on a collaboration between private sector (architects), public sector (local municipality and schools), and a non-governmental sector (an NGO). As such, the initiative was limited in time and scope (depending on funding support), and it aimed at creating a study summarizing ideas of youth and children for future spatial planning in the Spořilov area. The study “Vision for Spořilov” (Stará, Veselý 2018) was subsequently presented to the local municipality, and the local municipality decided to take the report into consideration as one of the background documents when planning future spatial developments. As a concrete example of how the local municipality used the final report (Stará, Veselý 2018), the “Action Plan for Public Space Regeneration of New Spořilov” (Stará, Veselý 2020) can be listed.

As described above, follow-up participatory spatial planning activities also took place in the Spořilov area when some of the spatial development projects entered various phases of implementation. These were aimed at local inhabitants generally, not focusing specifically on youth, but also not excluding them. They were also, technically, different initiatives, and ones which were initiated top-down by the local government.

When it comes to participatory spatial planning activities, it is apparent that their scope is limited to a given location, and to a given time frame. While the whole area of Spořilov was the geographical focus of the Vision for Spořilov initiative, the follow-up activities had a much narrower scope, and focused on a particular park area or even on a concrete road crossing. In terms of time, the initial study outlined a long-term perspective (i.e., future decades), but the follow-up activities, again, focused on a much narrower time spans, such as immediately implemented projects foreseen for months and years to come.

In that context, the Vision for Spořilov is a concluded initiative which is serving further spatial planning purposes, but there is no need for it to immediately continue. The initiative, however, constitutes a good practice example in creating youth participation methodology in spatial planning which can be applied to other spatial development projects as well. There are concrete phases of spatial development efforts in which participatory activities can easily be included to favour the whole process.

Firstly, a preparatory phase of any spatial planning project can already include participatory activities conducted by the local municipality. The input from participatory activities can be used to specify the concrete assignment of any spatial development project or it can be quoted as an annex to the assignment. The municipality can also set the participatory component as a condition for implementing the spatial planning project by a selected external subject (e.g., a private company).

Subsequently, participative methods can also be used in further steps of the spatial planning as validation tools. In that sense, the participative methods help to make sure that the local government and the local inhabitants have a common understanding

**156** of all key aspects of the spatial development plan (i.e., that the proposed solutions take into account needs of the local inhabitants and eliminate problems identified in a given local environment). Participation methods need to be included from the start of the spatial development process, otherwise the inhabitants rightly recognize that it is not a participatory event, but a mere communication of decisions that have already been taken by the local government.

## Impacts and transparency

*“There is always a majority of any given classroom that cooperates with us actively, and I think it always is a pleasant time together. We do not push them into anything, we do not dictate anything, and you can see the activity of the youth and children, their initiative, them being engaged, asking questions, debating with you.”* (Architect Working with Youth)

There were two main goals of participatory spatial planning activities implemented during Vision for Spořilov initiative: to provide young people with an opportunity to contribute to the spatial planning project, and to enable youth and children to learn something new during the process.

When it comes to impacts of spatial planning activities, these can be largely seen in the Vision for Spořilov study (Stará, Veselý 2018) becoming a background document for local government spatial planning opportunities. Input of the young people and children collected by the architects and accumulated in the report continues to inform local youth policy years after the participatory spatial planning activities took place. The report was also made available to the young people and children at the schools in order to provide them with an opportunity to discover the final product of their engagement.

To mention a concrete example: There is a lake out of which a stream flows, and young people and children found this to be a valuable green place. In their view, it might be possible to spend their free time in that area or use it as a shortcut from one place to another. However, youth and children were not able to use this green area as it was not well maintained and it was known for occurrence of pathologic phenomena (e.g., drugs, etc.). As a result of the participatory spatial planning activities and the subsequent Vision for Spořilov study (Stará, Veselý 2018), new landscaping efforts are under way as a cooperation of several local municipal governments, and solutions are sought to upgrade the place so that young people, children, and other local inhabitants, can safely use it in ways they wish.

When it comes to the educational component, there was a strong component of participation and citizenship education (e.g., how to be active in creating their surroundings, etc.), but youth and children also learned about the spatial planning on the local level: what actors are involved in what stages of the projects, how the projects are initiated,



157 by whom, in what phases they are at the moment, etc.

Moreover, there were developmental impacts in terms of knowledge of various academic-related disciplines, such as history, arts education, landscape planning, and others. As an example, one of the participatory activities was designed in such a way that the youth and children created their own pieces of arts through which they communicated the ideas on spatial planning. At the same time, during deliberations on spatial planning, there were different skills young people and children could learn: soft skills, team cooperation, presentation skills, leading a dialogue, argumentation, debating, finding a consensus, and many other. When implementing workshops in schools, the architects and teachers often cooperated closely to identify concrete learning outcomes which should be covered by the workshops during the participation spatial planning efforts.

In order to make the impacts visible to the young people and children, it is key to also communicate the follow-up steps in spatial planning processes back to the youth and children. This was done during follow-up visits at schools by architects themselves, but unfortunately, only as voluntary activities on the part of the architects, and not as part of the local funded project. In particular, the following example questions should be answered to the young people:

- What exactly the participatory spatial planning activity fed into?
- What next steps will be taken in the spatial planning process?
- Where can young people follow the spatial planning developments? At webpages? At reports?
- What is a realistic timeline of any new developments?
- Which points were raised by youth and children that cannot be addressed? Why?
- In case no follow-up activities are eventually planned, why did that happen?

The visibility of impacts, especially in such long-term endeavours as spatial planning, is key to prevent demotivation of youth and children and ensure they are willing to engage in similar activities in the future. It also helps support developmental impacts, especially those in the domain of active citizenship.

## Aspects of youth political participation

**Are young people active in the process?** – es, they take part in participatory spatial planning activities which provide basis for creating spatial development plans.

**Are young people participating voluntarily?** – Yes, they are asked to either take part in participatory spatial planning activities, or to devote the time to school tasks and be considerate to those young people and children who decided to take part in spatial planning.

**158** **Are young people participating in the role of young citizens?** – Yes, they are participating in the capacity of members of a local community and young citizens of Spořilov.

**Is the initiative targeting a policy domain?** – Yes, it resulted in creation of the Vision for Spořilov study (Stará, Veselý 2018) which served as a background document to further spatial planning developments, such as the Action Plan (Stará, Veselý 2020). Concrete developments were based on the input from the participatory spatial planning activities in the local area of Spořilov.

## Meaningfulness of the youth political participation

*“You are always talking with the youth and children about a given place, you want to hear their local knowledge of that place, but that also means that you teach them something new about that place, how to view that place differently than they did before...”* (Architect Working with Youth)

**What does the initiative aim to achieve?**

### EFFICIENCY AIMS

- Young people as experts on local environment are enabled to contribute to spatial planning policies in the area they live in.

### DEVELOPMENTAL AIMS

- Young people are provided with an opportunity to develop their faculties as active citizens, their knowledge in the domain of spatial planning (and other related fields), and various skills, through their active participation at a spatial planning activity.

**What democratic environments is the initiative operating in and what concrete mechanisms is the initiative using?**

### COUNTER-DEMOCRACY

- As a bottom-up initiative, young people were provided with a consultancy platform in which they shared their lived experience, with experts (architects) summarizing the inputs of young people and presenting them to local government for further use.

**How do the aims and mechanisms complement each other to create a meaningful youth political participation opportunity?**

The aims are both efficiency-oriented (encouraging young people to contribute with their ideas to the development of their local environment) and development-oriented (enhancing active citizenship, as well as other domains of knowledge and skills), and

**159** the basic mechanism that is used is a bottom-up initiative providing young people with space to share their ideas and facilitating transfer of their ideas to the local government (through a spatial planning study).

All in all, the aims are achievable through the methods that are utilized in the “Vision for Spořilov” initiative, and hence this is a meaningful youth political participation opportunity.

## Conclusions: Strengthening the participation

*“The participatory projects are always built from the scratch, and they mostly look very different from each other.”* (Architect Working with Youth)

### How can the initiative be improved?

As the spatial planning participatory activities are tightly bound to a given geographical location and to a clearly set timeframe for which the developments are foreseen, each of these activities is necessarily a short-term endeavour. This being said, nothing prevents these activities to be implemented repeatedly in different stages of the spatial development design and implementation, as described above. As such, each of the participatory spatial planning activities should be tailor-made to (A) its audience and (B) its purposes. As shown in case of the Vision for Spořilov initiative, age of young people and children needs to be taken into account when designing such activities, namely in terms of language, activity types, and even in choosing a space which holds the activity. In some cases, school settings may prove beneficial as young people are already there and their free time is not limited by their participation in a given activity, in other cases different other environments can prove to be just as beneficial (e.g., local environment during a walk, or sports facilities for their open space and variability).

In terms of purposes, spatial planning can have two main purposes described above (participatory and developmental), but there can be others worth mentioning as well. These participatory tools can also be used to communicate intentions of the local government in spatial planning: to let inhabitants know what the currently planned and implemented projects are. Participatory planning activities can include facilitating transformation of the given area to its new form. The local inhabitants can be offered with a chance to bid farewell to the old form of the area, and symbolically welcome the creation of a new place. Participative methods can also contribute to creating bonds between newly designed places and the local community. For example, local inhabitants, including youth and children, can be invited to paint a fence or symbolically contribute to constructing part of the place. All of these can be part of a package of participatory spatial planning activities, and all of them can be valuable tools that serve different purposes, not necessarily only the participatory one. As shown in this paragraph, a spatial planning activity can have many different levels, and as such it

**160** can become a community gathering which supports local democracy in various ways, from participation, through increasing transparency of local government processes, to strengthening local community and its relationship to local environment.

Transparency can be boosted by making reporting back to the young people a fixed part of any participatory spatial planning activity. It is necessary to complete the whole circle and to let young people know what happened with their input, where to find additional information, and what the next steps are, as described in detail in one of the previous chapters. Doing that strengthens the positive impacts of the participatory spatial planning activities and increases the likelihood of youth and children participating in similar activities in the future, or even of youth initiating them.

Participation and engagement of young people can be increased by creating new roles for them in the spatial planning process. Young people can, for example, create an advisory board which is invited to be part of the whole spatial planning process from the beginning (designing activities) to the end (presenting results). Young people can also be invited to completely take over different tasks within the process, for example presenting the final study to the local government. A final conference can be organised at which young people not only hear the results of their engagement but can also directly ask local government representatives about different aspects of current and future spatial developments. Overall, creating new roles for young people can bring added value not only for the spatial development processes, but also for the young people and local community.

### **How can the initiative be scaled or spread?**

In theory, similar participatory spatial planning activities could be designed also on the level of whole cities and even regions. In practice, this would very much depend on concrete aims and contexts of such endeavour. While it may be possible to conduct a similar exercise in a reasonably sized town of a few tens of thousands of inhabitants, or at a similarly sized rural region, the practical barriers will start occurring rather quickly with the increasing number of potential interested parties (numbers of local governments, numbers of inhabitants, etc.), and their distance from the spatial planning focus in both physical sense (i.e., how far the given spatial development project is from where people live) and abstract sense (i.e., how well people can relate to increasingly abstract decisions to be debated). Hence scaling participatory spatial planning upwards seems to be rather problematic.

Scaling participatory spatial planning activities down, on the other hand, is realistic. This can be done at the level of schools, youth work centres, blocks of flats, basically at any local environment where one can identify responsible decisionmakers (e.g., school board of directors, or youth centre management), and local inhabitants using the particular environments (e.g., students, or youth using the youth centres). These exercises take place sometimes at a very limited scale in case of school parliaments, for

**161** example, or when decisions are taken as to what a local youth centre or a local skate park is to look like. However, as shown in this case study, there is potential to engage in much richer participatory processes when debating these spatial developments, contributing not only to developments of local democracy, but also to developments in young people themselves.

A participatory spatial planning initiative can be constructed in any local environment in a democratic country. As there will always be a very strong aspect of local context, it is good to take the Vision for Spořilov as a good practice example only, but to tailor-make any participatory spatial planning initiatives to specifics of the local environments. Any such initiatives need to be defined in terms of geographical location and timeframe, and they need to, ideally, bring together all key actors of the local spatial planning: local inhabitants, local government, experts (e.g., architects, facilitators, youth workers, etc.), and non-governmental sector. As debated above, the participatory spatial planning initiative can be both bottom-up (as was the case in Vision for Spořilov initiative) and top-down (e.g., initiated by local municipality). It needs to be ensured that the spatial planning outcomes are always communicated back to youth and children, and ideally also the whole local community, to create a transparent process which contributes to positive democratic developments (e.g., boosts future engagement of youth and children in similar activities).



# Conclusions

This publication is an attempt to bring theory of meaningful youth political participation to life. It showcases how a meaningful youth political participation can be spotted, it utilizes as many practical examples as possible, and it is providing the reader with 10 case studies. Each of the case studies is not only detailed, but also serves as a real-life example of utilizing sound theory to determine whether a given youth political participation initiative, project, or activity, is a meaningful one.

This publication is meant to help you find solid ground when it comes to debating, designing, and even monitoring youth political participation activities, events, initiatives, and projects. Use it to your advantage, help spread meaningful youth political participation opportunities and not those that are only presented as such.

For those of you who wish to go further, please have a look at a practical guide to see impacts of youth political participation mechanisms on municipal decision making: Change Tracker (Bárta, Moxon 2023). Change Tracker is a practical toolkit built on the same theoretical basis that is presented in this publication, but it takes it one step further: from identifying meaningful youth political participation practices, to assessing their impacts on local decision-making.





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# Annex 1 Questionnaire on mapping of youth participation practices

## Intro

**This questionnaire aims at collecting one input per organization**, so please only fill in the questionnaire once for your organization. If you feel someone else in your organization is in a better position to answer questions on youth political participation practices, please forward it to them!

**This survey is anonymous** and no personal information is collected in the process unless you yourselves decide to leave contact details for us to get in touch with you for case studies.

**The survey takes about 15 minutes of your time, but it will help us enormously!**

**THANKS IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

Ondřej “Ondras” Bárta,  
on behalf of the **HOW TO SCORE A YOUTH GOAL** project consortium.

### SECTION 0 Before we begin

*It is important to know what organization you represent!*

**Where is your organization based?**

ALBANIA  
AUSTRIA  
BELGIUM: DUTCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY  
BELGIUM: FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY  
BELGIUM: GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY  
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA  
BULGARIA  
CROATIA  
CYPRUS  
CZECH REPUBLIC  
DENMARK  
ESTONIA

**FINLAND**  
**FRANCE**  
**GERMANY**  
**GREECE**  
**HUNGARY**  
**ICELAND**  
**IRELAND**  
**ITALY**  
**KOSOVO**  
**LATVIA**  
**LIECHTENSTEIN**  
**LITHUANIA**  
**LUXEMBOURG**  
**MALTA**  
**MOLDOVA**  
**MONTENEGRO**  
**NETHERLANDS**  
**NORWAY**  
**POLAND**  
**PORTUGAL**  
**ROMANIA**  
**SERBIA**  
**SLOVAKIA**  
**SLOVENIA**  
**SPAIN**  
**SWEDEN**  
**SWITZERLAND**  
**REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA**  
**UKRAINE**  
**UNITED KINGDOM**  
**OTHER**

**Which organization do you represent?**

- a) A local organization (predominantly locally focused)
- b) A regional organization (predominantly focused on a wider region)
- c) A national organization (predominantly focused on nation-wide matters)
- d) An international organization (predominantly active on the international level)

**Before we begin the next section, it should be noted that this section asks about good practice examples. These good practice examples will serve as an insight into what is around, and also as a basis on which case studies will be selected. Case studies will be conducted in spring and summer 2022 and will include online interviews with you, the actors in the field, and studying any documents related to these practices.**





**Would you be willing to share more on examples of good practice via an online interview?**

- a) **YES**
- b) **NO**

**IF YES:** Wonderful, please share with us your email contact below!

**OPEN**

**SECTION 1** Now let's begin! What meaningful youth political participation practices exist around you?

*This section focuses on exploring which meaningful youth political participation practices are used in your country (on national, regional, or local levels!) and good practice examples linked to these practices. It is not stressed in each single practice, but **we are ONLY interested in such practices which are either youth-focused, or in which young people successfully participate**, not those which are open to general public but are hardly ever used by youth.*

**Have you ever heard of the following youth political participation practice?**

**PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING**

*(This happens when a budget is created by the citizens, and representatives of state then approve of it, and put it in force either in full or to some extent.)*

- a) Yes, I know what it is
- b) Yes, I heard about it
- c) No, I did not hear about it

**If a): In what context is PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING used in your country?**

*(Please only refer to contexts in which this youth participation practice is currently used for sure.)*

- a) **NATIONAL**
- b) **REGIONAL**
- c) **LOCAL**

**In the last 12 months, was your organization directly involved in PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING activities in your country?**

Direct involvement means being directly in touch with the tool in any capacity, e.g., as



**170** an initiator, as an organizer, as a facilitator helping young people take part, and many other roles.

- a) **YES**
- b) **NO**
- c) **I DO NOT KNOW / I AM NOT SURE**

**If a): Do you consider PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING activities that your organization was involved in to be a good practice example of meaningful youth participation?**

- a) **YES, ABSOLUTELY!**
- b) **NOT REALLY**
- c) **I DO NOT KNOW**

**If a): Can you shortly describe the good practice example of PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING, please? Also add weblinks (even if the webpages are not in English) if applicable, thank you!**

#### **OPEN**

#### **REFERENDUM**

(This mechanism allows citizens to vote directly on certain topics.)

#### **TOWN MEETING**

(Typically, town meeting is an annual assembly where people come together and vote directly on certain matters.)

#### **RIGHT TO RECALL**

(This is a mechanism through which citizens can remove a politician from their role in case the politician is not performing well.)

#### **CITIZENS' INITIATIVE**

(Also called "popular initiatives", this happens when concrete ideas are presented by citizens directly to politicians. An example can be the EU-introduced European Citizens' Initiative, a mechanism in which if an idea collects over 1 million signatures, it needs to be dealt with directly by the European Commission.)

#### **ADVISORY BODY**

(These can be linked to government bodies such as municipality, or to elected representatives, such as town council, and offer regular opinions of young people on matters that are debated and decided.)

#### **YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE STRUCTURE**

(These are any bodies which offer young people the chance to be elected and participate



**171** on decision-making, for instance in case of school parliaments, youth-led municipal youth departments, or similar bodies. Please note that they **MUST** have decision-making powers, if not, they are not participatory mechanisms, but educational tools.)

**PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING**

(This happens when a budget is created by the citizens, and representatives of state then approve of it, and put it in force either in full or to some extent.)

**CITIZENS' OR NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL (INCLUDING SCHOOL COUNCIL, LOCAL YOUTH COUNCIL, ETC.)**

(These are permanent structures in which young people debate public matters and provide suggestions for representatives of state who put it in force either in full or to some extent.)

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

(Think of the EU Youth Dialogue: Consulting with young people in order to present policymakers with their views.)

**PARTICIPATORY PLANNING**

(This happens when a certain public matter is planned by the citizens, and representatives of state then approve of it, and put it in force either in full or to some extent.)

**E-GOVERNMENT TOOL**

(Such online and electronic tools and channels which enable young people to engage with their local, regional, national, or supranational governments, for example when applying for a driving licence, etc.)

**E-DEMOCRACY TOOL**

(Any digital tools which are developed and run by young people to support democratic processes, such as <https://whocanivotefor.co.uk/> )

**ONLINE DELIBERATION**

(An activity which takes place online and enables people to debate on public matters to reach common conclusions, for example through the Stanford Online Deliberation Platform, Kialo.com, or DebateHub.net, and other platforms.)

**DELIBERATIVE POLLING**

(Activities in which people gather to first discuss on a certain public matter, and then take a poll to determine decisions.)

**CITIZENS' JURY OR ASSEMBLY**

(An activity in which people gather to first discuss on a certain public matter, and then create public recommendations on the matter.)



**CO-OPTEE OR EXPERT-BY-EXPERIENCE**

(This is when members of public are invited to oversee policy design and implementation.)

**PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH**

(This is such a research endeavour which engages young people in various capacities, enabling them to collect and interpret information, and to be part of all research processes.)

**PETITIONING**

(This is an initiative of citizens in which people can express their support for a certain public cause.)

**STRIKE OR PEACEFUL PROTEST**

(Peaceful actions taken to bring attention of public to matters or decisions which need public scrutiny.)

**CALL-IN**

(These are mechanisms through which public can demand further scrutiny to be conducted on political decisions before they are implemented.)

**CITIZEN DENUNCIATION**

(These are whistle-blowing mechanisms through which public can anonymously bring attention to corruption.)

**YOUTH-LED NGO AND YOUTH-LED PROJECT OR INITIATIVE**

(Young people can come together to influence the public domain and elected politicians through a range of tools: Independent evaluations of policies in question, or perhaps by conducting lobbying activities.)

Are there any other youth participation practices that go beyond the ones listed above? If yes, please leave us a title of the practice(s), and a short description(s)!

**OPEN****CONCLUDING!**

One last question for you, and we are done!

**You have just filled in a questionnaire on youth political participation. Has it been in any way beneficial to you?**

I gained new knowledge

I am inspired to look up new knowledge

I am inspired to start new youth political participation practices

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- a) **ABSOLUTELY YES**
- b) **PROBABLY YES**
- c) **PROBABLY NOT**
- d) **ABSOLUTELY NOT**
- e) **I CANNOT TELL**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!**



**2023.**