



Youth Engagement Academy

YOUTH DEBATE: DIALOGUE OF YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES OF YOUTH COUNCILS AND DECISION MAKERS

ORREFORS, SWEDEN
1-4 NOVEMBER 2023

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www.YouthEngagementAcademy.eu



ACTIVITY T.2.3. Dialogue of youth-representatives of youth councils and decision makers

DELIVERABLE D.2.3. Report of the exposed outcomes for the dialogue of youth-representatives of youth councils and decision makers

PROJECT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ACADEMY

Dialogue of youth-representatives of youth councils and decision makers took place as part of the project Youth Engagement Academy. The YEA (Youth Engagement Academy) project is a transnational European Youth Together project designed to be implemented by youth work NGOs in seven EU Member States (Romania, Croatia, Germany, Poland, Greece, France, and Sweden) and one third country associated with the Programme (North Macedonia). The Youth Engagement Academy is a digital platform designed to empower young people and foster their active participation in EU policymaking. Through a series of skills-building activities and interactive features, the platform aims to enhance youth critical thinking, analyze populism, and deepen understanding of representative and participatory democracies in the European Union. By facilitating dialogues between young individuals and decision-makers, the project seeks to increase



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youth engagement in European procedures and promote a sense of ownership and responsibility among young Europeans.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DIALOGUE

Activity T.2.3. Was a mobility in Sweden in a form of formalized debate and discussion, involving representatives from various youth councils across the country and decision-makers. With a total of 40 participants (5 from each partner), the two-day event addressed crucial topics related to youth councils, youth participation, and policymaking. The discussions encompassed youth policy decisions at European, national, and regional levels, amplifying youth voices in coherent policy processes, evaluating the neutrality of European politics in representing all young people, and ensuring the alignment of European values with youth policies.

Key discussion points during the debate included the democratic institutions, avenues for young citizens to engage in EU policy-making, understanding the democratic framework, and exploring adaptations to existing institutions for improved participatory democracy, coupled with economic benefits for youth and society. The report of the content created during the dialogue, presented at the end of this document, aims to answer key questions regarding democratic participation, institutional frameworks, and potential enhancements. The ultimate goal of the dialogue was to promote active youth participation in European democratic life by enabling them to express their voices through the formulation of positions, proposals, and recommendations. The expected outcomes included the support and visibility enhancement of youth councils, as well as the sharing of information and knowledge among them.

AGENDA OF THE DIALOGUE

In the event held in Orrefors in November 2023, a formalized debate and discussion brought together representatives from various youth councils across Sweden and decision-makers for a two-day session. The discussions covered a diverse range of topics related to youth councils and the active involvement of young people.

The event included workshops facilitated by youth from different councils and youth workers, emphasizing hands-on engagement. An experienced facilitator from Positive YOUTH, Karolina Mazetyte, mentored the process to ensure the fulfillment of the programme. An open agenda allowed participants to familiarize themselves with various youth councils, engage in conversations with policymakers, and ensure their voices were heard throughout the sessions. One day was devoted for the meeting with youth councils, politicians and decision makers from Sweden



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which took place in Kalmar Science Park. Local newspapers came to meet the youth and took interviews from the participants.

The primary topics of discussion during the event were:

- Decision-Making in Youth Policy: Exploring how youth policy decisions could be made at the European, national, and regional levels.
- Amplifying Youth Voices: Investigating mechanisms to ensure that youth voices are heard seamlessly from local to European levels, particularly in coherent policy processes.
- Neutrality of European Politics: Evaluating the neutrality of European politics to represent all young people and organize large-scale actions.
- Transfer of European Values to Youth Policies: Discussing strategies to ensure that European values are effectively and accurately transferred to youth policies.

The expected outcomes of the agenda were aimed at supporting the work of youth councils, increasing their visibility, and fostering the exchange of information and knowledge among the different youth councils. The event sought to create a platform where participants could actively contribute to shaping youth policies and strengthening the role of youth councils in the decision-making processes at various levels.



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Orrefors Vandrarhem, Orrefors, Sweden

ARRIVALS	DAY 1		DAY 2		DEPARTURES
	8.30-09:30	Breakfast			
	9:30-10:30	Recharge and Thrive: morning mindfulness and meditation	9:15	Travel to Kalmar (time for well-being)	
	11:00 -12:30	Introduction. Getting to know each other	10:00 - 10:30	Kalmar Science Center introduction	
	12:30 - 13:00	Coffee break	10:30 - 11:30	Kalmar Komun discussion with Sophia Sundlin and Youth Council	
	13:00 - 15:00	Diving into topic: Youth participation	11:30 - 12:00	Coffee break	
	15:00 - 16:00	Lunch	12:00 - 13:30	Debriefing circle. Next steps	
	16:00 - 17:30	The future of democracy: what are the challenges and opportunities for the youth to amplify it's impact and increase the number of youth taking part in decision making processes?	13:30 - 17:00	Lunch. Connecting with the local realities in Kalmar	
	17:30 - 18:00	Coffee break	17:00	Gathering at the Kalmar Science Park and travelling back to the venue	
	18:00 - 19:00	Preparation for the Policy Dialogue	18:30 - 19:30	Closing	
	19:00 - 19:30	Reflection of the Day			
Dinner	19:30 - 20:30	Dinner	19:30 - 20:30	Dinner	
Welcome Circle	21:00	SOCIAL GATHERING/CULTURAL NIGHT	21:00	SOCIAL GATHERING/CULTURAL NIGHT	



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Coordinating TEAM – Sweden



Karolina

Wellbeing facilitator, working as a holistic healer, social entrepreneur, TEDx speaker, co-author of a collaborative book project "A mile in our shoes: stories of our global journeys". She is a facilitator at ChangemakerXchange global community, Intercultural Citizenship Education Trainer trained by Anna Lindh Foundation.



Positive Youth

Coordinating
organisation

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VISIBILITY, MEDIA COVERAGE

LOCAL NEWSPAPER

<https://www.dagenskalmar.nu/nyheter/politik/e/148252/internationell-ungdomsdelegation-pa-plats-for-att-diskutera-politisk-paverkan/>

LOCAL NEWSPAPER

<https://www.barometern.se/nybro/orrefors-har-blivit-bas-for-internationella-projekt/>



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PHOTOS

Photo album

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/7FtkRRd9q544FmSh7>

SOCIAL MEDIA COVERAGE

IG stories:

<https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18027482389483731/>

FB post:

<https://www.facebook.com/tyshchenko.mariia/posts/pfbid037hpMJbCm9tBdcXSmB9A8FXW4D6vJL3BivgFaqsra9UeVFKzavdTgjT4eu9gXWQscl>

D.2.3. REPORT

Report of the exposed outcomes for the dialogue of youth-representatives of youth councils and decision makers

A Report contains the answers to the following key- questions:

1. What are our democratic institutions?
2. How can young citizens participate in the decision making process of the EU Policy making? 3. What is democratic framework?
4. How adaptations to existing democratic institutions could further improve the functioning of participatory democracy while also delivering additional economic benefits to youth and society as whole?

The expected result is to promote the active participation of young people in democratic life in Europe, by young people being able to make their voices heard through the formulation of positions, proposals and recommendations.

1. What are our democratic institutions?

The comprehensive analysis conducted by the Youth Lab revealed that democratic institutions form the bedrock of a functioning democratic system. These institutions encompass a range of entities, including government bodies, electoral systems, judiciary, and legislative branches. The report underscores the critical roles played by each institution in maintaining the democratic fabric



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of society. Government bodies, for instance, are responsible for policy formulation and implementation, while the judiciary ensures the protection of citizens' rights through legal processes. Legislative branches, on the other hand, enact laws and represent the diverse interests of the populace. The Youth Lab's exploration of democratic institutions provides a foundational understanding essential for promoting civic education and engagement.

Democratic institutions form the backbone of a functioning democratic society, embodying the organizational structures that facilitate governance, representation, and the protection of citizens' rights. These institutions collectively ensure the fair and participatory functioning of a democracy. Key democratic institutions include:

- **Government Bodies:** At the core of democratic governance are government bodies, which formulate and execute policies, administer public services, and make decisions on behalf of the citizens. These bodies are typically divided into executive, legislative, and judicial branches.
- **Electoral Systems:** Electoral systems are instrumental in translating the will of the people into political representation. Through processes such as voting and elections, citizens have the opportunity to choose their leaders and representatives.
- **Judiciary:** The judicial branch plays a crucial role in upholding the rule of law and safeguarding individual rights. It interprets laws, resolves disputes, and ensures that government actions align with constitutional principles.
- **Legislative Branch:** Comprising elected representatives, the legislative branch enacts laws, debates policy issues, and represents the diverse interests of the population. It is responsible for shaping the legal framework of the country.
- **Political Parties:** While not a formal institution, political parties are integral to democratic systems. They provide a mechanism for organizing political competition, presenting different policy options, and representing diverse ideologies.

These institutions collectively create a system of checks and balances, ensuring that power is distributed, decisions are transparent, and citizens' rights are protected. Understanding these democratic institutions is fundamental for citizens to actively participate in and contribute to the democratic process.

2. How can young citizens participate in the decision-making process of EU Policy making?



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The report delves into various avenues through which young citizens can actively participate in shaping EU policies. It identifies mechanisms such as public consultations, youth forums, and advisory bodies dedicated to amplifying the voices of young people. Emphasizing inclusivity, the report recommends creating platforms that enable diverse participation, ensuring representation from various socio-economic backgrounds and geographical regions. Additionally, leveraging technology and social media emerges as a key strategy to bridge communication gaps, fostering accessible and widespread engagement among the youth in EU policy-making processes.

Young citizens can play an active and meaningful role in the decision-making process of EU policy by engaging in various avenues that facilitate participation. The involvement of the youth is crucial for ensuring diverse perspectives and fostering a more inclusive and representative policymaking environment. Here are several ways in which young citizens can participate in EU policy-making:

- **Public Consultations:** The EU often conducts public consultations to gather input from citizens on specific policy issues. Young people can actively participate by contributing their opinions, insights, and suggestions during these consultation periods. Staying informed about ongoing consultations and providing thoughtful feedback is a direct way to influence policy decisions.
- **Youth Forums and Conferences:** Participating in youth forums and conferences organized by the EU provides a platform for young citizens to express their views and engage in discussions about relevant policy matters. These events offer opportunities to network, collaborate, and share perspectives with peers and policymakers.
- **Online Platforms and Social Media:** Utilizing online platforms and social media is an effective way for young citizens to voice their opinions on EU policies. Engaging in discussions, sharing information, and leveraging hashtags related to specific policy issues can help amplify the youth's collective voice and draw attention to their concerns.
- **Youth Advisory Groups:** Some EU institutions may establish youth advisory groups or councils designed to gather input directly from young people. Joining or contributing to such groups provides a structured avenue for young citizens to share their experiences, insights, and recommendations with policymakers.
- **Youth NGOs and Advocacy Organizations:** Getting involved with youth-focused non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups allows young citizens to participate in campaigns, projects, and initiatives that address specific policy issues. These organizations often collaborate with EU institutions to influence policymaking.
- **Internships and Traineeships:** Participating in internships or traineeships within EU institutions provides first hand experience in the policymaking process. It allows young



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individuals to understand the inner workings of EU institutions, contribute to ongoing projects, and build relationships with professionals involved in policymaking.

- Educational Programs and Competitions: Engaging in educational programs, competitions, and projects related to EU policies can enhance young citizens' understanding of specific issues. Winning or participating in such initiatives can also provide visibility and opportunities to share ideas with policymakers.
- Youth Delegations: Some EU events and meetings may include opportunities for youth delegations to actively participate. Joining these delegations allows young citizens to attend sessions, interact with policymakers, and contribute to discussions on policy matters.

By taking advantage of these avenues, young citizens can effectively participate in the decision-making process of EU policy. It is essential for them to stay informed, actively contribute to discussions, and leverage available platforms to ensure their voices are heard in the policymaking arena.

3. What is the democratic framework?

The Youth Lab's examination of the democratic framework establishes it as a system founded on core principles and values. The report defines the democratic framework as one that prioritizes inclusivity, transparency, and the rule of law. It elucidates the significance of protecting fundamental rights, upholding freedom of expression, and actively involving citizens in decision-making processes. The democratic framework, as outlined in the report, serves as a guiding structure that ensures fairness, accountability, and the protection of individual liberties within a democratic society.

The democratic framework serves as the foundational structure that guides and sustains democratic societies, providing the principles and values essential for fair governance, individual rights, and civic engagement. It encompasses a set of fundamental elements that shape the character of a democratic system. The democratic framework includes:

- Inclusion: At the heart of the democratic framework is the principle of inclusivity, ensuring that all citizens have equal rights and opportunities to participate in the democratic process. It rejects discrimination based on factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.
- Transparency: Transparency is a key component of the democratic framework, emphasizing openness and accessibility in government actions and decision-making



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processes. It enables citizens to be well-informed about policies, legislation, and the conduct of public officials.

- **Rule of Law:** The democratic framework upholds the rule of law, meaning that laws apply equally to all citizens and even those in power. It ensures that government actions are bound by legal constraints, promoting accountability and preventing arbitrary use of authority.
- **Fundamental Rights:** Protection of fundamental rights is a cornerstone of the democratic framework. These rights, which may include freedom of speech, assembly, and expression, are safeguarded to ensure the dignity and autonomy of individuals within the democratic society.
- **Freedom of Expression:** Democracy thrives on the free exchange of ideas and opinions. The democratic framework encourages and protects freedom of expression, allowing citizens to voice their perspectives, critique government actions, and engage in public discourse.
- **Active Citizen Participation:** Democracy is characterized by the active participation of citizens in decision-making processes. The democratic framework encourages civic engagement through voting, public consultations, and involvement in community activities, ensuring that the collective will of the people shapes policies.
- **Accountability:** Democratic institutions and representatives are accountable to the public. Elected officials, for example, are accountable for their actions, and mechanisms such as elections and checks and balances ensure that those in power answer to the citizenry.
- **Pluralism:** The democratic framework embraces diversity of opinions, beliefs, and backgrounds. It recognizes and values the existence of multiple perspectives within society, fostering an environment where different voices are heard and respected.

Understanding the democratic framework is crucial for citizens to actively participate in democratic processes and hold their leaders accountable. It provides a shared set of principles that guide the relationship between the government and the governed, ensuring that democracy remains a dynamic and responsive system reflective of the values and aspirations of the society it serves.

4. How can adaptations to existing democratic institutions further improve the functioning of participatory democracy while also delivering additional economic benefits to youth and society as a whole?

The Youth Lab's investigation into adaptations to democratic institutions explores innovative approaches aimed at enhancing participatory democracy and fostering economic benefits. The report suggests reforms in electoral systems to encourage greater representation of youth voices



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within legislative bodies. It proposes the creation of youth advisory boards within decision-making entities, ensuring direct input from the younger demographic. Moreover, the integration of digital tools for enhanced civic engagement is advocated, with an emphasis on utilizing technology to facilitate accessible participation. The economic benefits of these adaptations are highlighted, positing that increased civic engagement can drive societal progress, economic development, and the creation of a more dynamic and responsive democratic system.

Adaptations to existing democratic institutions can contribute to the improvement of participatory democracy, fostering increased engagement and representation, while simultaneously delivering additional economic benefits to youth and society at large. Several strategies and adaptations can be considered for achieving these dual objectives:

Youth Representation in Decision-Making Bodies:

- **Adaptation:** Introduce mechanisms to enhance youth representation in legislative bodies, local councils, and other decision-making entities.
- **Benefits:** This adaptation ensures that the perspectives and concerns of the youth are directly integrated into policy discussions, promoting a more inclusive and representative democracy. Increased youth representation can lead to policies that better address the needs of younger generations.

Youth Advisory Boards:

- **Adaptation:** Establish youth advisory boards that work closely with governmental agencies and institutions to provide insights and recommendations on policies affecting young people.
- **Benefits:** This adaptation facilitates direct collaboration between policymakers and the youth, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of their needs. It enhances the democratic process by incorporating diverse voices and can lead to more effective and relevant policies.

Digital Platforms for Civic Engagement:

- **Adaptation:** Develop and optimize digital platforms to facilitate civic engagement, providing easily accessible channels for youth to participate in discussions, propose ideas, and contribute to decision-making.
- **Benefits:** Leveraging technology makes democratic processes more inclusive and convenient for the younger generation. It enhances communication between policymakers and the youth, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas. Additionally, it can result in cost savings and increased efficiency.

Civic Education Programs:



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- **Adaptation:** Strengthen civic education programs that focus on informing and empowering the youth about democratic processes, their rights, and the importance of civic engagement.
- **Benefits:** A well-informed citizenry is more likely to actively participate in democracy. Civic education programs equip the youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage meaningfully, contributing to a more informed and empowered society.

Internship and Mentorship Programs:

- **Adaptation:** Implement internship and mentorship programs that provide young individuals with opportunities to work closely with policymakers, gaining practical experience in the democratic process.
- **Benefits:** This adaptation not only promotes youth involvement but also serves as a potential avenue for economic benefits by creating pathways for career development. It enhances the skill sets of young individuals, contributing to a more skilled and competitive workforce.

Incentives for Youth-Led Initiatives:

- **Adaptation:** Provide financial incentives and support for youth-led initiatives and projects that aim to address societal challenges and contribute to community development.
- **Benefits:** Encouraging and supporting youth-led initiatives not only fosters a sense of responsibility and community engagement but also stimulates economic growth through innovative projects that address pressing issues.

Inclusive Economic Policies:

- **Adaptation:** Develop economic policies that specifically address the challenges faced by the youth, such as access to education, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurship support.
- **Benefits:** Tailoring economic policies to the needs of the youth fosters economic growth and stability. It creates an environment conducive to innovation and entrepreneurship, positively impacting both the youth and society as a whole.

These adaptations collectively contribute to a more participatory and economically beneficial democratic system. By actively involving the youth in decision-making processes and considering their unique needs, societies can harness the energy, creativity, and potential economic contributions of young citizens, ultimately fostering a more resilient and dynamic democratic framework.



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PARTICIPANT INPUT (OPINION OF THE YOUTH)

Participants of the Youth Dialogue were divided in the groups and have prepared their own inputs on the questions raised, their input can be found here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q26KI8SQpW3utO-Cf_-dPE3ghqYP3Jsa/view?usp=sharing

EXPECTED RESULT

The anticipated outcome of the Youth Dialogues comprehensive report is to empower young citizens across Europe to actively engage in democratic processes. By providing detailed insights, practical recommendations, and actionable strategies, the report seeks to inspire young people to make their voices heard through active participation, formulation of positions, and the submission of recommendations. Ultimately, the report aspires to contribute to the evolution of a more inclusive, responsive, and dynamic European democracy, reflective of the diverse perspectives and aspirations of the youth.



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