

Youth Participation Toolkit



Youth participation toolkit

This toolkit was developed by the Thematic Committee on Youth Participation and Governance in the AER Youth Regional Network with the aim of informing young people about European opportunities which can empower and encourage them to become active citizens.

The toolkit includes practical tools beneficial for daily work as youth politicians and activists as well as putting participatory concepts into context. The toolkit also provides inspiration for initiatives to be implemented and developed in regional and local contexts.

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What is youth participation?

“Youth participation is the active and meaningful engagement of young people throughout their own communities.”

Youth participation as a process

In order for a process or structure to be regarded as a genuine instance of youth participation, it needs to fulfill three conditions:

- Young people need to take part in it
- Be genuinely empowered to express their views and opinions about the questions being discussed
- Be given a real opportunity to have influence and some say over the outcome

Why is youth participation essential for a well functioning society?

The youth is the future. The youth have unique perspectives. And the youth are immensely resourceful. In order to build stable and peaceful societies and develop policies that respond to the specific needs of younger generations and future generations the voice of youth must be included in politics.

The unlimited creativity, the resourcefulness, and boundless enthusiasm makes the young people a significant component of the society. It is imperative to recognize the big potential the young generation has and to ensure their active participation in shaping the societies we aim for. In an era characterized by complex challenges and rapid changes, the voices and the perspectives of the young people are not only valuable, but indispensable. Young people's active contributions can bring democratic values to life.

Youth participation must be in place in order to:

Recognise the **human rights** of youth with their possession of participation rights as citizens as well as recognising international treaties such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In order to **empower youth**, shifting the balance of power between generations, ensuring power sharing and meaningful inclusion of youth.

Utilizing the important resource that youth are with their **unique competence, perspectives** and hence potential to contribute to **shaping the healthy, blossoming societies we strive for**. Youth participation desirable and a source of knowledge for practitioners and policy makers bettering the efficiency, targetedness and overall success of political processes and decisions.

Resources

Youth Policies

Youthwiki: Europe encyclopedia of National Youth Policies

The Youth Wiki is an online platform presenting information on European countries' youth policies.

The main objective of the Youth Wiki is to support evidence-based European cooperation in the field of Youth. It does so by providing information on national policies in support of young people – in a user-friendly and continuously updated way.

The overall purpose is to help the European Commission and Member States in their decision making, by providing information on reforms and initiatives. It allows the exchange of information and innovative approaches and can substantiate peer learning activities.

Currently, 34 countries participate in the Youth Wiki.

[Visit Youth Wiki](#)

Youth stats

Eurostat

As the official data office for the European Union, Eurostat provides high quality quantitative data on many topics, including a dedicated page on youth statistics. The data contribute to the evaluation of the progress toward the goals set in the EU Youth Strategy and covers areas like health, education social inclusion and participation.

[Visit Eurostat](#)

Eurodesk

Eurodesk is a European youth information network that offers comprehensive information on learning mobility. Eurodesk produces a variety of publications targeting young people and those who work with them. The network is present in 35 countries and has over 1500 local partners and organizations.

[Visit Eurodesk](#)

EKCYP

The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP), created under a partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, is an online “think tank” and a laboratory, gathering and producing knowledge, translating it for an effective use in youth policy and practice, developing and testing new approaches, considering traditional themes and innovative trends.

[Visit EKCYP](#)

Eurobarometer

Eurobarometer is the polling instrument used by the European Commission, the European Parliament and other EU institutions and agencies to monitor regularly the state of public opinion in Europe. Next to providing quantitative data, Eurobarometer also covers qualitative studies. Eurobarometer surveys report in detail on the attitudes, opinions, expectations, and concerns of the public and of selected social groups including youth.

[Visit Eurobarometer](#)

Eurofound

Eurofound is the EU Agency for the improvement of living and working conditions. It provides comparative information, research and analysis in the areas of working conditions, industrial relations, employment and living conditions, including on issues relevant to young people.

[Visit Eurofound](#)

European Social Survey

The European Social Survey (ESS) is an academically driven cross-national survey. Every two years, face-to-face interviews are conducted with newly selected, cross-sectional samples. The survey measures the attitudes, beliefs and behavior patterns of diverse populations in more than thirty nations and offer breakdowns by age.

[Visit ESS](#)

European Youth Forum

The European Youth Forum is a platform of youth organisations in Europe, representing over 100 youth organisations. It works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives by representing and advocating their needs and interests. The European Youth Forum also produces publications, most notably the Youth Progress Index which measures the quality of life of young people around the world, focusing on areas such as education, housing, safety, health and access to rights and freedoms

[Visit European Youth Forum](#)

Resource pool on participation research - SALTO

A resource pool on youth participation, an area of research that has numerous policy documents, research reports, legislation and other publications that set agendas, explain, investigate, regulate, measure or evaluate the field of youth participation.

[Visit the resource pool](#)

11 EU Youth Goals

The Youth Goals are the outcome of the Structured Dialogue with Youth process 2017-18. The European Youth Goals present a vision for a Europe that enables young people to realize their full potential. They identify 11 cross-sectoral areas that affect young people's lives and point out which challenges need to be tackled. Within

their respective competences Member States and the European Commission are invited to draw inspiration from them. The Work Plan for the Youth Strategy 2019-2021 relates to the Youth Goals.

[Visit the 11 EU Youth Goals](#)

Transparency register

The transparency register is a database that lists organisations that try to influence the law-making and policy implementation process of the EU institutions. The register makes visible what interests are being pursued, by whom and with what budgets. In this way, the register allows for public scrutiny, giving citizens and other interest groups the possibility to track the activities of lobbyists.

[Visit the transparency register](#)

Funding

Funding opportunities for young people through the European Commission

[Visit the European Commission](#)

Council of Europe - European youth forum

The Council of Europe's European Youth Foundation (EYF) provides financial and educational support for European youth activities, it has an annual budget of approximately € 3.7 million. The EYF is a powerful tool for European youth co-operation. It supports European youth activities organised by non-governmental youth organisations and networks, such as international youth meetings, conferences, campaigns, training courses, seminars, study visits, which have as possible outputs exhibitions, publications, audio-visual material and websites.

[Visit the EYF](#)

Funding for international (rural) youth projects

An overview of funding opportunities for international (rural) youth projects created by SALTO.

[Visit SALTO](#)

Funding in your region

In addition to funding opportunities on an International and European level, there exists many opportunities for funding in your local and regional communities! For instance from:

- Local businesses
- Local government
- Local organizations

Youth participation and activism

The Participation Resource Pool - SALTO

The Participation Resource Pool was created for trainers, youth workers, youth leaders and educators to gain access to the best and most up-to-date online tools. It includes materials and newest trends in Youth Participation, Media & Information Literacy, Strategic Communication and Digital Transformation.

The overall purpose of SALTO Participation and Information Resource Centre (SALTO PI) is to develop strategic and innovative action to encourage – in accordance with the goals of the EU Youth Strategy and the Erasmus+ Programme

[Visit SALTO](#)

Activist handbook

Activist Handbook is the Wikipedia for activists. On this website, you will find over 450+ guides and 4.7K external resources.

[Visit the Activist Handbook](#)

Effective activist

A guide to learn scientifically proven strategies for creating change. Developed with the aim of helping activists develop more effective tools and strategies in order to create lasting, progressive social change.

[Visit effective activist](#)

Planning a workshop

A step-by-step approach to breaking the process of planning a workshop into small, manageable chunks.

[Visit session lab](#)

Podcasts and videos

12 Podcasts About Youth Empowerment & Engagement to Listen to Today

A list of incredible podcasts for educators and young people. These podcasts feature youth voices and ideas about youth empowerment, youth engagement, community building, and much more.

[Listen to the 12 podcasts](#)

Bridging the gap between young people and politics

“Not My Place” draws on the MYPLACE research data and explores some of the key findings on political participation with a group of young people who are active and engaged in local political issues and youth democracy. Further comment and insight is provided by elected politicians and practitioners.

[Watch the video](#)

Qualitative resources

Gathering information

Research about youth and the issues they face may provide information and guide you towards societal areas that are worth engaging in and exploring. However, research on the European or regional level may not always be valid or relevant on your local level. Thereby, the ability to identify the issues of youth in your area becomes an important strategy in your youth participation.

Identifying a need qualitatively in your own community can be done through:

- **Surveys:** Conducting research using surveys that researchers send to survey respondents. May be digital or on paper, allows for asking multiple survey questions both multiple choice and open ended for richer data.
- **Workshops:** A meeting at which a group of people engage in intensive discussion and activity on a particular subject or project. May be digital or in person and include fewer or more participants.
- **Individual interviews:** Interviews conducted with one individual. Allows you to gain a deeper understanding of people's knowledge, practices, experiences, emotions, beliefs, opinions and ideas.
- **Focus group interviews:** Interviews conducted with a group of people. Planned discussion and interview with a small group of people conducted by a moderator.

Become involved

Volunteering and traineeship opportunities

European Solidarity Corps

The European Solidarity Corps portal offers a place for those young people and organisations, holding a grant, to implement activities and to find each other. All European citizens aged between 18 and 30 can participate.

Volunteering opportunities, then, but also jobs and traineeships. The calls are open for young people from 17 years old onwards, as long as they turn 18 by the beginning of the project. It is possible to apply just once: it means that who has already participated in a EVS project won't be able to apply with the ESC. The projects can be long-term (from 2 to 12 months) or short-term (from two weeks to two months).

[Visit the European Solidarity Corps](#)

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is an exchange programme for entrepreneurs offering the opportunity to work alongside an experienced entrepreneur in another participating country for a period between one and six months.

[Visit Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#)

EURODYSSEY traineeships

The Eurodyssey Programme is a traineeship programme between European regions. It offers young people a three to seven-month paid vocational training course in a foreign business. The programme aims to provide young people with practical work experience while improving their language skills.

[Visit Eurodyssey](#)

Erasmus Intern

ErasmusIntern.org is part of STORY project which is a project by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN). ESN is a non-profit international student organisation which mission is to represent international students by providing opportunities for cultural understanding and self-development under the principle of Students Helping Students. Erasmus Intern provides a place where companies and organisations can publish their internship offers and search for interns, and where students that want to do an internship abroad can have their profiles, search and apply for internships vacancies.

[Visit Erasmus Intern](#)

Erasmus Plus

Through the Erasmus+ programme, international students can study in one of 33 European countries for between 3 and 12 months as part of their study programme. Erasmus+ students do not have to pay tuition fees for their time abroad. Some students may also be eligible for a grant contributing to living costs and travel expenses.

There are also opportunities for students from Europe to study at partner higher education institutions in other parts of the world. To be eligible, you need to be studying at a higher education institution that is part of the Erasmus+ programme.

[Visit Erasmus Plus](#)

Erasmus Mundus

Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters are high-level and integrated study programmes, at master level. They are designed and delivered by an international partnership of higher education institutions. An EMJM involves at least three HEIs from three different countries, of which at least two must be EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme.

[Visit Erasmus Mundus](#)

Young European Ambassadors for the Neighbours East

The Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) initiative is a non-political, voluntary, vibrant communication network connecting and building bridges of friendship among young people from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the EU Member States and the United Kingdom. The aim of the network is to raise awareness about the EU's cooperation with its Eastern partner countries, showcase the tangible results of this cooperation, contribute to policy dialogue on various topics, help increase civic activism and work together for a better future.

[Visit YEA](#)

European Young Journalists

Eurodesk and the European Commission are inviting young people to put their journalistic skills into practice and report on issues that matter to them. Join the team and make your voice heard, by producing different kinds of content (writing, pictures, podcasting, videos). The content produced by the Pool will be done on a voluntary basis, and in return it will be highlighted on the European Youth Portal (EYP) and promoted on its social media platforms. The members of the Pool will also have the opportunity to benefit from various trainings.

[Visit European Young Journalists](#)

Eurodesk opportunity finder tool: Learning, volunteering, traineeships, participating

[Visit Eurodesk](#)

Culture Moves Europe

Culture Moves Europe provides mobility grants for artists and cultural professionals in all 40 creative Europe countries. It covers the sectors of architecture, cultural heritage, design and fashion design, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts.

[Visit Culture Moves Europe](#)

On an international level

Council of Europe youth delegate

Gives young people, from the 46 Council of Europe member states, a unique opportunity to sit (without voting rights) in a European assembly alongside local and regional elected representatives. They can make their voices heard, be part of a diverse group of young activists, build a network and have an impact by stimulating debate from a youth perspective.

[Visit CoE Youth Delegates](#)

UN Youth Delegate

One form of youth participation at the United Nations is through the inclusion of youth delegates in a country's official delegation to the United Nations General Assembly and various functional Commissions of the Economic and Social Council. It is the responsibility of Member States to establish a youth delegate programme at the national level, and to decide who will represent the young people of their country at the United Nations.

[Visit UN Youth Delegates](#)

OECD Youthwise

Youthwise, the OECD's Youth Advisory Board, was established in 2021 with a dual mission: to foster a better understanding of the OECD's work and international policy-

making among young people, and to bring forth the valuable perspectives and ideas of youth to the Organisation.

Youthwise 2023 consists of 22 exceptional young people aged 18 to 30. These brilliant individuals bring a diverse range of professional backgrounds and interests to the table, including in fields such as artificial intelligence, education, environment, technology, gender equality, health and social care, law, politics, climate, natural sciences, social mobility, and beyond.

[Visit OECD Youthwise](#)

EYCA Youth Panel

The EYCA Youth Panel is composed of 11 young people, aged 18 to 29, selected amongst European Youth Cardholders. The mandate is for two years. As an EYCA Youth Panel member, you will be asked to provide insights, act as an EYC ambassador, advocate for the issues you feel passionate about and organise a large-scale project to give a similar opportunity to other young people.

[Visit EYCA Youth Panel](#)

On a National level

By googling keywords like “youth councils”, “youth participation” or even “civic engagement spaces” people are able to see the kind of spaces that are available in their locality.

Events

UN youth events

An overview over UN youth events.

[Visit UN Youth Events](#)

The UNESCO Youth Forum

The UNESCO Youth Forum was created in 1999 to provide young people with the opportunity to present their concerns and ideas to Member States and help shape the direction of UNESCO.

Participants are nominated to attend the UNESCO Youth Forum by their National Commission Offices, Civil Society Organisations and youth-related partners.

[Visit the UNESCO Youth Forum](#)

European youth portal events

The European Youth Portal provides EU level information and opportunities for young people and youth stakeholders. This page provides an overview of youth events.

[Visit the European Youth Portal event overview](#)

European Youth Event

The EYE (European Youth Event) brings together at the European Parliament in Strasbourg and online thousands of young people from all over the European Union and the world, to share and shape their ideas on Europe's future.

It is a unique opportunity for 16 to 30 year olds to interact, inspire each other and exchange their views with experts, activists, influencers and decision-makers, right in the heart of European democracy.

[Visit the EYE event](#)

Together.eu

Together.eu is a platform powered by the European Union that allows your organisation to promote your activities, events and campaigns at a European level. As a citizen, it proves to be a good tool to get to know new organisations and activities done online and in-person in your region.

Together.eu is a community of people who believe in democracy and who want to give it real meaning as the next European elections approach. It connects people from across Europe to meet, share knowledge and learn new skills, all while encouraging others to vote in 2024. Sign up here to get involved - the more people vote, the stronger our democracy becomes!

[Visit together.eu](#)

On a regional and local level

Formal structures and traditional forms - These include voting, standing for election, joining a trade union, youth councils, youth forums, school councils and some types of youth organization. And in kindergartens and schools, where children and young people are given choices and freedom to decide what they want to learn or who they want to represent them in various youth organizations.

Non-formal structures - Brings opportunities to create spaces yourself. Such as, but not limited to campaign movements and youth activism, digital spaces or communities, deliberative democracy projects or public spaces used by young people.

Formal structures - List of accredited organizations for youth

List of accredited organizations for youth developed by the EU. Filtered by country, topic, scope, town and name.

[Visit EU accredited organisations](#)

Non - formal structures: Think creatively about what youth participation can be

There is currently a transition from more traditional forms of participation towards other forms of participation on other arenas, and with a greater digital presence. It is important to know that whereas many of the structures and processes for youth participation are connected to the public sector and governments, youth participation can also happen in other arenas. In fact, any situation where youth are given the right to jointly or independently decide about certain questions that concern their everyday life may be considered youth participation. As such, your imagination and creativity is the only factor creating boundaries for the ways in which you may facilitate and engage in youth participation.

Non-formal structures may include:

Campaign movements and youth activism, especially based around single issues or causes, like the environmental movement.

Participation projects based on **digital tools** and **digital spaces** or communities.

Co-production and **co-management**, where young people and decision makers share responsibility for creating or running something.

Deliberative democracy projects, where young people work collaboratively with policy makers to create new ideas.

Young people **finding new ways to use public and community spaces**, like opening a community café.

Fundraising events like concerts, flea markets, auctions.

Practical grass root initiatives such as clean up actions.

Podcasts for youth and with youth.

Short films to promote, inform, argue, analyze, persuade or discuss around different topics.

Creating visual art, poetry, writing music and any other artistic expressions and showcasing it through social media or an exhibition.

And so much more!

Inspiration for initiatives

Summary of projects drawn up and implemented by the 2023 CoE youth delegates

As a part of their participation in the 44th and 45th congress sessions of the Council of Europe, the youth delegates have been required to develop their own projects at local and regional level. These projects range from creating short films, celebration of National Youth Day, the creation of reports, seminars, podcast, organizing a debate, workshops and may be a source of inspiration.

[Visit the CoE Youth Delegate project summaries](#)

Join the YRN

The Youth Regional Network (YRN) is a cross-regional youth platform, promoting active youth participation at regional level. Composed of regional-level youth councils, parliaments and organisations in AER's network and membership, it provides young people with an opportunity to express policy recommendations, to foster debate and capacity-building, to exchange good practices, to reach out to decision-makers and to influence policies. The YRN is a unique forum for young people from diverse regions to raise their voice collectively, while introducing a European dimension to youth policy in those regions.

Activities include: **capacity-building, debates, workshops, policy work, elaboration of toolkits and statements, exchange of best practices, international events...** all with the goal of making youth voices heard in regional and European policy-making, and in providing young people from all over Europe with a platform to meet, exchange views and learn from one another.

[Read more about the YRN, their activities and how to become involved](#)

The YRN Revival Process

[Watch the video from the Capacity Building Weekend in Innlandet, Norway](#)

[Read about the Highlights from the YRN General Assembly 2023](#)

Contact the YRN!

You can contact the YRN Presidium at presidium.yrn@aer.eu.

To reach out to specific members of the YRN Presidium:

- **President:** yrn.president@aer.eu
- **1st Vice-President:** yrn.vice-president1@aer.eu
- **2nd Vice-President:** yrn.vice-president2@aer.eu
- **Chair of the TC on Youth Participation & Governance:** yrn.tc-youth-participation@aer.eu
- **Chair of the TC on Mental Health & Wellbeing:** yrn.tc-mental-health@aer.eu
- **Chair of the TC on Gender Equality & Women Empowerment:** yrn.tc-gender-equality@aer.eu

To reach out to the YRN Contact Person at the AER Secretariat, you can write to AER Programmes Coordinator Lorène Weber, l.weber@aer.eu.