

REPORT

Cross-Sectoral Forum on Youth Participation in Democratic Life

Jūrmala, Latvia
28.11 – 1.12.2023



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About the Forum

The forum focused on enhancing youth participation in democratic life. It included discussions, interactive sessions, and presentations addressing the role of youth in different sectors. A key outcome was the **development of strategies for cross-sectoral collaboration among youth participation and civic education** and sharing best practices for youth engagement.

This event was a vibrant space of learning and exchange as a result of the collaborative effort under the third work package of the New Power in Youth Strategic Partnership. The main aims were to:

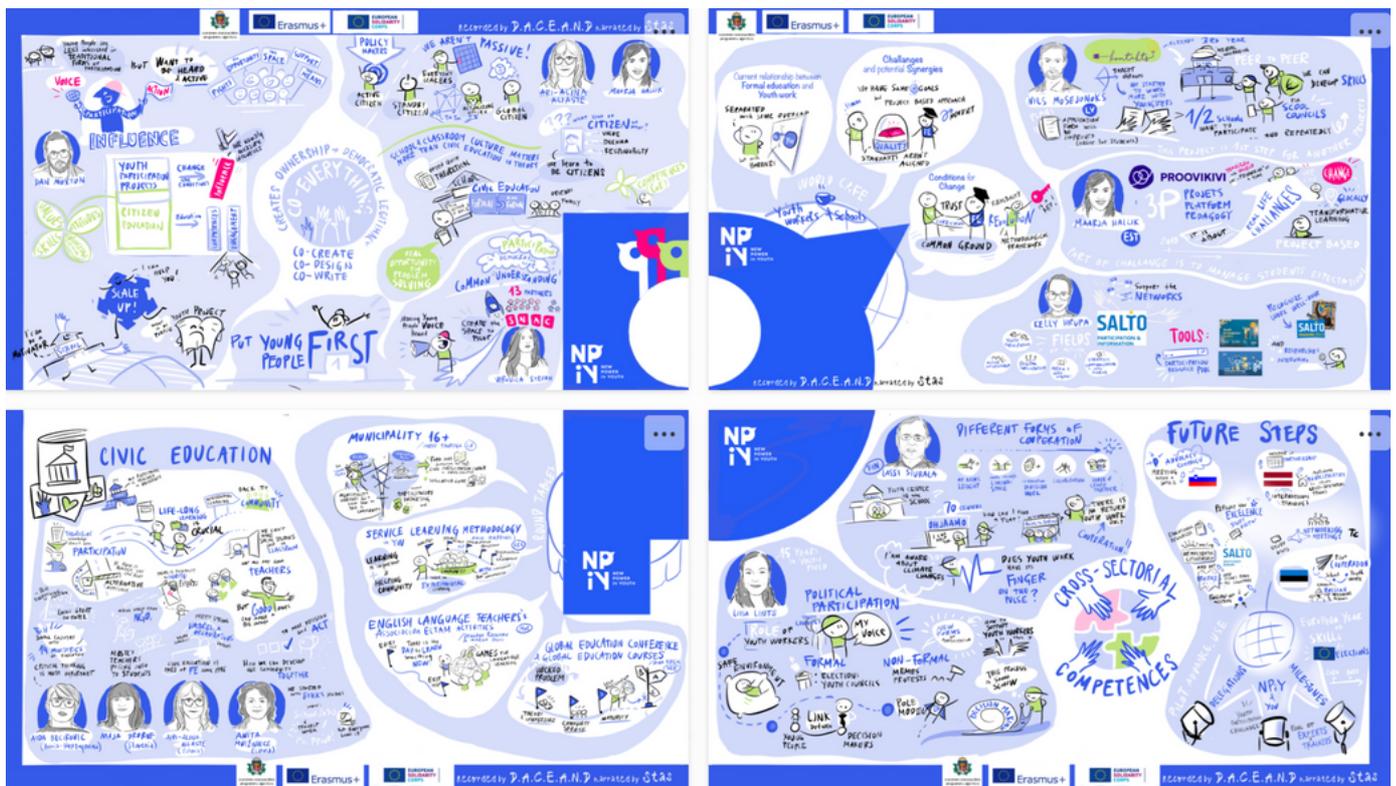
- Contribute to a shared understanding of youth participation in democratic life in both formal and non-formal sectors – what are the main concepts & approaches
- Create a space for mutual learning – including practices connected to school education & civic education citizenship as well as youth work sector & youth participation
- Identify key competences to advance cross-sectoral cooperation
- Inspire professionals from both sectors to identify avenues for working together and potentially develop joint projects in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme

The Latvian National Agency – Jaunatnes Starptautisko Programmu Aģentūra was an exemplary host, ensuring everybody was involved and all needs and contributions were considered and well taken care of.



European countries have a diversity of approaches reflecting the richness in which youth participation is perceived. This is why the Forum started with the experience gathered in three countries (Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia) and a European region containing the Western Balkan countries (managed by South East Europe SALTO Resource Centre) and it addressed topics such as:

- what is youth participation and civic education and how do they interact
- new forms of youth participation
- exploring cross-cooperation among youth work and school education
- learning from real practices to better cooperate
- civic education programs for young people
- competences for an effective cross-cooperation



Graphic recording on the main points presented during the two days of the Forum.

About New Power in Youth

The vision of young people for the future of Europe is stated in European Youth Goals. **This strategic partnership sets out to specifically contribute to achieving goal no. 1 - Connecting the EU with youth and goal no. 9 - Space and Participation for All.** In addition to that, by encouraging youth participation in democratic life, the partnership helps to achieve other youth goals as well.

New Power in Youth Strategic Partnership brings together National Agencies for Erasmus+ & European Solidarity Corps and SALTO Resource Centers **aiming to foster youth participation in democratic life while it**

- Distinctly supports the Youth Participation Strategy of the E+ & ESC programmes
- Focuses on strengthening the youth participation dimension in the EU youth programmes
- Contributes to strategic change by empowering different stakeholders to use participatory approaches
- Specifically supports KA1 projects, thus exploring their potential, with the possibility to feed into policy development
- Directly engages young people with an aim to foster quality youth participation
- Is designed in close cooperation with SALTO PI, providing access to quality know-how and resources

The Strategic Partnership is designed as a framework to support and advance initiatives that set up to increase the quality of youth participation, at all levels. It has three wider objectives that are addressed through three Work Packages:

WP 1

Introducing Erasmus+ & ESC Youth Participation Strategy and supporting youth participation projects through Erasmus+ & European Solidarity Corps programmes.

WP 2

Supporting the strategic development of youth participation in democratic life on local, national and European level.

WP 3

Enhancing the partnership between the non-formal and formal education sectors in order to better support youth participation in democratic life.

Veronica ȘTEFAN
NPiY coordinator

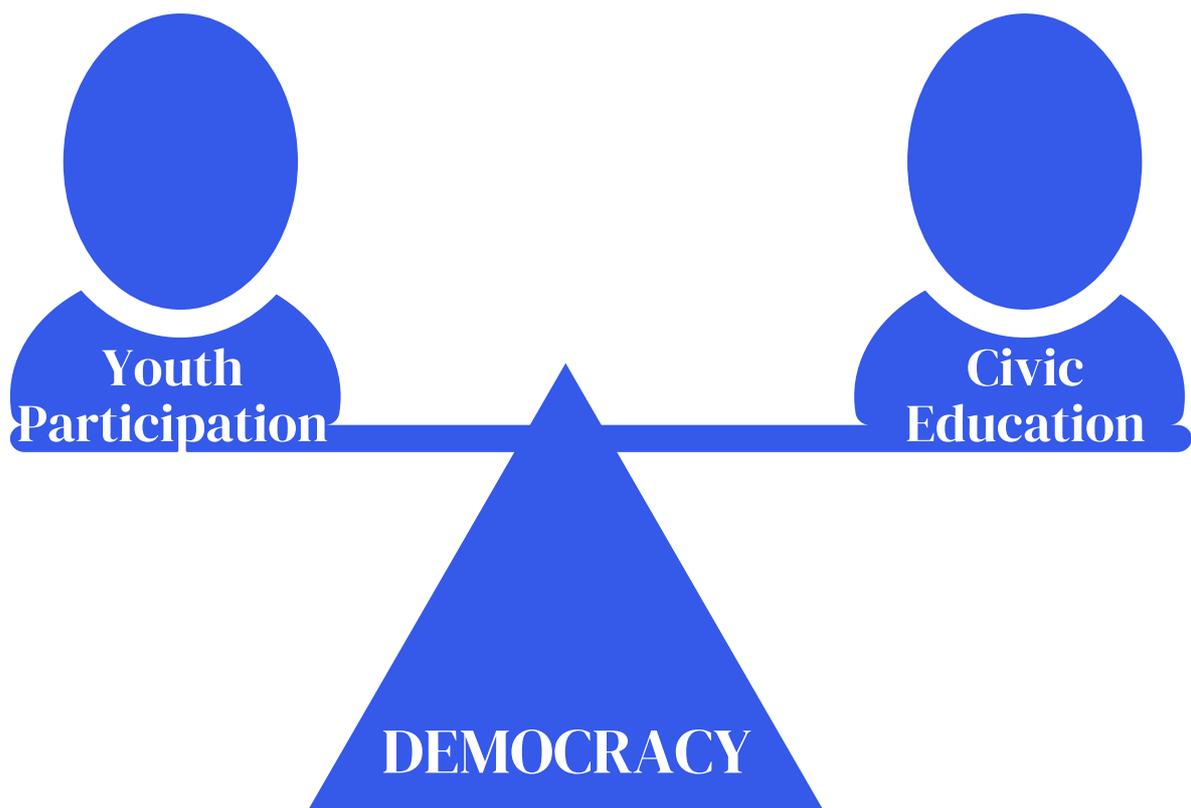


Context

Democracy could be described as a work in progress. Too often, we tend to take it for granted. However, like anything valuable in our lives, it needs constant nurturing. It might not work perfectly everywhere around the world, but it still is the best we have had so far in terms of respect for human rights and our best hope to fulfil opportunities for most.

Nurturing democracy is a must and it takes many shapes. Youth participation and civic education are among the best-known options to equip and empower citizens in general, and young people in particular, with the right tools in order to make informed decisions and be actively involved in the democratic processes.

The Cross-Sectoral Forum on Youth Participation in Democratic Life was set up to bring together the worlds of youth and school education and to create long-lasting synergies by better understanding that youth participation and civic education are, essentially, two sides of the same coin.



Definitions

'**Youth participation** in democratic life is about individual young people and groups of young people having **the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support** to freely express their views, contribute to and influence societal decision making on matters affecting them, and be active within the democratic and civic life of our communities' ([Youth Participation Strategy, SALTO PI](#)).

Civic education (also known as citizen education or democracy education) can be broadly defined as the provision of information and learning experiences to equip and empower citizens to participate in democratic processes... As such, civic education is an approach that employs a range of different methods, and is often used in combination with other participatory governance tools. ([CIVICUS - Civic Education Toolkit by Jennifer Rietbergen-McCracken](#))



Put **YOUNG PEOPLE** first!

Reet KOST
Estonian National Agency

Youth Participation

Youth participation in Europe has known a dynamic evolution since the early 2000s, when the recognition of the importance of involving young people in decision-making processes at various levels has been growing. In this regard, there have been made several efforts to enhance a youth participation culture, especially in political and social spheres.

The landscape of youth participation is a process in continuous motion with several challenges persisting, such as political apathy, a sense of disconnection between young people and traditional political structures or socio-economic disparities. The impact of the economic crisis during late 2000s / beginning of 2010s as well as the recent COVID-19 pandemic had repercussions on youth engagement and opportunities at all levels.

Most important forms of nowadays youth participation may be considered:

- **Social Engagement** - with young people being more and more involved in global movements as well as activities that transcend the formal political involvement - such as social activism, community service, or volunteerism. The so-called Z generation is increasingly involved in campaigns addressing social issues, such as environmental sustainability, human rights, and gender equality.
- **Digital Participation** - stimulated by the rise of digital technology plays an important role in facilitating youth participation. On the one hand, social media platforms have become essential tools for organizing and mobilizing young people, allowing them to express their opinions and connect with like-minded individuals across borders. On the other hand, it has also exposed them to manipulation, dis/misinformation, and post-truth, thus creating a series of new challenges that the youth and education sector try to navigate.
- **Political Participation** - remains a high priority, even if many European countries are struggling to engage young people in formal political processes. Youth councils, youth parliaments, or youth advisory boards are some of the forms of participation that are most frequently mentioned to support youth engagement in such processes. Increased efforts have also been made to encourage youth involvement in elections, with some countries lowering the voting age to 16 and several others carrying out extended debates on this issue.
- **Education and Employment** - noticeable efforts have also been made to enhance youth participation in education and employment policies. As a result, extended programs were developed to provide skill development, entrepreneurship opportunities, and internships to empower young people in their transition from education to the workforce while preparing them for real life. In this regard, the European Union supported various initiatives to promote youth participation, such as the Youth in Action, Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, to foster a sense of European identity and solidarity among young people.



Civic education

The status of civic education in Europe varies vastly across countries, reflecting diverse educational systems and priorities. Civic education generally aims to prepare pupils & students for active and informed citizenship, fostering an understanding of democratic principles, civic engagement, and societal responsibilities.

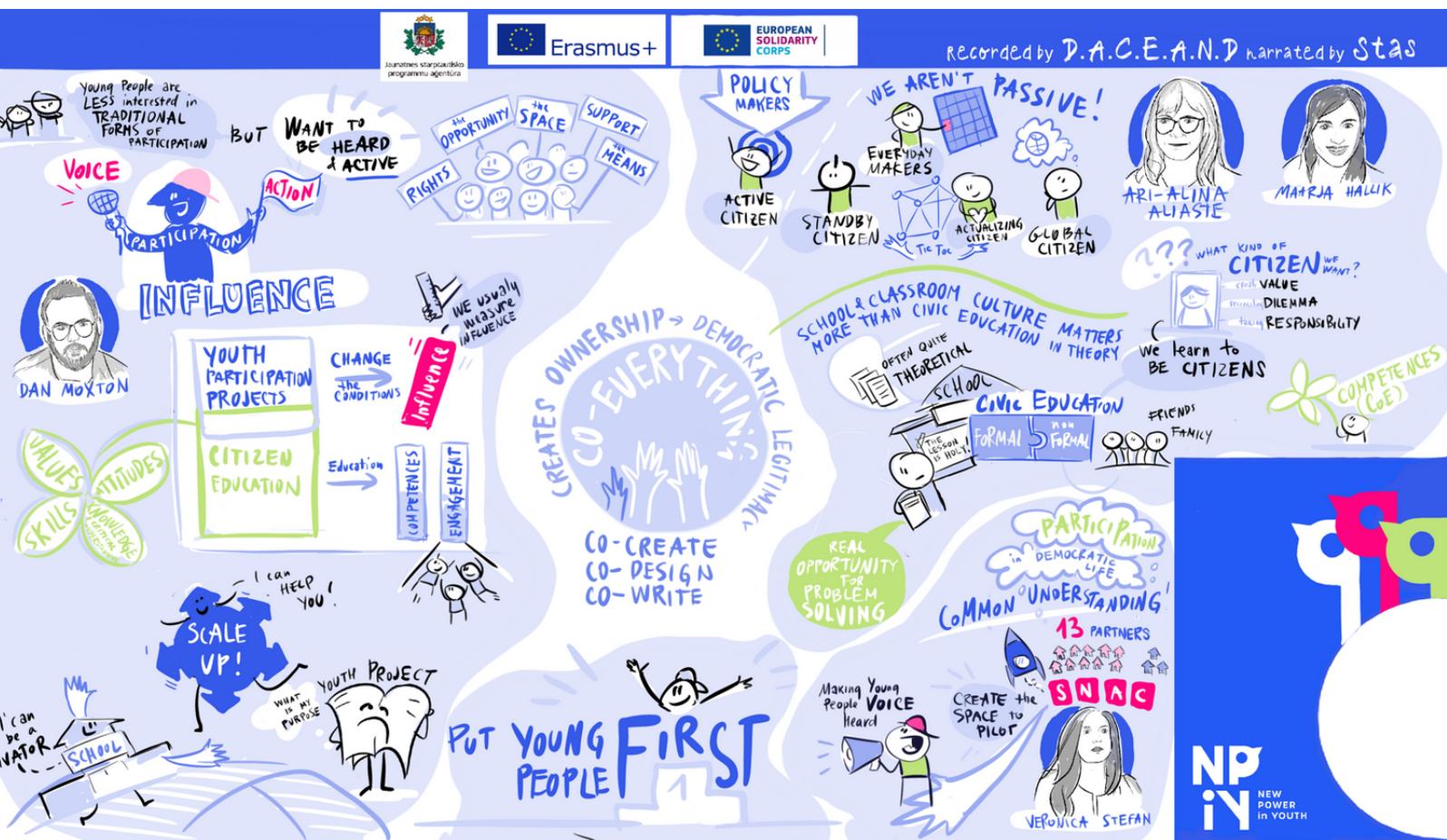
Some of the most important issues considered in connection to civic education at European level, include:

- **Curriculum approach** - while European countries integrated civic education into their formal education curricula, the depth and focus of civic education varies significantly. As a result, some national educational systems emphasize civic education as a standalone subject, while others incorporate it into broader courses like social studies.
- **Vocational training for teachers** - is a crucial aspect of the effectiveness of civic education that often depends on teachers' training and professional development to deliver engaging civic education content, relevant to real-life situations.
- **Democratic values, human rights and the rule of law** - can be considered the basis for civic education, aiming to underline the understanding of the democratic processes, the importance of civic engagement and tolerance or respect for diverse perspectives.
- **Experiential learning tools and methods** - such as election simulations, debates, and community service projects, provide young people with practical insights into civic processes and responsibilities while ultimately developing real-life skills.

- **Digital and Media Literacy** - encourages critical thinking and increases the understanding of what impact digital media has on democratic processes. At the same time, it equips young people to make good use of social media and online platforms for the benefit of citizens.
- **Challenges** - there are several issues that are especially important due to the great differences in the quality and consistency of civic education across European countries. It includes concerns related to the need for more interactive and participatory methods or keeping curricula updated in the face of evolving societal issues.
- **European Union Integration** - while there are various efforts to educate students on how the EU is working, the role of young people as European citizens needs to be further enhanced and connected to a greater sense of European identity and understanding.



About Youth Participation and Cooperation



Graphic recording on the day 1 / sessions 1 & 2
The key points are developed below

Enabling Youth Participation in Democratic Life



Or...

[Youth participation in democratic life, youth participation projects and citizenship education - are they all the same thing?](#)

Analytical paper for the Forum

by Dan MOXON

People Dialogue and Change

In this keynote speech, dr. Dan Moxon addressed the connections between the youth and civic education sectors, providing examples of what are the differences but most importantly, the commonalities between the two sectors. His presentation and concept paper provide a strong basis for understanding the main concepts and propose ways for further cooperation.

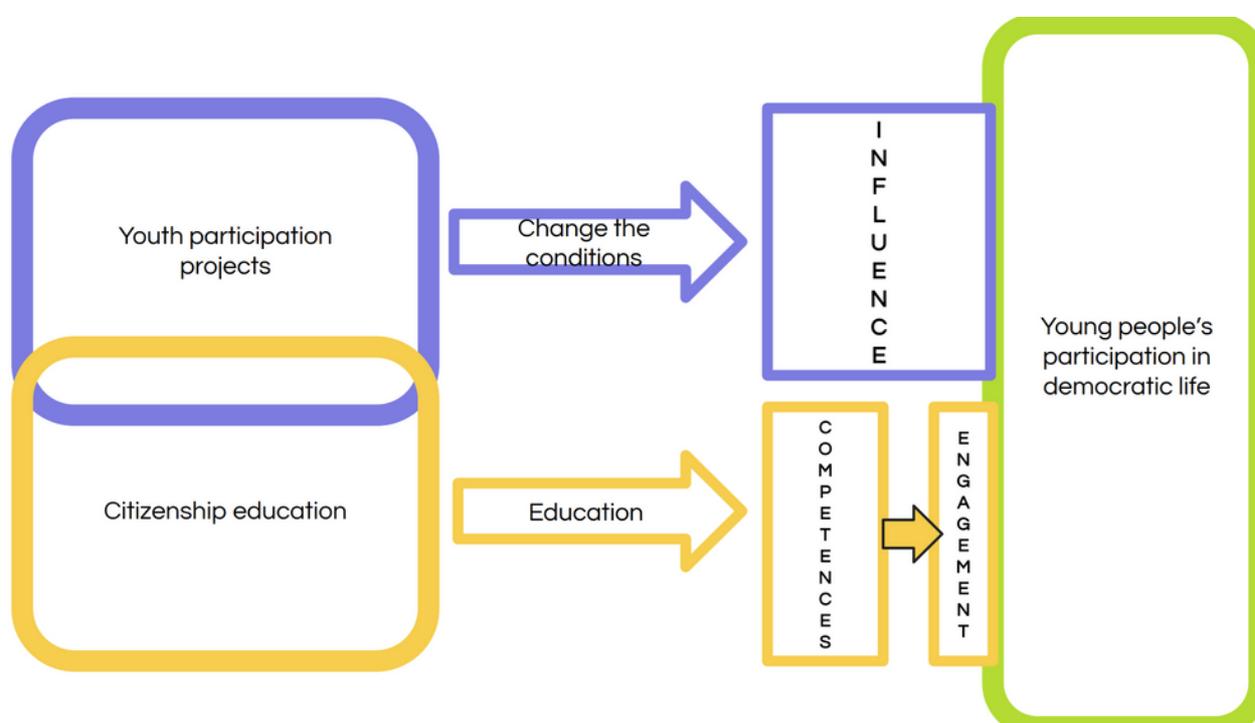
Youth participation in democratic life is about young people's ability to exercise their rights to influence and shape our communities and societies through either expressing their voice to decision-makers or by taking action to create positive social change. This relies on young people having the necessary competences to engage in democracy as well as on the environment, which should provide them with opportunities to do so.

It is common within the youth sector / non-formal education field to run 'youth participation projects' and activities to support young people's participation in democratic life. These projects typically focus on creating opportunities for young people to directly influence democratic decision making or to take some form of democratic action during the project. The primary goal of these projects is often to enable young people to exert some form of influence during the project.

'Citizenship education' is a term used in formal education to refer to educational activities that enable young people to develop the competences required to engage in democratic life. The primary goal of these projects is often to enable learners to have the necessary knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to then go on and engage in democracy throughout their lives.

There is considerable overlap between ‘citizenship education’ and ‘youth participation projects.’ Youth participation projects may still pay attention to the competences young people develop, and citizenship education may still directly provide opportunities for young people to engage in democratic decision making. Terminology is not always used consistently, and the forms and types of practice vary considerably in each field.

Both forms of practice have the long-term goal of promoting youth participation in democratic life. This means there are considerable opportunities for collaboration between fields. When collaborating, it is necessary for stakeholders to be aware of their different approaches and agree what goals and outcomes they hope to achieve by the end of their collaboration.

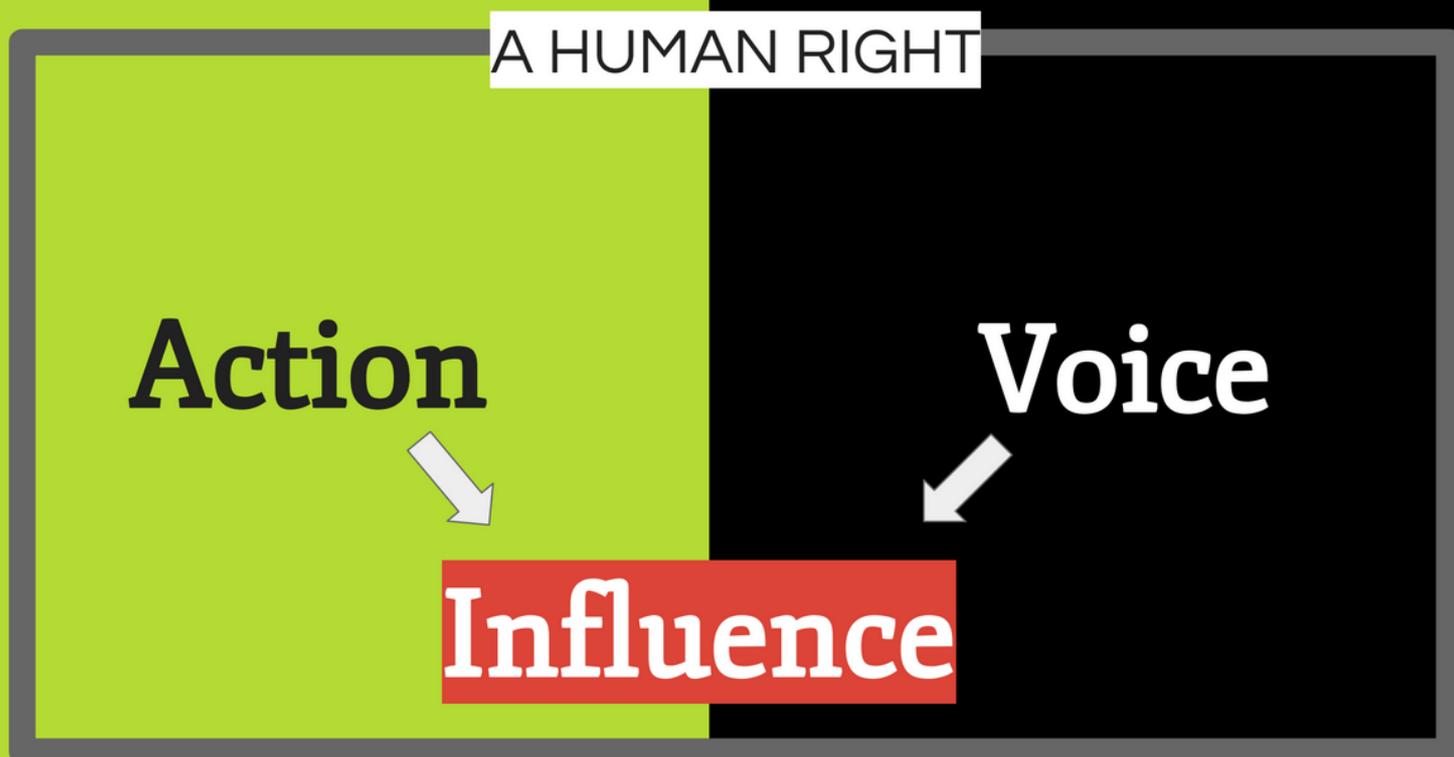


However, many consider young people apathetic towards democracy, with more and more young people being engaged in the so-called ‘alternative forms of participation’, which include:

- Involvement with protests and social movements or lifestyle choices such as boycotting and buycotting
- Volunteering, civic activism and mutual aid
- Deliberative participation initiatives
- Co-production and co-management of public services
- Membership of youth organisations, youth advisory groups, and civil society organisations (this form of structured participation is considered by some as a traditional form of participation)
- Alternative use of public space
- Digital participation or e-participation

In order to advance the agenda of both sectors, youth sector / non-formal education actors and formal education actors seeking to collaborate around youth participation and citizenship education should recognize that:

- youth participation in democratic life is a term referring to the way young people behave and interact with democracy,
- there is a distinction between youth participation in democratic life (the behaviour) and 'youth participation projects' (initiatives that support the behaviour and young people's interaction with democracy),
- citizenship education and youth participation projects are distinct but closely connected and overlapping concepts, since both seek to promote young people's participation in democratic life,
- citizenship education primarily encourages young people's participation in democratic life by developing the competences of young people,
- youth participation projects encourage young people's participation in democratic life by changing the conditions and possibilities around young people, and/or supporting young people's learning,
- experiential learning methods are identified as one of the more effective methods for influencing young people's democratic behaviour; non-formal methods can be delivered in both the formal and the non-formal sectors,
- when non-formal learning methods are applied to democracy, they require learners to actively engage with democracy. This means there is significant overlap between learning and active involvement.



Old and new forms of Youth Participation

Alina ALLASTE
Tallinn University



Maarja HALLIK
Tallinn University



In these two complementary speeches, Alina Allaste and Maarja HALLIK were diving deeper into how youth participation is evolving, how new generations are expressing themselves, the challenges of the global society, theory versus practice or the importance of walking the talk for a healthy and vibrant democracy.

Whether we like it or not, [democracy reports](#) show that there is a democratic crisis under development. In 2022, 5.7 billion people lived under an autocratic regime, meaning 72% of the world's population. For the rest of the world, the democratic advances made in the last 35 years have been wiped out, with a similar level enjoyed by the average global citizen in 1986. Such situations lead to a series of challenges, such as:

- economic, political and even personal insecurity
- appeal of illiberalism
- information noise: false news, PR spin, emotional appeals and manipulation etc.
- technocracy and populism
- disenchantment or radicalization
- ongoing political fluctuations, crises

In this context, young citizens are not that interested in typical forms of participation (especially in political participation). There are two approaches in interpreting this trend: 1) the younger generations are more passive, therefore this is a threat to democracy or 2) younger generations are simply participating in different ways and are interested in more alternative forms of participation.

Entanglement with social media brings new forms of expressing oneself, implicitly shaping new ways of participation. Global issues are more present in the lives of young people due to the increased direct access to information. While they may not seem to be always participating in the 'traditional ways', young people are more alert and prone to become active if asked, if they feel that they can make a difference, or if there are issues important to them.

Citizenship is also changing and **public action becomes more personal**. As a result, nowadays, citizens are acting on a more decentralized basis through loose community networking, addressing issues that have personal value with a strong use of social media rather than following the public agenda, usually set up by politicians and mass media. Public action becomes a form of personal recognition or self-validation.

There is a certain tension between 'formal' participation, since most youth policy makers usually engage with more traditional organisations such as youth councils (considered hierarchical/top-down youth organizations). In this context, leaving the others (considered more bottom-up participation) - like the global social movements organised on issues such as climate change or LGBTQA+ rights - relatively outside the structures of the centralized decision making and state-based politics.

Civic education curriculum in schools is important but the teachers and practitioners need to "walk the talk" embedding the civic engagement values:

- in the school and classroom culture, by consulting students about school policies and rules, involving them in planning class work
- offering ample opportunities for discussions, dialogue and debate among students on controversial public and political issues in an open and safe/respectful classroom environment,
- creating real opportunities for participation and problem-solving such as 'issues-centered curriculum', participation in extracurricular activities and service learning programmes. Thus, becoming an opportunity for young people to learn how to solve problems in the community while also learning cooperation skills, decision-making, and civic action,
- implementing project based learning.

Conclusions:

- participation needs to start early,
- cooperation among formal education and youth work is essential,
- we need to rethink governance and participation to allow more flexible and effective approaches to actually engage citizens and young people.

Group reflections

See below the participants' reflections inspired by the inputs above based on the following guiding questions:

- What works in our current understanding and approach to youth participation? What is challenging? What do we need to rethink?
- What can we all learn from young people about youth participation? What conditions do they need to participate?
- What are the changing societal needs that we need to take into account when considering working on youth participation in democratic life?



- The ideas young people generate are amazing - large part of youth work is connected to just channeling those ideas.
- We shouldn't expect youth to participate on our terms but to ensure spaces allowing them to express themselves
- Rethinking youth participation in a wider sense with a door opener attitude in mind, rather than gate keeper.
- New forms of participation with deeper meaning and clear results behind different activities are required to see what kind of impact they will have in the long run.
- Digital transformation and online communication play a significant role in society and among youth, the need to be better supported.
- Equipping, engaging and empowering youth better through digital means is increasingly important.
- Youth need consistent support and mentoring; nevertheless, it is equally important not to "shoot any idea down" and instead show support.
- Support and mentoring are not only about a set of competences, but also about building a disposition of enablement & empowerment with an ethical background.
- At a societal level, it is important to create the space for youth consultations/dialogue in a meaningful, transparent and accountable way, with feedback after the consultations
- Young people need to be further supported in taking the next step around their ideas or needs (after they have voiced them).
- Sometimes, school curricula on civic education are too strictly prescribed; current practices need more rethinking.
- There is a need to hear more youth voices in school boards.
- Sometimes, school and classroom culture matter more than civic education theory; if the living experience is different from what we learn, the formal aspect of education is not enough.
- Quality of leadership in schools and youth work, local governments is highly important
- Adults (professionals working with young people) need also to build skills on how to engage young people in decision-making processes

Let's work together





Current relationship between Formal education and Youth work
 SEPARATED with SOME OVERLAP but with BARRIERS

Challenges and potential Synergies
 WE HAVE SAME GOALS and PROJECT BASED APPROACH
 QUALITY STANDARTS AREN'T ALIGNED
 MINDSET

Conditions for Change
 TRUST CURRICULUM COMMON GROUND
 FLEXIBILITY REVOLUTION IS A KEY! METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

YOUTH PARTICIPATION
 ALREADY 3RD YEAR MENTAL WELLBEING PEER TO PEER WE CAN DEVELOP SKILLS FOR SCOOOL COUNCILS AND REPEATEDLY
 TARGET GROUPS WE STARTED TO WORK MORE WITH YOUNGSTERS
 NILS MOSEJONOKS LV APPLICATION FORM WILL BE IMPROVED (easier for STUDENTS)
 1/2 Schools WANT TO PARTICIPATE...

PROOVIKIVI
 TRANSFER THE WORLD ONE "PROOVIKIVI" AT A TIME
 WE CAN CHANGE GLOBALLY TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING
 3P PROJETS PLATFORM PEDAGOGY
 MAARJA HALLIK EST 2018
 REAL LIFE CHALLENGES
 PART OF CHALLENGE IS TO MANAGE STUDENTS EXPECTATIONS
 PROJECT BASED

SALTO
 Support the NETWORKS
 KERRY HRUPA
 FIELDS OF ACTION: YOUTH PARTICIPATION, ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP, DIGITAL PARTICIPATION, MEDIA & INFO LITERACY, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION & INFO SHARING
 TOOLS: PARTICIPATION RESOURCE POOL
 RECOGNIZE WORK WELL-DONE AND RESEARCHES INTERVIEWS
 SALTO Awards 2022

WORLD CAFE
 Youth workers & Schools
 NP IN NEW POWER IN YOUTH
 RECORDED BY D.A.C.E.A.N.D. NARRATED BY STAS

Graphic recording on the day 1 / sessions 3 & 4
The key points are developed below

World Cafe: Cross-Sectorial Cooperation



During this session, the participants were encouraged to activate their "collective intelligence" through effective conversations, generating ideas, being creative and transferring grassroots experiences. The results below reflect the main findings as expressed by the participants throughout the three rounds, each round focusing a particular topic.

Round 1 Results

Current relations: formal education and youth work

Current relations between formal education and youth work seem to be mostly about youth workers trying to deliver programmes within schools and get access to young people via school education infrastructure. School initiatives to work with the youth sector are much more scarce, however more than welcome.

This cooperation is necessary in both directions but it needs an open mind and heart. Sometimes, it might be perceived that formal education has "more power", but both sectors' goals are similar when it comes to youth participation.

When cooperation happens - the magic happens as well, and the ones that benefit the most are young people and communities. In order to create "magic" community service learning, mobility programmes or school exchanges represent good tools to change attitudes and mindsets and to connect both sectors. It is crucial to recognize take the youth work sector's potential seriously and treat it as an equal stakeholder.

“

FE has more power, but when the cooperation happens - the magic happens. Community service learning mobility programmes, school exchanges might change attitudes and mindsets and recognise possibility to implement YW into FE.

Summary of "Round 1: Draw the current relations between formal education, youth work and youth participation." discussion

Round 2 Results

Exploring challenges and potential synergies

It is important to have a synergic mindset and remember that both sectors should strive to develop meaningful collaboration for the same goal. Youth work and formal education have differences in the quality delivered, approaches taken, even the rhythm of the activities and the program life cycles are different. Coming together is not systematic and it takes effort to reach the desired synergy.

The most straightforward challenges for cooperation include restrictions on what youth organizations are allowed to do, especially due to lack of time, planning issues, etc. Sometimes, less tangible challenges are equally important and perhaps even more difficult to overcome – such as the teacher's mindset (not taking youth work seriously) and/or educational facilities. When these barriers are broken, formal education can foster an environment which brings together several inputs from youth work that improve the level of education and ensure a greater flexibility. Such a cooperation would be to the benefit of young people, who could benefit from a stable environment but still enjoying diverse opportunities.

More experiential learning needs to happen in both sectors. The competences need to be translated into the "common language" so that **active participation is recognized and turns into valuable life skills** (team work, problem solving, dialogues).



Automatic AI summary extracted
from the online platform

Youthwork and formal education have differences in the quality and they're rhythm and life cycles are different. Youth work is not always taken seriously / recognised by schools. More experiential learning needs to happen.

Round 3 Results

Conditions to improve cooperation – part 1

Youth work and formal education may have common ground and the same goals, especially when it comes to developing democratic values. However, above anything else, they both need to address each other's values and build trust to kick off a more systematic cooperation.

To make this change happen, formal education needs structural changes, while youth work needs to show that it is connected to the formal curriculum in order to support youth in their growth. Therefore, youth work activities could benefit from better demonstrating their added value to learning outcomes, as included in the formal curriculum.

This cooperation is not only about needs but also about what each has to offer. Youth work outcomes in civic education need to be transparent and clear in their added value for schools. This improves the longevity of cooperation and reduces the potential for misunderstanding.

Interdisciplinary approaches in education, implementation of new proactive methodologies, training of youth workers and teachers are among the processes that will help to find the common ground. Synergies can also happen through learning from each other, sharing methodologies, or changing practices from different countries and regions through opportunities offered in programs like Erasmus+ (both in mobilities but also in cooperation projects). This means that cooperation should also be looked at outside the local community.



Automatic AI summary extracted
from the online platform

Interdisciplinary approaches in education and training of youthworkers and teachers, which helps to find the common ground. We recognized, that youthwork and formal education have the common ground and same goals, but we first need to address our value to each other and build trust between two sectors to start more systematical co-operation between ourselves.

Round 3: Identifying conditions for change.

schools	25%	<p>Maja Drobne</p> <p>First try the cross sectoral Frameworks - flexibility of the School system - you need to enter into the School strategies to bring more understanding of both fields and how can they cooperate with each other. If this doesn't work - School system Revolution is the key :)</p>
		<p>Kätlin Merisalu</p> <p>We recognized, that youthwork and formal education have the common ground and same goals, but we first need to address our value to each other and build trust between two sectors to start more systematical co-operation between ourselves. To make the change happen - formal education is in need for structural changes and we need to show youthwork is connected to the curriculum to support youth in their growth. #commonplanning</p>
NGOs	25%	<p>Rok Hafner</p> <p>FE entities can include YW by being proactive, they often already do that, but sometimes it is difficult to make the match (list of NGOs or even 'public lists' of schools' needs would help to facilitate this process). Synergies can happen also through learning from each other (methodologies) not necessarily from being in the same space (such as seminars and Erasmus KA2 projects (heh)). The general understanding of what youth work is has to be improved - media, NGOs themselves and politicians all play a role in that. More can be done for youth work with older youth (up to 30) - there could be more programmes for them (but we have recognised that this differs in different countries). Relationship can be improved either by a top-down (from the ministry or similar) or a bottom-up approach (just do lots and lots of project to improve the image of youth work).</p>
		<p>Elizabete Rebezova</p> <p>Personal and professional development to avoid burning out. Support from the government.</p>
methodologies	13%	<p>Maja Drobne</p> <p>Implementation of different methodologies.</p>
curriculum	13%	<p>Kätlin Merisalu</p> <p>Interdisciplinary approaches in education and training of youthworkers and teachers, which helps to find the common ground.</p>
process	13%	<p>Kätlin Merisalu</p> <p>"Who will be the driver for this process?"</p>
programmes	13%	<p>Dan Moxon</p> <p>Youth work programmes in schools need to be able to demonstrate how they contribute to learning outcomes that are on the curriculum</p>

Automatic AI themes extracted
with participants contributions from the online platform

Round 3 Results

Conditions to improve cooperation – part 2

A big question mark would be on "who will be the driver for this process?" To address this, it is important to develop cross-sectoral frameworks. One needs to understand the school strategies to gain more understanding of both fields and how they can cooperate with each other and create more flexibility in the school system. "If this doesn't work – school system revolution is the key" as one group mentioned.

Schools can include youth organizations in civic education programs by being proactive, and they often do that. Sometimes, it is difficult for them when there is a lack of databases or at least some sort of list of the youth NGOs and their services – this would support a good match with the schools' needs and ultimately facilitate this process.

Youth work may have a great impact on society, but often, the general public has little understanding of what it may offer. This has to be improved. In this regard, media, NGOs, and politicians play an important role. Relationships can be improved either by a top-down (from the ministry or public authorities) or a bottom-up approach (just doing lots and lots of projects to increase the recognition of youth work).

Last but not least, there are needed personal and professional development programs addressing how to avoid burnout among youth workers and teachers, programs to be supported by institutional stakeholders.



Programs for youth participation and cross-sectorial cooperation

Inspiration plays a key role in unlocking creativity while boosting motivation. Below are the main inputs from three organizations that already managed to obtain amazing results, starting from the basic cooperation principle. Learning from what is already working out there, with initiatives led by different types of stakeholders, was an excellent tool to get more engaged, confident and motivated participants in order to work together.



KONTRACTS - Supporting Student Councils in Latvia

Nils Mosejonoks

Agency for International Programs for Youth of Latvia

Latvian pupils' councils programme - Kontakts - is a multi-faceted programme that delivers both training in non-formal education methods as well as an opportunity to practice project development and implementation on an accessible scale.

It includes a microgrants programme aiming to strengthen the development of student councils through a peer-to-peer approach in order to:

- increase the level of participation of young people in various processes
- create and develop sustainable and quality youth work systems in the municipalities
- increase the competences of young people and youth workers
- promote inclusion of young people

The grant supports the activities of student council teams made up of three young people (aged 13 - 25 years old), including one support person offering residential training, support for project application, and implementation of projects for up to 5 months.

The overall budget increased from 0.5 in 2020 to 1.3 million Euros in 2023 supporting 93 school projects (out of 240 applications) and 475 participants in residential trainings.



PROOVIKIVI

Maarja Hallik
GTL Lab NGO &
Tallinn University

Proovikivi translates in English as 'touchstone' or 'challenge' – it is an educational programme that brings project-based learning to Estonian schools where students get to contribute to their local community or society.

It brings together a community of teachers and youth workers who inspire other educators through personal examples of project-based learning to help young people become responsible and empowered local and global citizens.

It developed community focused "Glocally Transformative Learning (GTL) Labs" based on concrete challenges, aiming to translate strategic goals into well-defined projects and specific actions. The goals can be wide, such as UN Sustainable Development Goals or EU Youth Goals, but also national or local goals, the important factor being to make young people understand how they are affected by them in real life.

The GTL projects follow a learning process through the following eight phases:

1. tuning in
2. finding a problem/ challenge
3. researching the problems
4. proposing solutions
5. planning the projects
6. implementing the projects
7. presenting results
8. evaluation and reflection

Main challenges encountered since the start of the programme:

- pandemic
- managing student expectations that could run wild
- enabling youth workers and teachers from different areas to work together

SALTO Participation tools



Kelly Hrupa

SALTO Participation and Information Resource Centre

SALTO Participation and Information Resource Centre has been hosted by the Estonian National Agency since 2018. Initially as a youth field centre, SALTO PI has been “expanding” towards the education and training fields since 2023 to help implement the horizontal Erasmus+ priority "Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement". SALTO PI supports the National Agency network of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, as well as the community of practice in exploiting the unique potential of the two programmes by:

- providing quality information on participation opportunities,
- reinforcing participation skills like critical thinking, media literacy, outreach and digital participation,
- fostering democratic processes in civic society

Tools & Resources

- [Participation Resource Pool](#) (central hub for quality information and tools about Youth Participation, Digital Transformation, Media and Information Literacy, and Promotion and Outreach)
- Youth Participation Strategy (core document based on the EU Youth Strategy and focuses on enhancing youth participation in democratic life through the two programmes)
- [Youth Participation Toolkit](#) (practical guidebook on Youth Participation to accompany the strategy, especially useful for practical understanding of participation and designing participation projects)
- [Flagship Projects Collection](#) Examples of good project practices to inspire and motivate anyone who plans, implements, or supports projects
- [SALTO Awards](#) (campaign to celebrate successful projects, make them more visible and disseminate good project results)

Ongoing mapping projects

- Media Literacy and Digital Participation Mapping and Gapping (aiming to understand how these topics are incorporated in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects)
- Participation Priority Mapping and Gapping (aiming to understand the main needs and practices of the Education & Training sector)

About Civic Education and Cooperation

CIVIC EDUCATION

NOT EVERYTHING IS TAUGHT IN UNIVERSITY

BACK TO COMMUNITY

LIFE-LONG LEARNING IS CRUCIAL

NEVERENDING LEARNING

THEORETICAL knowledge doesn't work

PARTICIPATION

IF ROAD IS BLOCKED, YOU CAN FIND ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

WE CAN'T HAVE SOCIAL STUDIES JUST IN CLASSROOM

NOT ALL ARE GOOD TEACHERS

THERE IS POSSIBILITY TO INVITE EXPERTS

ASKING HELP FROM NGO

PRETTY STRONG UMBRELLA ORGANIZATIONS UNIONS

YOUTH COUNCILS

TO MAKE DECISION and ACT

WE STARTED WITH ETHICS STUDIES NOW: School 2030 & PROJECT WORK I'm proud!

not everyone loves it

MUNICIPALITY 16+
INBSE TAURINA (LV)

REALITY

LEGISLATION ACTS

MUNICIPALITY

ROAD MAP (CONTRIBUTION TO YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION INDEX A MUNICIPALITIES)

MUNICIPALITY WORKERS don't know how to talk to COMMUNITY

ACTIVE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING and...

SIMULATION GAME

SERVICE LEARNING METHODOLOGY
in YW

ANALYSIS

TRIGGERING

IMPLEMENTATION

REFLECTION

DISSEMINATION & CELEBRATION

WITH COMMUNITY FOR COMMUNITY

LEARNING IS IMPORTANT & HELPING COMMUNITY

BASED ON EXPERIMENTAL LEARNING

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS'S ASSOCIATION ELTAM ACTIVITIES
DRAGANA RADMAN & MARIJA BAJIC (HR)

ENTRY

EXIT TEST

TODAY IS THE DAY TO LEARN something NEW!

GAMES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

GLOBAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE & GLOBAL EDUCATION COURSES
DINA BEGIĆ (SEE)

WICKED PROBLEM

THEORY & CONFERENCE

PPP COMMUNITY SERVICE

SELF-ASSESSMENT

MATURITY

AIDA BECIROVIC (Bosnia-Herzegovina)

MAJA DROBNE (Slovenia)

AIRI-ALINA ALLASTE (Estonia)

ANITA MUIŽNIECE (Latvia)

Erasmus+ | EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

recorded by D.A.C.E.A.N.D narrated by Stas

Graphic recording on the day 2 / sessions 1 & 2
The key points are developed below

Panel - Civic education programmes for young people

"Civic education is for everyone!" However the national realities show that visions may differ from one country to another. This interactive panel explored four perspectives coming from Bosnia and Hecegovina, Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia aiming to find the way to bring civic education closer to every young person. The pannelist presented the various national curricula, stressed the importance of supporting teachers in an effective manner and looked into the cooperation among civic sector and formal education.

Civic education is integrated into the primary and secondary level curriculum with various content depending on the entities. The curriculum covers topics such as Democracy and the Rule of Law, Citizenship Education, Political Systems, Civic Engagement, Ethics and Values.

Non-Formal education also supports civic education through services offered by NGOs, community groups and international organizations on topics such as Youth Engagement, Community Development, Human Rights, Media Literacy, Environment or Advocacy.



A Bosnia and Hercegovina perspective

Aida Bećirović

Stiftung Schüler Helfen Leben Sarajevo

An Estonian perspective

Alina Allaste

Tallinn University



Civic education has been a part of formal education since 1996 and has been integrated both in basic and secondary schools. Since 2002, there has been a focus on lessons about society, yet civic education should be better integrated into social studies. Topics covered: Civic Competences, Society and Political Structures, Human Rights, Equality and Democratic Values, Multicultural Society and Tolerance building.

In addition to formal education, several organizations have been established to support civic education, mainly through youth councils, which serve as advisory participation councils consisting of young people and operate at the level of rural municipalities or city councils.

While theoretical civic knowledge is strong, actual participation is below average compared to other countries, and in-school participation has been experiencing a downward trend (according to the International Civic Education Survey).

Civic education in Latvia is part of primary and secondary school through social studies and history. The main focus is to get information, think critically, and, very importantly, build an attitude to act.

The program is divided into two thematic areas: 1) Society vs individual (tolerance, diversity, discrimination, mobbing, decision-making, action-based initiatives, participatory budgeting projects, Good Deeds Week, small projects, etc.; 2) Economics and entrepreneurship (student educational enterprises, social entrepreneurship, subject "Project work" in high school). They repeat each educational cycle, getting deeper and wider. In the final year, it turns into project-based education when students can choose to do research, entrepreneurship or a volunteering activity. Schools are opening their doors to the wider world.

Various NGOs also support this process on topics such as Inclusive Society, Community Development, Dialogue and Cultures, Diversity and Tolerance, Global Education, Civil Participation, and Critical Thinking.



A Latvian perspective

Anita Birzniece

Dems NGO

A Slovenian perspective

Maja Drobne

PiNA NGOty



Civic education in Slovenia has been part of primary school for more than 20 years and in secondary school for the past 3 years. Typical topics approached are Human rights, Active Citizenship, Political system, Legal frameworks, the EU and how it functions, and Participation in civil society.

There is a lack of practical experience in schools that, most of the time, is compensated by non-formal learning through National and Local Youth Councils, organisations dealing with political aspects, or even youth branches of political parties. They address topics such as the Engagement of young people in society, Active participation of young people, Youth dialogue, Interventions in public spaces, system thinking, Theatre of the oppressed, Human rights, etc.

Some over-arching ideas

- Strong theoretical knowledge, but it does not necessarily translate into active participation.
- Nonformal support is actually working to develop competences in a different way.
- There is an impact, but it depends on how well-equipped and motivated the teachers are.
- When given the space to have their voice heard and seriously taken in consideration, many initiatives have been started.
- There is a wide gap among big cities and rural areas.
- International experience in projects supported by Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps makes a big difference. On the other hand, it is important to remember that not all young people or professionals working with young people have access to such opportunities. That, just like democracy, should not be taken for granted.
- We need to break stereotypes like youth work being about fun and social science or civic education not being serious topics.
- Often, teachers are left alone to find their path to develop effective competences but also to find effective methods of engagement for the students.
- Students are more attracted by the passion and support offered by the teacher rather than by the "coolness" of the subject.
- New methodologies should be taught in the formal training of educators through cooperation with grassroots organizations or by offering the students the possibility to do fieldwork in such organizations.
- Civic education is for everyone. Hence, it cannot be done in a bubble in the classroom; we have to go out there in the real world.
- On the other hand, we cannot expect the world to "mess things up" and expect the teachers to fix it.
- There are different realities in different countries there is a need for a better understanding of civic education and youth participation at the EU level.



Youth participation in European programs

Youth participation is a bottom up process. Therefore it is only fair to “walk the talk” and value the participants expertise built so far, while real inspiration is grass-rooted. Below are the main inputs from four organizations that managed cooperation partnership to further engage and motivated participants in order to actively solve problems and generate new solutions together through peer practice sharing.

English Language Teachers' Association of Montenegro

Dragana Radoman & Marija Bojic

Objective

Teaching Global Issues through English.

Main target group

Teachers and youth workers.

Activities

Activities that are implemented in formal education system, based on non formal education and programs (Access Program, Think Globally - Teach Locally project, Activate - Make a Difference project etc)

How it addressed youth participation/civic education?

Encouraging teachers to use youth work methodology in classrooms and to implement youth work programs in English

What was the cross-sectoral dimension of the project?

Supporting teachers in schools to implement global issues topics through language teaching and to implement non formal education methodology into formal education

What are the main lessons learnt?

Teachers need support and encouragement, while students are eager to participate and take actions in local communities

Global Education on democracy and environmental issues

Dina Begic, Tallinn Pelgulinna Upper Secondary School

Objective

Empowering students to take action in society in order to create a positive change.

Main target group

Students, educators, public and private sector, experts and policy makers, community.

Activities

Students are working on issues they feel are most interested in and tackle it in the framework of their own skills. For example some students might organize social media campaigns to raise awareness on certain topics, others might develop an app, some might volunteer in their local community etc. At the end of the school year they will present the outcome of their project during a conference held in the school for local community, experts, policy makers, representatives of different sectors and experts.

How it addressed youth participation/civic education?

During the first year of high school all our students take three courses of Global Education and participate in creating the change they want to see in those fields of study. The idea is to give background on various issues concerning mainly democracy and climate change. The year ends with students undertaking practical assignments to make a change in a topic or area that concerns them the most in order to motivate them to be more active citizens and to experience the power of change . The final projects will be present in a conference that lasts several days.

What was the cross-sectoral dimension of the project?

During the courses students will get to know different roles both public and private sector plays in given topics. They develop ideas and cooperate with different non-profit, governmental and private organizations and experts from different fields. The final projects are presented to stakeholders of all the named sectors.

What are the main lessons learnt?

Different ways to be an active citizen and to experience that power of one person.

Service Learning Methodology in Youth Work

Maja Markovic, Forum MNE

Objective

Providing the opportunity for youth to engage in practical activities, achieving certain learning outcomes and bringing specific benefit for the community

Main target group

Young people (high school or university students, people working with the youth (teachers, youth workers, community leaders)

Activities

Two projects with formal and non-formal education institutions and organisations that included groups of youngsters developing and implementing community projects focusing on enhancing the process of achieving learning outcomes through practical activities and enhancing cooperation between community, schools and CSOs. Groups of young people are formed based on their interests and programmes they are attending. Each group follow the process of Service Learning development (analysis, project design) and get the opportunity to implement those projects within communities and in cooperation with the communities.

How it addressed youth participation/civic education?

Service Learning provides space for civic participation to be connected with other learning processes and therefore it encourage youth workers and teachers to implement their tasks. One of the main components of Service Learning is that it puts focus on direct cooperation WITH the community and avoids the usual mistakes of external actors doing something FOR the community. As it is a recognised pedagogical tool, the method has high sustainability potential. For example, we had success in working with higher education institutions due to the fact that our legal framework prescribes the minimum percentage of practical engagement within specific courses, so we used this to promote Service Learning as a method that can actually help teachers fulfil this requirement. Apart from this, this approach allows young people to contextualise civic participation and actually connect it with social problems, the needs of the community, their own learning process and education and therefore help them see it in a more meaningful way.

What was the cross-sectoral dimension of the project?

In our projects we have had participation from several sectors: schools, universities, civic society organizations (CSO) within the local communities. Each project needs to be implemented between the education institution (CSO or school) and community (citizens, NGOs, media, etc.)

MUNICIPALITY 16+

Inese Tauriņa, Sabiedriba par atklātību – Delna

Objective

Rising up youth civic participation level by understanding the mechanisms of youth civic participation in the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Latvia.

Main target group

Primary: municipalities, young people aged 16 – 25), youth workers, municipal employees. Secondary: national and regional decision makers.

Activities

Developing a complex and research-based tool that improves civic competence of youth and to put in use at least four civic participation mechanisms in municipalities: elections, participatory budgeting, civic councils, public consultation etc. Throughout the implementation of the project there are to be developed a INDEX of youth civic participation in municipalities, a SIMULATION GAME and a TRAINING OF MUNICIPALITY 16+, that will help youth to develop civic competence and allow them to be more confidently involved in municipalities and supervise municipalities' management.

How it addressed youth participation/civic education?

Youth participation and civic education is addressed by narrowing the gap between the youth participation mechanisms delegated to municipalities in legislative acts and the actual reality. This is to be achieved by strengthening young people's understanding and knowledge of specific participation mechanisms and overall civic competence.

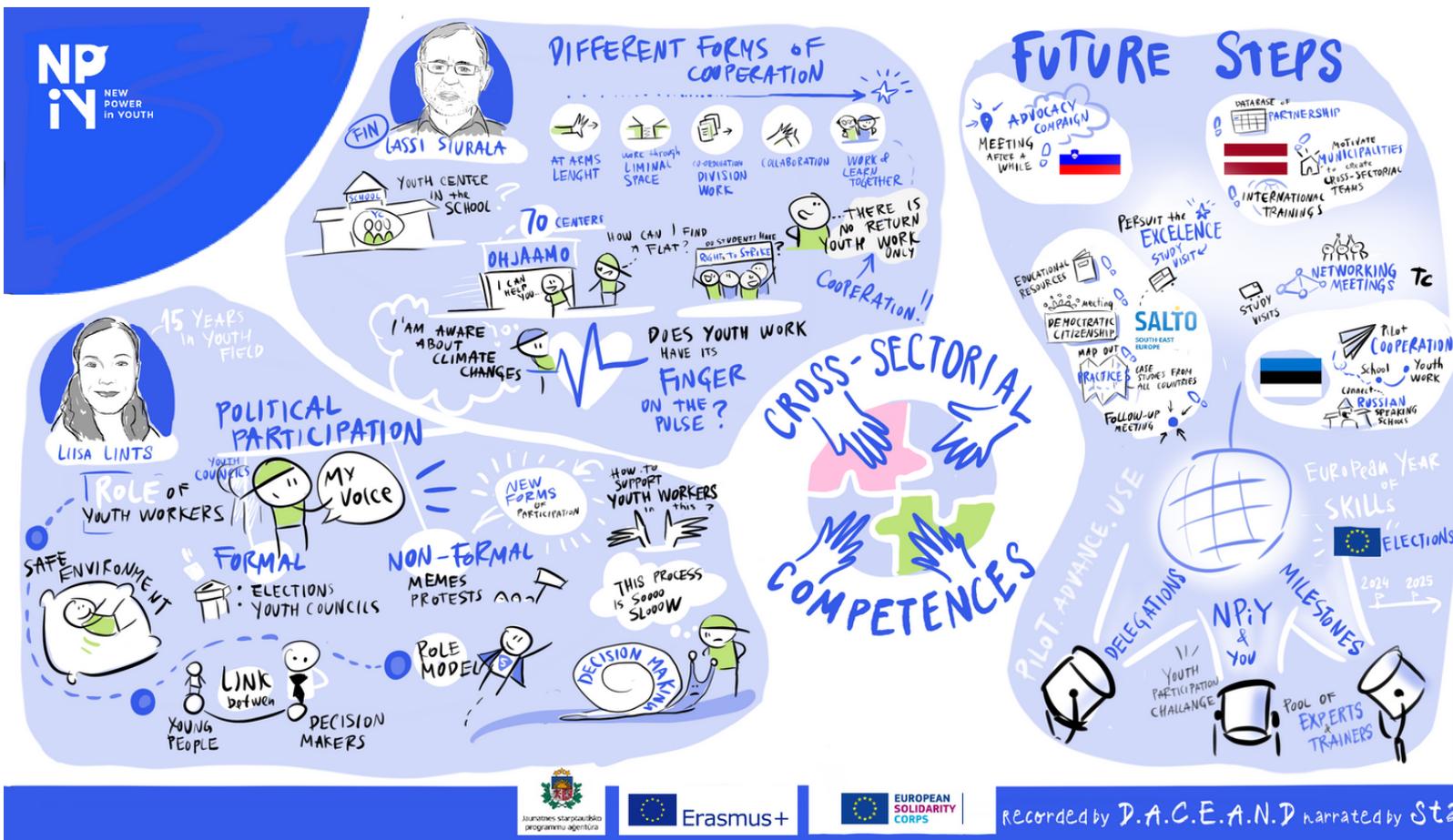
What was the cross-sectoral dimension of the project?

The project partner organizations collaborate with youth in both formal and non-formal educational settings, emphasizing the enhancement of various aspects of youth civic competence. The project model reinforces the link between school and real-life experiences, incorporates gaming elements into the learning process, and deepens educators understanding of the mentioned topics. The integration of digital literacy elements in the simulation game fosters synergy between digital and civic competences, enabling the acknowledgment of contemporary shifts in democratic processes achievable through digital technologies in civic engagement.

What are the main lessons learnt?

Project has just started so the first lessons are yet to be learned.

Let's Move on Together



Graphic recording on the day 2 / sessions 3 & 4
The key points are developed below

Cross Competences for participation



Fostering youth participation and cooperation with school

by Lasse SIURALA

Aalto University

Tallinn University

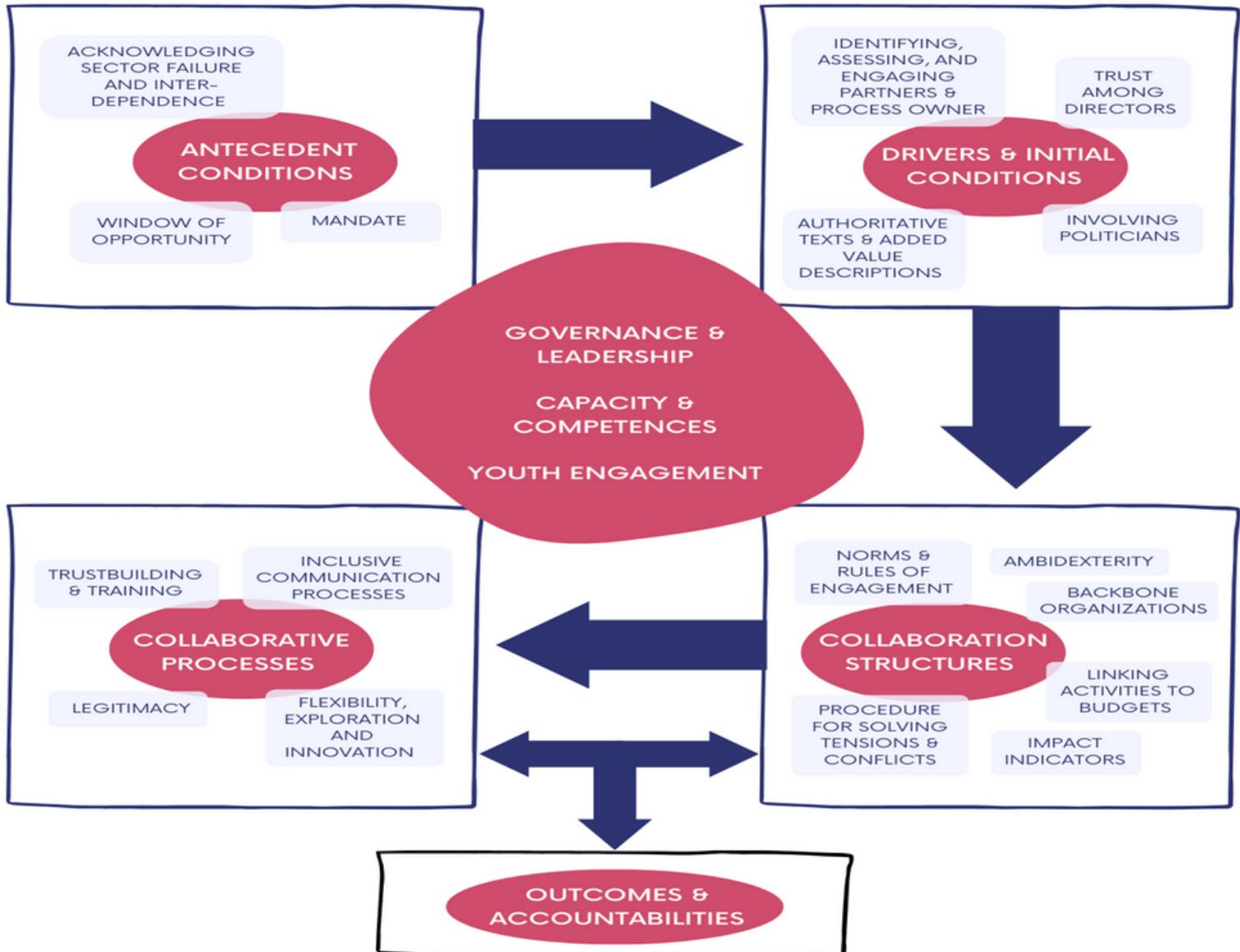
In this key note speech, dr. Lasse SIURALA mapped the various forms of cooperation, from silos to synergies, offering real-life experiences and a clear framework organized into three elements to understand how to strengthen collaboration. He also addressed the inherent risks and how to navigate among them in such endeavours.

Cooperation of youth work with other sectors is challenging and sometimes can be easily overlooked or considered to be leisure-related activity with little value in contributing to societal impact.

For examples, the Finish Municipal Youth Service carried out a three years pilot program aiming to integrate youth work in schools. Some of the schools even established youth centers as a facility, leading to an ambivalent reaction: while some young people appreciated the proximity and the opportunity to meet their peers in a friendly environment, many others perceived it as a formalized school structure, too “uncool” and unfriendly to go to. Last but not least, the question arises whether the youth workers and teachers are there to integrate young people into society or to stimulate them to be change-makers in society.

Cooperation among different sectors can take different forms, from silos to working together. There are weaker types of cooperation, such as being aware of what is happening in other sectors without much interference or limited cooperation on common spaces or societal themes such as digital competences. The stronger forms involve collaboration on common interest with a clear structure and task division or working and learning together in a systemic way, creating synergies among different sectors.

An integrated youth policy framework (see the picture below) needs to follow several steps, such as identifying when the window is open for collaboration and determining the necessary cooperation structures and processes leading to tangible outcomes supported by a good monitoring and evaluation system. Such a framework also needs three elements: 1) organization and management, 2) capacity and competencies and 3) youth engagement.



Any kind of cooperation needs a competence framework to navigate through. For youth work-school cooperation the following competences should be considered:

- collaborative management,
- understanding how school works (what are the structures, norms and practices of the school, knowing the formal education curriculum) – for youth workers,
- understanding why to do youth work and what is the totality of the life situation of young people – for the teachers,
- developing youth work resilience to emergent crises,
- understanding the variety of youth responses,
- complement democracy education with non-formal learning.

One needs to be aware that there are also risks that need to be managed in youth work cooperation with other sectors, and with schools in particular, like those identified by Tania de St Croix (2016):

[relations with other sectors] “became formalised, more bureaucratic, target focused, monetised and commodified, placed more clearly in the framework of social control, surveillance and policing. It seemed to many practitioners that youth work was losing its identity, its sense of solidarity with young people and its informal approach.”

One way to avoid these risks is to always keep in mind the core values of youth work, such as non-formal learning as “a learner-centered and practice-based learning process which emphasizes intrinsic motivation” or the usefulness of knowledge and critical thinking (rather than objective knowledge and memorizing) and aims at identity growth, social change and integration into society.

Moreover, learning is voluntary, as it involves educational aims and may be credited.” (Siurala in Festeu, Dorin and Humberstone, Barbara (eds) (2006) Non-formal education through outdoor activities guide, Buckinghamshire, UK, p. 12).

Final considerations for school youth work :

- In the very beginning, it is important to negotiate the aims and forms of cooperation with the school
- Consider setting up an organised structure, such as a joint steering group
- Focus on transfer phases in education
- If needed, define limits to individual-based work
- Invest in mutual training in collaboration
- Develop a group working method fit for the task at hand, such as triad work
- Consider having space for school youth work
- Develop together an assessment tool
- Cooperate with researchers
- The longer youth work has been at school, the more the school expects it to be there.





What youth workers need to better support young people's political participation?

by **Liisa LINTS**

Ministry of Education and Research

Liisa LINTS has an extended experience in youth work, being also a member of the Estonian Association of Youth Workers. In her input, she presented the main finding in the research carried out for her master thesis, „The willingness of the youth worker to address issues related to political participation with young people”.

Youth workers understand youth political participation as the right of young people to have a say in societal processes. This is achieved through formal forms of participation, such as elections and involvement in youth councils or political parties. The alternative forms of participation include social media, memes, street art or protesting.

Youth workers **roles** in supporting young people's political participation:

- Ensuring a safe environment where young people dare to speak up and trust that their ideas will be considered.
- Acting as a link between young people and decision-makers, as a safety net that allows young people to act and as support to translate in common language the decision making process (probably one of the most challenging roles while it needs a good understanding of the young people needs and a lot of negotiation skills).
- Being a role model as an active contributor to the society.

Barriers for youth workers to support youth participation

- Young people are not taken as an equal partner and are often involved in minor issues (tokenism), it can be overcome with meaningful involvement of the young people in joint activities with decision-makers.
- Young people's lack of interest in formal forms of participation.
- Youth workers perceived pressure to direct young people into formal forms of participation.
- Youth workers feel alone in supporting participation.
- The nature of the decision-making processes which are very regulated and slow functioning.

Needs of the youth workers when dealing with topics related with political participation

- Additional knowledge and training to handle the topic
- Common understanding of the concept of political participation
- Sharing good practices
- Cooperation between different institutions
- Active support

Conclusions and Recommendations

Forum Recommendations

The cooperation between youth participation and civic education is crucial for fostering an informed, engaged, and active citizenship among young people in Europe.

The synergetic relationship between youth participation and civic education contributes to the development of a well-informed, engaged, and empowered generation of young citizens who will actively contribute to the democratic processes and the prosperity of their communities.

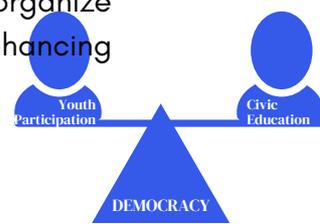
The Cross-Sectoral Forum on Youth Participation in Democratic Life was a source of inspiration to share practical experiences and just a first step on many to come but reach in looking for ways to cooperate among the youth and education sector. Based on this first experience there were drafted 10 recommendations on how youth participation and civic education can collaborate effectively:

1. Human resources training is a must. Investment in the professional development of civic educators and youth workers to enhance their capacity to deliver effective youth involvement should be linked with providing resources and training on innovative, engaging methods, facilitating discussions on complex issues, and creating relevant learning environments developing real social life skills.

2. Integrated curriculum and practical activities are needed in order to ensure that young people not only learn but also exercise democratic principles, human rights, and active citizenship from an early age. Integrating civic education into various subjects and connecting it with youth participation activities carried out by various youth structures is essential to emphasize its relevance to real-world issues.

3. Experiential learning provides hands-on and develops a real-life learning culture that allows young people to engage in civic activities. Simulations, mock elections, debates, and community service learning activities can offer practical experiences that enhance civic understanding and skills.

4. Encourage and support youth-led initiatives within schools and communities in order to empower students and young people to take on leadership roles, organize events and activities, or address local issues. This has both the merit of enhancing their civic skills and demonstrating the value of their active participation.



5. Acknowledge and validate the contributions of young people in civic engagement by celebrating their initiatives, projects and achievements to reinforce their importance in the community, offering a sense of belonging while being engaged in something meaningful and valuable.

6. Incorporate digital and media literacy into civic education and youth participation. This way, the young people and students will be equipped with the critical thinking tools to evaluate information, navigate digital platforms responsibly, and engage in constructive online discourse.

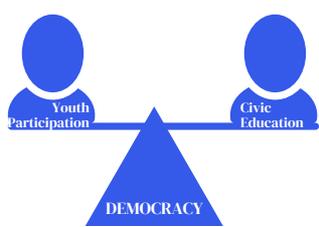
7. Actively develop partnerships among schools and youth organizations. The collaboration of schools with civil society organizations, NGOs, or youth groups, in addition to formal education, can provide students with exposure to diverse perspectives and real-world civic challenges while bringing additional resources and opportunities.

8. Promote critical thinking and emphasize critical thinking skills within youth participation and civic education. Encouraging young people and students to analyze information, question assumptions, and develop their own informed opinions helps them to become active, avoid manipulation and aid in discerning facts from perceptions in democratic processes.

9. Mind the global and European perspectives while the new generations are more sensitive to global issues such as climate change or artificial intelligence that seem to have a bigger impact on their daily lives. Acknowledging the interconnectedness regarding global issues and fostering the understanding of the European institution's role highlights the importance of active participation in both local and European contexts.

10. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of civic education and youth participation programs and adapt them to address evolving challenges and societal changes. Feedback from young people, students, youth workers, educators, and other stakeholders to ensure the relevance and impact of civic education and youth participation initiatives are required for continuous evaluation and adaptation.

Last but not least, it is important to stress that there are so many narratives, each anchored in their specific context, that makes it difficult to identify a single metanarrative. These conclusions and recommendations are considered to be a good starting point, however the continuation and focus of the discussions should be the way forward in the following years.



Expert recommendations

The youth sector, together with non-formal education and formal education actors, works with the same target group (young people) and is engaged in activities to promote youth participation in democratic life. This means there may be opportunities for practice sharing, collaboration and enhancing each other's work. **Democracy does not stop or start at the doors of the school or the doors of the youth projects. Both sectors are part of a wider democratic culture and exist within a democratic environment that encompasses our society.**

In the concept paper "Youth participation in democratic life, youth participation projects, and citizenship education - are they all the same thing?" developed for the Forum, Dr Dan Moxon outlines several guidelines for collaboration between the formal and non-formal education sectors.

Youth sector / non-formal education actors and formal education actors seeking to collaborate around youth participation and citizenship education should recognize that:

- youth participation in democratic life is a term referring to the way young people behave and interact with democracy;
- citizenship education and youth participation projects are distinct but closely connected and overlapping concepts, that both seek to promote young people's participation in democratic life;
- citizenship education primarily encourages young people's participation in democratic life by developing the competences of young people;
- youth participation projects encourage young people's participation in democratic life changing the condition and possibilities around young people, and/or supporting their young people's learning;
- experiential learning methods are identified as one of the more effective methods for influencing young people's democratic behavior, and that non-formal methods can be delivered in both the formal and the non-formal sector;
- when non-formal learning methods are applied to democracy, they require learners to actively engage with democracy while there is a significant degree of overlap between learning and active involvement;
- there is a distinction between youth participation in democratic life (the behavior) and 'youth participation projects' (initiatives that support the behavior and young people's interaction with democracy).

When developing cross-sectoral education projects, it is important to consider and agree carefully if the priority and short-term outcome are to a) develop young people's competences or b) enable young people to influence/effect some sort of change during the project. These two priorities are not mutually exclusive, but at a project level, it is important to be clear about what sort of change or outcome is realistically expected at the end of the project. In the longer term, both priorities will contribute to promoting participants' participation in democratic life.

Further inspiration and Resources



[Analytical paper "Youth participation in democratic life, youth participation projects, and citizenship education - are they all the same thing?"](#) developed for the Forum, Dr Dan Moxon

Click on the picture bellow to open the **recorded videos** on YouTube
Keynote speeches



Panel discussion - Civic education programmes for young people (to be added) -->

For the whole playlist, including good practices and testimonials



[CLICK HERE](#)



Meet the Team



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Andrei POPESCU
Rapporteur

Cross-Sectoral Forum on Youth Participation in Democratic Life

Report by
Andrei Popescu

