



DEMOCRACY RELOADING



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Youth

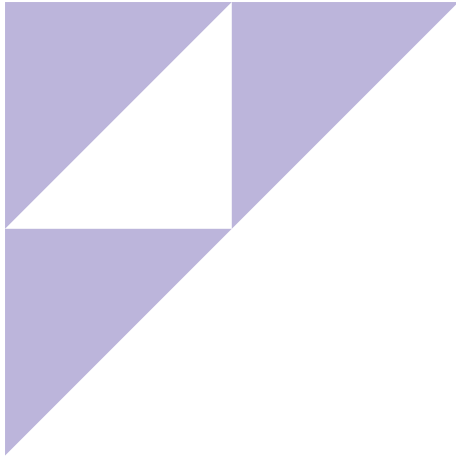


# FINAL REPORT

## European Conference on Local Youth Work and Democracy

20-23 February 2024, Brussels

EU  
NEEDS  
YOUTH



## **COLOPHON**

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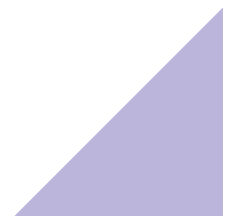
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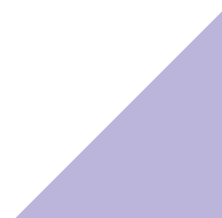
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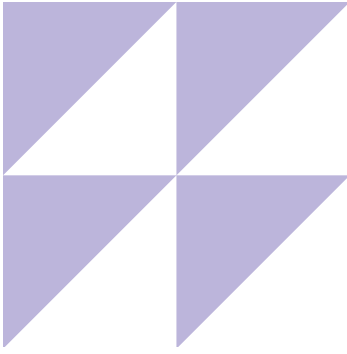
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# The rationale of the event

(by Judit Balogh)

The Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Belgian EU Presidency or Presidency) (1/1/2024 - 30/6/2024) hosted the European conference 'Local youth work and democracy', with the aim of contributing to the goals of the Presidency in the youth and youth work policy area. The event took place from 20 until 23 February 2024 in Brussels. The main thematic objective of the conference was to discuss the role of local youth work in enhancing youth engagement and participation in local communities. This event built on the synergies deriving from the Strategic National Agency Cooperation projects Europe

Goes Local (EGL), coordinated by JINT vzw and Democracy Reloading (DemRel), coordinated by BIJ - the National Agencies of Erasmus+ Youth for the Flemish and French communities of Belgium.

## The objectives of the event were to:

- take stock of what has been achieved in local youth work and youth participation;
- identify links between quality local youth work, meaningful youth participation and the provision of public space;
- explore how youth work can be approached as a continuum, involving and addressing young people already from their early age with a focus on the right to play;
- discuss the role, tasks, and needs of local and regional authorities in the provision of quality youth work and youth participation in decision-making, paying special attention to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

## The event invited the participants to:

- INSPIRE each other through facilitated discussions and debates;
- ILLUSTRATE how youth work and youth participation is provided all over Europe via inspiring practices and study visits to local organisations in Brussels;
- IMAGINE the future of youth work and youth participation, and to make recommendations to achieve the desired developments.

## Thematic approach

The sessions of the event were organized in three thematic pillars: Youth work; Youth participation, and; Roles and needs of municipalities regarding youth work.

Each pillar offered related topics to discuss through inspiring inputs and facilitated group work. The topics were:

### Pillar 1: Youth work

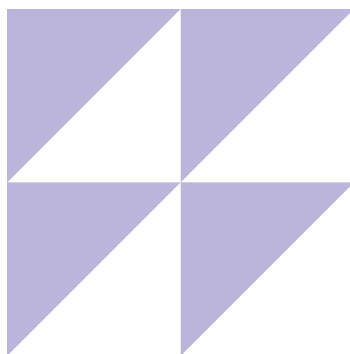
1. Youth work as a continuum
2. Youth work as a promoter of play and playful methods
3. Frameworks for local youth work: local autonomy, allocation of resources, lobbying for youth work and advocating for youth participation
4. Frameworks, structures, and methods for knowledge-based youth work
5. The role of local youth work in enhancing inclusivity and providing equal opportunities for young people to participate in their local communities with a special focus on reinforced support for their mental health

### Pillar 2: Youth participation

6. A participatory culture and environment in the local community and youth work that enables young people to become active citizens
7. Sustainable structures, frameworks, and meaningful mechanisms of local youth participation
8. The role of youth work in promoting critical thinking, human rights, and active citizenship

### Pillar 3: Roles and needs of municipalities

9. Municipal policies, strategies, and structures
10. The relation between youth, youth work, participation, and the provision of public space



### **The expected outcomes were:**

- Networking and peer-learning amongst participants
- A collection of good practices for municipal youth work and youth participation that will be published through the websites of both EGL and DemRel for the benefit of the youth work community of practice
- Written conclusions on the thematic areas of the event, summarizing the needs and requirements of local and regional authorities for the provision of the basic youth work offer and youth participation in municipal decision-making, highlighting inspiring practices, instruments and concepts that already exist and can be of support for the community of practice

## **The participants**

(by Judit Balogh)

The conference aimed at addressing all Members States (MS) of the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Union (EU). Each MS was invited to set up a delegation of 4-6 people covering the following professional profiles and taking into account the networks of the two strategic cooperation projects, EGL and DemRel:

- Young people active in local youth work, in youth councils or NGOs
- Representatives of local and regional authorities (both administrative staff and elected politicians)
- Youth workers engaged directly with young people in local youth work or representing umbrella organisations of local youth work
- Decision-makers at the national level who have influence on youth work and youth policy-making as well as on providing the means and frameworks of local youth work provision
- National Agencies of the Erasmus+ Youth programme and the European Solidarity Corps
- Representatives of European institutions/organisations

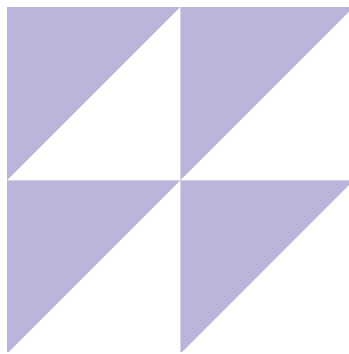
Besides national delegations, the Presidency also invited European institutions and organisations to delegate their representatives. As such the event hosted the representatives of the European Youth Forum; the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture; the Committee of the Regions; the CoE's Youth Department, Advisory Council on Youth and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities; the EU-CoE Youth Partnership; European umbrella organisations such as ERYICA, EYCA, Eurodesk, ALDA, KEKS and from the child-participation field: UNICEF, Child in the City and EuroChild.

The conference provided space for experts to share their practices. An open call for inspiring practices was launched across Europe in the summer of 2023 through the website of EGL. A 101 practices were submitted. After the evaluation of each entry, 88 inspiring new practices were published through the database of EGL, available to all. This call was in line with the aim of the event to take stock of the achievements of youth work. DemRel also launched a similar call and used their own channels to collect practices. Their call resulted in about 20 practices, also taken into account when drafting the agenda of the conference.

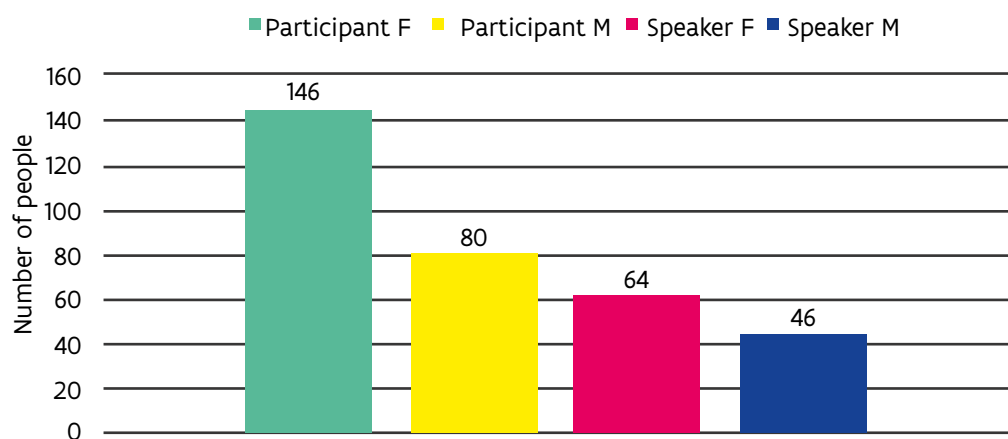
The conference had a grand total of 415 attendees, out of which 336 participants and 79 support staff. The 336 attending participants can be categorized into two major groups: participants (226 persons) and speakers (110 persons). 90% of speakers took part in the whole event.

When selecting the speakers and inviting the MS to set up their delegations, the Presidency aimed to include the full geographical spread of the area of the CoE. Out of 46 members, 39 were represented at the event. Belgium-Flanders was overrepresented amongst both the participants and slightly amongst the speakers as well, but this event also served as an opportunity to showcase Flemish youth work and to invite stakeholders to network, forge new partnerships and find inspiration. The speakers came from 33 countries and the European institutions/organisations were also invited to give input.

When it comes to gender balance, the composition of delegations was out of the Presidency's hands. However, when selecting the speakers and the crew (facilitators and rapporteurs) of the event we aimed for a balance between male and female experts. The final composition of both participants and speakers included more women (F) than men (M):

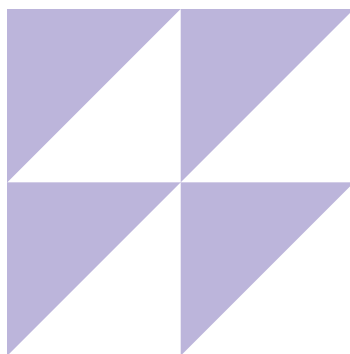


## Role/gender



Full overview of participants and speakers regarding their country of residency and gender (the representatives of European institutions and organisations were not clustered into country groups):

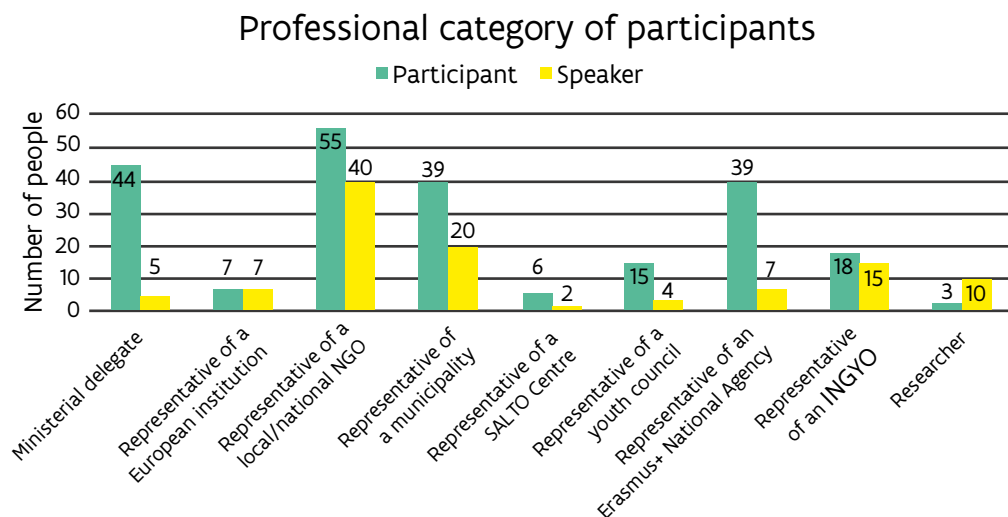
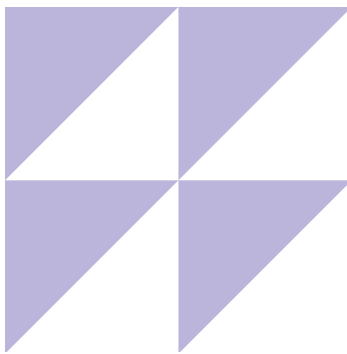
No.	Role/gender (F=female; M= male)	Participant		Participant Total	Speaker		Speaker Total	Grand total		
		F	M		F	M		F	M	All
	<b>Country represented</b>									
1	Albania				2		2	2	0	<b>2</b>
2	Armenia	2	1	3		1	1	2	2	<b>4</b>
3	Austria	4	2	6	1	1	2	5	3	<b>8</b>
4	Belgium	1		1				1	0	<b>1</b>
5	Belgium - DE	5	1	6	1	1	2	6	2	<b>8</b>
6	Belgium - FL	12	13	25	15	9	24	27	22	<b>49</b>
7	Belgium - FR	4	3	7	3	2	5	7	5	<b>12</b>
8	Bosnia and Herzegovina				1		1	1	0	<b>1</b>
9	Bulgaria	4	2	6				4	2	<b>6</b>
10	Croatia	3	1	4	1	2	3	4	3	<b>7</b>
11	Cyprus	3	3	6				3	3	<b>6</b>
12	Czech Republic	5	1	6		2	2	5	3	<b>8</b>
13	Denmark		1	1				0	1	<b>1</b>
14	Estonia	5	2	7	3		3	8	2	<b>10</b>
15	European institution/NGO	14	10	24	5	13	18	19	23	<b>42</b>
16	Finland	4		4	2	1	3	6	1	<b>7</b>
17	France	5	4	9	1	1	2	6	5	<b>11</b>
18	Georgia				1		1	1	0	<b>1</b>
19	Germany	4	2	6	3	2	5	7	4	<b>11</b>
20	Greece	2		2	1		1	3	0	<b>3</b>
21	Hungary	5	2	7	1		1	6	2	<b>8</b>
22	Iceland	9	1	10	2		2	11	1	<b>12</b>
23	Ireland	6		6	2		2	8	0	<b>8</b>
24	Italy	9	2	11	3		3	12	2	<b>14</b>
25	Latvia	4	1	5	1		1	5	1	<b>6</b>
26	Lithuania	4		4				4	0	<b>4</b>
27	Luxembourg	2	1	3		1	1	2	2	<b>4</b>
28	Malta	4	2	6	1	1	2	5	3	<b>8</b>
29	Moldova	2	1	3				2	1	<b>3</b>



30	Netherlands	3	3	6	1	1	2	4	4	<b>8</b>
31	North Macedonia	2	2	4	1		1	3	2	<b>5</b>
32	Norway	1	2	3		2	2	1	4	<b>5</b>
33	Poland	1	3	4	1		1	2	3	<b>5</b>
34	Portugal	4	1	5	2	1	3	6	2	<b>8</b>
35	Romania	4	2	6				4	2	<b>6</b>
36	Serbia	3	1	4	1		1	4	1	<b>5</b>
37	Slovakia	2	2	4				2	2	<b>4</b>
38	Slovenia	4	3	7		1	1	4	4	<b>8</b>
39	Spain	1		1		1	1	1	1	<b>2</b>
40	Sweden	3		3	4	1	5	7	1	<b>8</b>
41	Switzerland	2	3	5	1		1	3	3	<b>6</b>
42	Ukraine		2	2	2	1	3	2	3	<b>5</b>
43	United Kingdom				3	1	4	3	1	<b>4</b>
		<b>146</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>336</b>

When the participants registered, they were asked to choose a pre-defined professional category. The professional composition and representation of the different stakeholder groups was crucial as the conference addressed the questions of local youth work policy and participation, also with a special emphasis on the role of municipalities. The good representation of municipalities can be considered as a result of the work of the two strategic cooperation projects, EGL and DemRel, which specifically focus on engaging municipalities both in the European discourse and European subsidies in the field of youth work. The most represented group at the event were NGOs (local and national level) with 95 persons (of which 40 gave input in one of the sessions). The second largest group were the representatives of municipalities with altogether 59 attendees out of which 20 speakers.

Category	Participant	% of Participants	Speaker	% of Speakers	Total	% of total
Ministerial delegate	44	19%	5	5%	<b>49</b>	<b>15%</b>
Representative of a European institution	7	3%	7	6%	<b>14</b>	<b>4%</b>
Representative of a local/national NGO	55	24%	40	36%	<b>95</b>	<b>28%</b>
Representative of a municipality	39	17%	20	18%	<b>59</b>	<b>18%</b>
Representative of a SALTO Centre	6	3%	2	2%	<b>8</b>	<b>2%</b>
Representative of a youth council	15	7%	4	4%	<b>19</b>	<b>6%</b>
Representative of an Erasmus+ National Agency	39	17%	7	6%	<b>46</b>	<b>14%</b>
Representative of an International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYO's)	18	8%	15	14%	<b>33</b>	<b>10%</b>
Researcher	3	1%	10	9%	<b>13</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>226</b>		<b>110</b>		<b>336</b>	



Regarding the support staff, it's important to highlight the group of general moderators (3 people), workshop facilitators (10 people), rapporteurs (7 people) and note-takers (4 people).

This group had an even gender balance (12 male and 12 female team members) and the experts had the following countries of origin: Armenia; Belgium-Flemish community (7); Belgium – French community (4); Croatia; Estonia; Finland; Hungary; Italy; Lithuania (2); Montenegro; the Netherlands; North Macedonia, Portugal; Romania.

## The agenda

(by Judit Balogh)

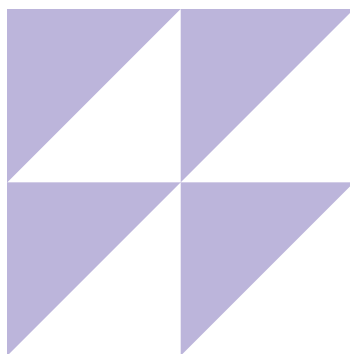
The conference consisted of:

- 30 parallel workshops with inspiring inputs of good practices and guided discussion
- 18 field visits
- 6 thematic panel discussions
- 2 reflection sessions led by the rapporteurs
- 2 informal networking sessions
- 1 marketplace of projects
- the opening and closing sessions

The conference had a variety of methods and sessions:

Expected outcomes	Session type / method
Networking and peer-learning amongst participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of inspiring practices within the parallel workshops</li> <li>• Parallel plenary sessions</li> <li>• Study visits</li> <li>• Marketplace</li> <li>• Informal networking sessions</li> </ul>
Written conclusions on the thematic areas of the event, summarizing the needs and requirements of local and regional authorities for the provision of the basic youth work offer and youth participation in municipal decision-making, highlighting inspiring practices, instruments and concepts that already exist and can be of support for the community of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated discussions within the parallel workshops</li> <li>• Reflection sessions led by the rapporteurs</li> </ul>





## Tuesday 20 February 2024 (BEL Brussels)

17:00 – 18:30 Opening (live streamed)

- Opening speech by **Benjamin Dalle**, Flemish Minister of Brussels, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction
- Opening video message by **Iliana Ivanova**, EU Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth
- Opening speech by **Matjaž Gruden**, Director for Democracy at the CoE
- Opening speech by **Rares Voicu**, Board member of the European Youth Forum
- Opening speech by **Spyros Papadatos**, Chairperson of the Advisory Council on Youth (CoE)
- ‘Youth work in contemporary Europe’, keynote by **Howard Williamson**, Professor of European Youth Policy - University of South Wales
- Panel discussion: Local youth work and participation in the context of policy and practice, by the directors of the Erasmus+ Youth National Agencies of Belgium - **Koen Lambert**, Director of JINT vzw; **Laurence Hermand** – Director of BIJ; **Margret Zeiner** - Director of Jugendbüro
- Youth work participation through the eyes of young people - story-telling by young activists

18:30 – 19:00 Informal networking – getting to know each other

19:00 – 21:00 Walking dinner at Bel

## Wednesday 21 February 2024 (The EGG Brussels)

09:30 – 11:00 Setting the scene

- Introduction of the rationale and method of the event by **Geert Boutsen** and **Guy Redig** (live streamed)
- Youth work in the local context – examples of diverse realities and practices: **Fatima Laabab** (Youth worker at Formaats vzw), **Olga Kiriakidou** (President of the Hellenic Youth Workers Association | Kids in Action), **Katarina Gorenc** (Head of Youth Office at the City of Ljubljana); **Oksana Malchenko** (Chairperson of the Regional Public Organization “Equal Opportunities Space” - Sumy region) (live streamed)
- Introduction to the agenda of the event and to the digital conference tool

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break

11:30 – 13:00 Parallel workshops with inspiring inputs of good practices and guided discussion

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:30 Parallel workshops with inspiring inputs of good practices and guided discussion

16:30 – 17:00 Coffee break

17:00 – 18:00 Thematic reflection groups

1. Youth work and participation from childhood
2. Quality local youth work
3. Inclusive youth work and reaching out
4. Participatory environments and spaces to participate
5. Information, critical thinking, and active citizenship
6. Roles and needs of municipalities

18:00 – 19:00 Informal networking

19:00 – 20:00 Walking dinner at the EGG

20:00 – 22:00 Cultural programme: Nuff Said <https://nuffsaid.be/>

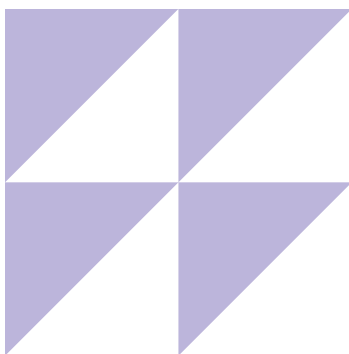


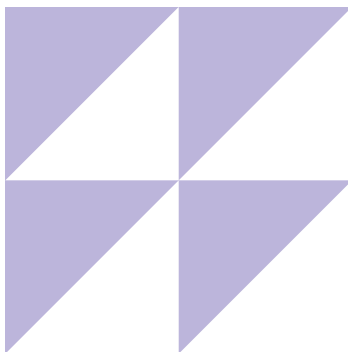
Photo: Freedom Photography

### Thursday 22 February 2024 (The EGG Brussels)

- 09:30 – 1:00 Plenary debates – How does Europe support local youth work and participation? – three parallel sessions *(live streamed/recorded)*
- 11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee break*
- 11:30 – 13:00 Parallel workshops with inspiring inputs of good practices and guided discussion
- 13:00 – 14:30 *Lunch*
- 14:30 – 18:00 Field visits hosted by NGO's in Brussels
- 18:00 – 19:00 Thematic reflection groups (same themes as in the previous round)
- 19:00 – 21:00 *Seated dinner at The EGG*  
*Cultural programme: Lyna Lahbiri*

### Friday 23 February 2024 (The EGG Brussels)

- 10:00 – 11:00 Marketplace
- 11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee break*
- 11:30 – 13:00 Presentation of the outcomes and closing *(live streamed)*
- Youth work in Ukraine by **Andriy Chesnokov**, Deputy Minister for European Integration, Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine
  - Presentation of the main policy messages of the event by **Guy Redig**, general rapporteur of the event
  - Policy panel reflecting on the outcomes of the event:
    - **Ioannis Malekos**, Head of Unit of DG EAC-B3, European Commission
    - **Tobias Flessenkemper**, Head of the Youth Department, CoE
    - **Stephen De Ron**, Member of Hesperange Municipal Council, Committee of the Regions
    - **Veronique Bertholle**, deputy thematic spokesperson on Youth, CoE Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
    - **Xesc Mainzer**, member of the Advisory Council on Youth, CoE
    - **Milosh Ristovski**, Secretary General of the European Youth Forum
  - Reflection by the coordinators of EGL and DemRel: **Judit Balogh** and **László Földi**
  - Announcement of the 4th European Youth Work Convention by **Miriam Teuma**, CEO Agenzija Zghazagh (Maltese Youth Agency)
  - Closing words by **Benjamin Dalle**, Flemish Minister of Brussels, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction
- 13:00 - 14:30 *Lunch*



# Analytical overview of the outcomes of the conference

(by Guy Redig)

## Methodology & approach

This final report is based on part I of the rapportage. It offers a comprehensive and structured summary of the conclusions and advices, based on the introductions and discussions made throughout almost three days, during nearly 40 sessions and by 350 participants.

This summary is part IV of a reporting method (see below). It made choices, by reducing and interpreting the reports, to describe as shown in the image. The basis were the 33 reports of the rapporteurs and note takers. They used a template to process the reporting in a comparable way.

Part II and III of this reporting process, as shown in the image, are available at JINT vzw. The advice presented to the Belgian EU Presidency, based on the conference outcomes, is integrated as the last part of this final report.

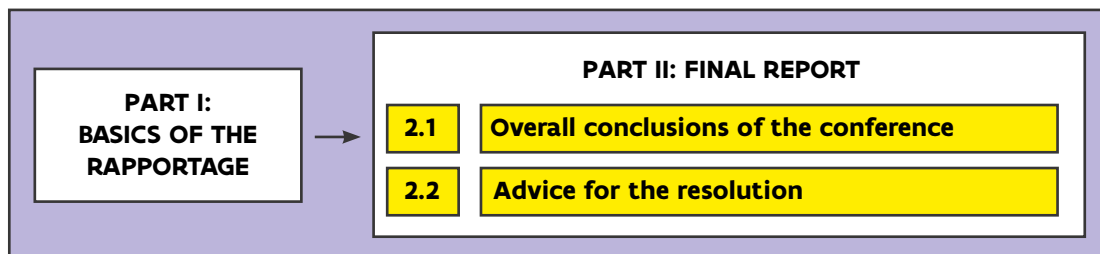


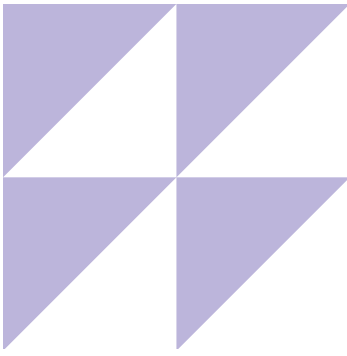
Image: The end report with overall conclusions as part IV of the processing

A first version of this final report was presented by the general-rapporteur, Guy Redig during the closing session of the conference. This first version was discussed and amended by the ten rapporteurs and note takers. The short project descriptions, underpinning the conclusions, are showcasing the inputs presented during the parallel workshops.

## Overall conclusions of the conference

The conclusions and advice of the conference in this final report are structured in 5 chapters:

1. On local youth work
2. On local youth work policy and active democracy
3. On the role of central government
4. On the role of EU and CoE
5. Extra focus points



## On local youth work

### Yes! We exist and we're alive and kicking

Indeed. Throughout the conference, the strong, lively and eager existence of local youth work was a driving, determining *file rouge*. This conference proved, through a lot of inspiring inputs and discussions, that the concept of local youth work became a thrilling reality throughout Europe.

And yes, this reality shows itself in various formats and methods. Therefore, the common ground to define it as local youth work was astounding.

This hurray does not want to hide questions, doubts or needs. On the contrary. Besides the strong conviction of being alive and kicking, a lot of work to improve the quality, the conditions, the recognition and definition etc. still needs to be done.

Concluding this, the conference found its highest relevance. The issues tackled were not about doubting the phenomenon of local youth work as such, but rather the challenges to use this moment as a window for opportunity to emancipate, empower and structure it better. This could be summarized as the creation of optimal conditions – to be described in the second chapter of this final report.

### Emphasizing crucial aspects of local youth work

This conference did not opt for an in-depth discussion on the definition of local youth work. There was a common understanding that a lot of the characteristics are accepted by a big majority of different actors (youth workers, governments, experts and researchers): youth work is not only there for young people, but needs to be created and executed by young people. Youth work should be developed during the free/leisure time, as a voluntary choice to participate, emphasizing the enjoyment of being young together. Thereby, youth work can use a range of methods and focus on a wide range of topics. In the wide family of pedagogical offers for young people, youth work has its own, very specific identity. Relatively humble, much cheaper (in the framework of public support) but full of potential.

During the conference, also set in motion by the inputs, some special points of interest were highlighted. These focused on youth work in the various local appearances.

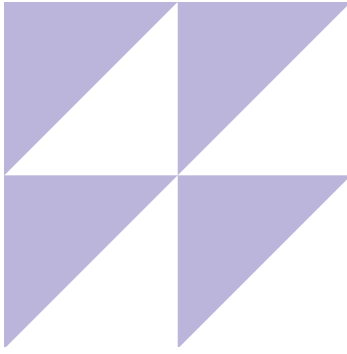
#### A super practice room for active democracy

It became clear that youth work offers a very exciting and effective place to learn and act in an active democratic way. This is quite different from a lot of other pedagogical interventions, like schools or social work, where the approach is more top-down.

The conference, through good practical inputs and discussions, emphasized that a participatory attitude needs attention as early as possible. Youth work offers children these opportunities. Therefore, youth work – as is done in many European countries already, should reach children as young as possible. By doing so, youth work builds a continuum of democratic (but also attractive and thrilling) activities for, with and by all young people.

*The Birzebbuga Case Study in Malta, presented by Simon Schembri, showed that meeting young people in their surroundings and listening to their stories and wishes can lead to changes, not only in the mindset of the young people, but also on the concrete reality of the city. Detached youth workers met young people in the streets. The latter wanted a skate park, but no resources were available. This led to a larger project, where different stakeholders (including the mayor, police, local council) came together to build a skatepark.*

*Luis A. Soravilla presented "A Cado" (Consejo de Adolescentes), a Teen Local Council gathering 15 youngsters aged 13 to 17 years old in Sabiñánigo, a small town with 9,500 inhabitants in Spain. The council meets once a month and operates according to the "play-discuss-decide" flow, which respects the principle of being young together, and joyful and playful youth participation.*



## To be young as a phase of many, intensive and fast developments

The decision to let children participate in youth work at an early age (as is the case in many European countries), is recognised in nearly all academic pedagogical and educational disciplines. They describe “to be young” as a specific and crucial phase in the way human beings develop, characterised by fast and intensive physical and mental growth.

Like education and all theories on prevention, starting youth work at an early age seems to be the best way of offering young people opportunities to develop a lot of competences and skills, combined with a practice of doing things together with their peers, while being coached by youth workers.

## Youth work: enjoying being young together

Several presentations emphasized the importance of the joyful and playful atmosphere of many practices. Youth work is an offer in the leisure/free time of young people, based on – as far as possible – a free choice to participate. Therefore, youth work is very much inspired by a positive, hopeful approach, instead of a defensive and pessimistic (protect, punish etc.) view.

One of the most explicit characteristics of youth work is the emphasis on enjoying, on playfulness. This sounds light and not really an issue in the seriousness of growing up and becoming an engaged citizen. But in fact, it is the other way around: by enjoying the participation in youth work, a lot of positive aspects get room to develop: social skills, competences, a feeling of happiness, learning to deal with risks, making friends and lifelong networks. All these aspects are crucial in developing a stable personality with a hopeful outlook on life.

Youth work, in most of its local practices, happens in a group of peers. The influence but also the necessity of being part of several groups (inside and outside youth work), cannot be underestimated.

Some of the participants in the discussions on this topic warned of overemphasizing play and playfulness, not by denying their importance and influence, but by doubting their positive effect when approaching decision-makers. Politicians and civil servants might struggle to take play and playfulness seriously enough to support a robust policy in favour of youth work. It (sometimes) seems difficult to stress this enjoyment as a serious, even indispensable aspect of youth work. They ask to keep this aspect in the shadows and give prominence to more useful characteristics of youth work, like defending democratic values, becoming an active citizen, gaining competences to become more employable, to conquer obstacles such as drug abuse, radicalisation, breaking with society etc.

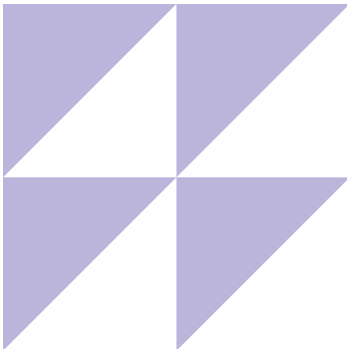
This counter argument comes unmistakably from of the daily policy practice of some youth workers. It raises a nearly deontological question: is it necessary to sell the political relevance of youth work by hiding one of the most crucial characteristics and overemphasizing the more secondary values? And can, may, or must youth work be firm on exposing itself as a playful offer, where young people can construct their own environment to enjoy being young together?

Furthermore, is it not dangerous to deny the optimistic, playful aspect in the discussions on the relevance of youth work? Because all the useful output of youth work is related to or are consequences of the playfulness of the youth work environment.

*“The P4 Play Doctorates programme” has multiple research projects based on occupational science for occupational therapists. One of the inputs at the conference explored how a complexity framework could benefit youth work. Another input shed a light on how participatory design of public spaces can result in a more sustainable use of it and promote intergenerational contact and understanding.*

*The “Building communities brick by brick” project, presented by Ilaria Zocco from Italy, perfectly illustrates the enjoyment of being young together through youth work. The project, targeting young people from rural areas, uses gamification methods (LEGO) to engage young people in an inclusive and playful way. The playfulness of the project is the ideal incentive for young people to gather and enjoy time together, but at the same time imagine and propose to policymakers a new youth-friendly community that they and their peers would thrive in. Young people feel engaged thanks to this project and their needs are understood and considered.*

*Public spaces can be very important for youth work. An inclusive environment gathers young people from different backgrounds, as shown in the “Let’s meet at the square” project from Budapest’s District VIII. In this city district, there are limited opportunities to socialize during your free time. A safe environment to engage and build relationships was needed. The project creates an inclusive outdoor space for children and young people, providing free play opportunities, and bringing different age groups of young people from a variety of backgrounds closer together.*



## Youth workers are crucial

As youth work is a clear pedagogical offer, it sounds logical and easy: no youth work without youth workers. So, the coaching of youth work participants in a youth work approach is always the result of the way the youth workers act. In this statement, youth work is not different from education, sports or social work.

But the profile of a youth workers is, like youth work itself, very specific. It differs in a lot of characteristics from the profile of teachers, sports trainers, social workers etc. Of course, they share common attitudes: an interest in and dedication to their participants, a strong conviction that they can contribute to the optimal development of young people and society, which is strongly embedded in an ethical and deontological framework.



Photo: Sanad Latifa

## Youth work is not/cannot be an island

A lot of inputs and discussions focussed on the identity and characteristics of local youth work. But at the same time, there were always reflections and warnings not to isolate youth work from the many contexts in which it develops.

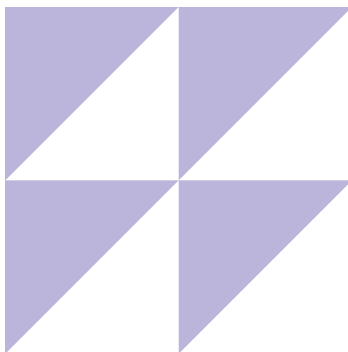
There is not only the notion “youth work policy” (see next chapter), but also the many necessary links of youth work with closely related sectors, in particular education, social affairs & welfare, culture and sports. In a more comprehensive view on youth policy, youth work is also linked to mobility, housing, employment etc. Although this was not a focus of the conference, it is absolute important to keep this integrated, cross-sectoral approach in mind.

*Chiro youth movement (Belgium/ Flanders) is an umbrella organisation that has local sections which operate autonomously. As an umbrella organisation it trains local youth workers, offers them support and guidance, and centralises information and knowledge. In this way, it enables qualitative local youth work.*

*Madea Pavliashvili (Georgia) emphasizes the importance of youth workers' training and education through Umbrella, an organization offering a project to enhance their skills. After the project analysed current tools and developed a new toolkit, it incorporated innovative elements like gamification, environmental initiatives, board game competitions, and movie nights, making it more engaging than traditional training methods. Madea highlighted that incorporating competition and a sense of fun can significantly boost youth worker motivation. Key message: education of youth workers is not enough; the whole system should be tailored to their needs!*

*The importance of a cross-sectoral approach was highlighted by Fien Morren from Globelink, a national youth organisation in Flanders (Belgium) whose project “Jong Lokaal Kabaal” tapped into the diversity and strength of the local community. Building a network in the community gives the project the possibility to benefit from the involvement and endorsement of a variety of actors, such as teachers, local entrepreneurs, or policymakers. The process should be made transparent as the community and the diversity of involved actors need to know about the results of the project. The approach of this Flemish organisation is a reminder of the African proverb about the value of community “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Youth work needs to be a reliable and equal partner to the other sectors as young people are the ultimate beneficiaries of this collaborative approach..*

*In her presentation on the “Mobile Youth Center in the Toila Municipality”, Elizaveta Shilman underpinned the importance of courage and innovation. This small Estonian region decided to do something unconventional: develop a mobile youth centre from a shipping container, a move that mobilized the entire community. This proactive approach demonstrated the importance of municipal support in building relevant youth work structures and its openness to new and unusual endeavours. It's message: Don't be afraid to try, unconventional ideas work!*



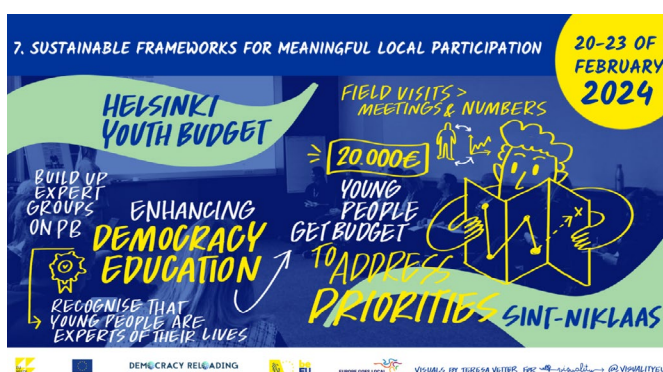
## On local youth work and democracy

The second chapter to summarize the conference outcomes can be described under the header of local youth work policy and democracy.

The conclusions of this conference’s approach to local youth work is linked to the policies of local governments, mostly in the form of municipalities. In this context, it concerns the most nearby public power, often very crucial for the conditions of daily life of young people and – in particular – for local youth work and the way it can contribute to a local, active democracy.

The essence of the conference can be summarized in a few points:

1. Local authorities (municipalities) are crucial to create a policy for optimal conditions to support and to generate additional local youth work. Therefore, local authorities must take responsibility and accountability.
2. This policy should be an example (and an experimental environment) for local democracy: the process, the execution and the evaluation of these policies are a process of dialogue and intensive communication.
3. To take this responsibility, local authorities need a framework to organise it: a set of ideas and methods that can be customized on the scale and in the working culture of all individual municipalities. Central government can/has to provide such a framework, while the European institutions (EU/CoE) and their partners can organise a network to exchange practices and to go deeper into different aspects of such a policy framework with support of the European funding schemes (Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes, among others - they do it already with Europe Goes Local and Democracy Reloading).

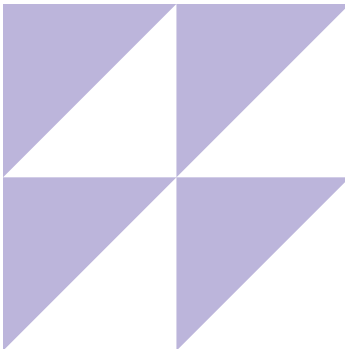


Marte Ingles presented “The KOMAF initiative”, (a network of partners) aiming to improve inclusion and diversity in local level leisure activities, targeted at children and young people. The initiative inspires and informs municipalities through an inspirational website (including tools, tips and tricks), by providing training at various levels (introductory and in-depth courses, as well as intensive coaching sessions) and conducting research and monitoring. Based on the KOMAF initiative experience, there is a need to make step-by-step guidance available for local governments to help them make their local youth work policies more inclusive and diverse.

The “Vienna Children and Youth Strategy” (2020-2025), presented by Nada Taha Ali Mohamed, illustrates a city-wide initiative aimed at co-creating a more inclusive and engaging environment for young people. The strategy was created through collaboration, originating from a simple question – ‘What do you like and dislike about your city?’ Nine key themes were identified and integrated into the strategic framework, ensuring that the voices and needs of youngsters are at the forefront of cities’ development.

“Platform Citizenship” presented by Emily Mortier, is designed to foster a culture of participatory decision-making for children in Flanders. The platform advocates for ecosystemic collaboration in policy participation, where all participants have unique roles, and the system continuously seeks ways to connect them. It’s not merely about the “participation” of young people, but rather about sustaining a continuous dialogue.

The city of Ghent (Belgium) example illustrates how applying for and receiving the European Youth Capital title can result in a positive boost for local youth work policy in general. The municipality is empowering young people’s self-realization by reducing bureaucratic burdens where possible (e.g. grant application processes for project-planning) and providing platforms and the necessary resources for young people’s voice to be heard (e.g. by involving professional communication enterprises and specialist mentors, but also by allowing young people to create the content and gain valuable experiences themselves). In the long-run these voices and opinions of young people with diverse backgrounds are used as a base for developing long-term strategic plans.



On the essence of a successful and inspiring framework, the conference offered a lot of knowledge, methods, insights, practices... far too many to describe here in detail.

An attempt to summarize can be made by describing them based on the common ground of : “giving/providing space” for an optimal development of local youth work. This concept of space can be analysed in four dimensions:

The “Quartier De Jeunes”, presented by Thomas Rogé is a facility for young people, co-created with young people from all over Paris (youth organisations, youth from poor neighbourhoods, NGOs, orphanages, and youngsters not affiliated with any organisation etc.). Another innovative aspect of this youth centre is that it brings together civil servants from different departments of public administration in the city of Paris, facilitating the exchange of expertise and connection on important topics (health, youth, employment, etc).



Action plan “Let’s go outside” stimulates youngsters to use the public space and spend time outside. It sets a framework for research, knowledge building, and sharing of expertise, as well as for making positive choices in policy and practice regarding children and young people in public spaces.

### Mental space:

- having knowledge, understanding, recognition and respect for local youth work as a specific offer in the leisure/free time of children and young people;
- only created through systematic and open dialogue, in a youth work-friendly atmosphere;
- sometimes defending youth work against disrespect and indifference (or disdain) for youth work because of its playful and optimistic characteristics.

### Physical space:

- providing suitable room to move: meeting up, playing, hanging out, making music, engaging in sport, using creativity, sharing views and questions ... space for young people to develop their own (self-owned) activities;
- this means: allocating public indoor/outdoor areas for young people who are an important part of the population;
- and especially physical space for youth work initiatives (private);

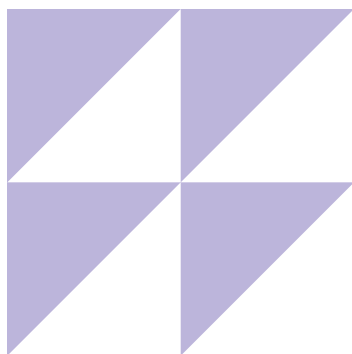
**Political space:** translate the needs of young people and local youth work to a robust system of governmental support via subsidies, services and coaching, developed through active participation.

**Time in space:** execute these policies for recognition and support in a long-term perspective, by providing sustainable and stable, officialised systems.

“Lobbying for Youth Work,” a spin-off project from EGL, presented by Inez Adriaensen, Claudius Siebel, and Isabelle Rombauts, showcased the importance of information and knowledge for civil servants in co-creating quality local youth policy. The projects also demonstrated the importance of cooperation among different stakeholders in addressing youth needs and providing adequate answers to them. The key message: knowledge is power!

The “Girls Make the City” project presented by Julie Van Garsse, strives to reclaim public space, and promote a feminist city where barriers - physical and social - are dismantled, and where all bodies are welcome and accommodated. They co-created and implemented two gender-sensitive interventions in Brussels, together with girls from very different backgrounds, who share a common need to feel safe, free and happy in public spaces.





## On central government and local youth work (policy)

Without any doubt, the central government – most of the times the MS, in some cases decentralized authorities – play the most influential role in steering or inspiring local government. The autonomy of local (or regional) authorities however can vary between nearly

no room for their own policies to a lot of space to develop their own chosen and very elaborate policies (the latter more common in countries in northern Europe).

As youth policy and youth work are within the decision-making competence of the MS in the EU, European policies do not have an obligatory nature for national development in this field. However, a lot of central governments prove their engagement and commitment to developing youth (work) policy and provide the necessary means and structures for the implementation.

It was a general consensus during the conference to appeal to central governments to elaborate on robust support for local youth work, enabling local governments to carry out the necessary tasks for the development of local youth work. This means not the creation of a detailed one-size-fits-all concept. On the contrary, the differences between local communities are significant, not only in their physical dimensions, but also in the contexts of political traditions, the availability of means, the know-how of local actors (politicians, civil servants and civil society), etc.

The conference recommended the creation of a framework, a (coherent) skeleton of possible approaches. Such a framework could be made by central government, in active and intensive dialogue with all local and specialized actors. Therefore a lively network of local actors, directed and supported by local government is crucial. This network will provide more exchanges of practices, systems, insights etc. Through such a network, local youth work policy can stay active and dynamic.

Last but not least, referring to an earlier chapter, the conference often emphasized the importance of training for all players involved: youth workers (with specific career questions), civil servants and also local politicians. The creation of such training opportunities can be directed by central government.

## The European level

Over the last decades, the EU and the CoE have promoted youth, youth work and democracy to real policy items. The conference participants recognised and appreciated the efforts of both institutions. Although this was not the conference's focus, the European commitment to these topics is clear and fruitful.

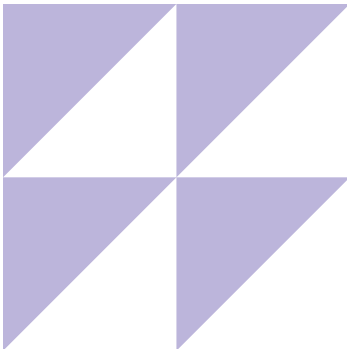
Many participants have gathered a lot of knowledge, a rich network and felt strongly encouraged. Especially the continuing effort of the partnership on youth between the two partners and the concrete and smart approach of both EGL and DemRel prove this increased and still growing attention. Everybody will agree on this positive vibe, as a combination of inspiration and source of enthusiasm.

A lot of work still remains, the ongoing processes eager to grow and develop. More support, more investments, more possibilities and – especially in this context – more emphasis on the expectations from the MS will be needed.

*As set out by Jehan Bottin of UCLouvain whilst presenting "Training on participatory democracy for civil servants in Belgium: A central issue is that there is often a limited impact of participation processes, leaving participants disappointed. To address this and to create meaningful participation, follow-up on the needs for a cultural shift are the key."*

*"The City for Youth certification system and assessment tool", presented by Mario Zulice (Association of Cities, Croatia) are designed for municipalities to evaluate and commend their youth-friendliness. The methodology consists of 81 criteria (both qualitative and quantitative) in 8 thematic fields (e.g. youth participation, demography, employment and housing, youth mobility, youth work etc.). The certification process, which is designed together with various stakeholders (academia, national agency, government, national youth council etc.) allows applicant municipalities to acknowledge their status quo and provides a stronger base for further strategic planning."*

*Democracy Reloading, presented by Laszlo Foldi, was initiated in 2015 and now includes 18 countries. Its mission is to empower youth in local decision-making processes, fostering meaningful engagement, with a focus on creating supportive environments within municipalities, using a toolkit that gives young people actual decision-making power. Municipalities are assisted in developing effective strategies for sustainable and inclusive youth participation."*



Both European institutes can do more to persuade their members to empower municipalities when it comes to local youth work policy. In this context the topic of active democracy cannot be underestimated. The relevance of young people's engagement in local public affairs is urgently needed to maintain our level of democratic politics.

Therefore, the participants of the conference, in a big consensus, hope that the upcoming resolution of "Local Youth Work and Democracy in a new Europe" will adopt and underpin these conclusions and advices.

## Extra attention

This nearly three-day conference produced an abundance of ideas, proposals, advices etc. Far too many to process them all. The previous chapters attempted to integrate and credit various ideas in a comprehensive manner. However, during the more than 35 sessions, some topics kept popping up. Hence why we would like to highlight them here.

From the beginning of Europe's focus on (local) youth work, the concern for more inclusion – and therefore the fight against exclusion, awareness for racism, poverty, violent radicalisation etc. was high on the agenda. One cannot deny their gravity, especially in the context of young people growing up in an unstable social and political climate. But it seems difficult to go beyond the identification of these problems and to find good practices to deal with them. Some of the conference sessions offered relevant practices, but overall, there is the threat of feeling powerless, of the fight against anti-democratic, anti-human tendencies and anti-fairness remaining just slogans or mantras.

A similar recurring theme is participation. This notion is really anchored in almost any approach to youth and, like in/exclusion, is tackled in many publications, surveys and conferences. Participation is often formulated as a problem: not enough young people are engaged, showing a lack of commitment to or even disdain for democracy.

This makes them an easy target for the clever (new) media approach of radicalised and anti-social actors. Youth work therefore – especially in the local context – can be a strong ally, because active and direct forms of participation are a crucial part of young people's identity. However, it seems naive to expect youth work to remedy what went wrong in so many other, even pedagogical environments.

The sense of belonging, being a co-owner and co-designer must be an overall integrated goal in all aspects of growing up. In this context, youth work will offer new and successful experiences, where young people can (re)gain belief in participation. Not only in their own/owned youth work environment, but also in more public spaces like neighbourhoods and the municipality, town or city.

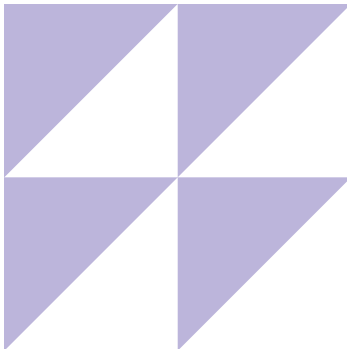
A lot of politicians learned to be politically active from their youth work experiences. But sometimes it feels like they forgot what is at the heart of the public participation of young people: making them real co-owners, beyond sometimes symbolic encounters.

*The municipality of Almada, represented by Vania Cruz, shared its practices: challenges were highlighted, including creating supportive environments, empowering youth, developing policies and strategies, and managing youth participation. However, they advocate for believing in the reference framework of Democracy Reloading and acquiring competencies to engage youth in decision-making processes.*

*The "Academy for Youth Leaders in Civil Society", a practice presented by Aida Becirovic from Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reflects on the strong impact of stimulating critical thinking and active citizenship, and receiving valuable information from young people. The project aims to diminish xenophobia, homophobia, and prejudice among young people, while promoting critical thinking and constructive dialogue in a fragmented society. It has the ambitious goal of facilitating reconciliation, reducing societal division, and preventing extremism and future conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina.*

*"Kooperativet Fjället" by Sara Lesch and Nour Ataia: a cooperative running a local youth club in the suburb, wanted to tackle the gender imbalance of boys being the majority in the youth club. To do this they provided space for boys to talk about societal issues and masculinity. This led to a more inclusive youth club with more girls attending. There was also an increase in the share of boys taking part in organising services.*

*The project, "Alles Kan" presented by Jeroen Paeleman, gives a great example of the ownership of young people: opportunities to start and receive funding for their own projects and offering consultations without taking over projects to ensure young people retain control. Decisions are made by a volunteer group of 15-20 young people, also focusing on the process and not just the result: projects, even if they fail, foster organisational and networking skills.*



## To conclude

The conference showcased the lively, strong and hopeful presence of local youth work, and a growing policy to support it on municipal level. The link with an active, open democracy is obvious, but must grow beyond just the slogans of participation and inclusion. Luckily, a lot of local case studies brought evidence of successful practices. All over Europe, from urban to rural, with children and youngsters. Through the discussions, the conference participants succeeded in achieving to find answers on two questions:

1. How can we make local youth work, the supporting policy and direct participation better, more efficient, and effective? This short summary of the outcomes shows a lot of inspiration, more insights and – especially – increased enthusiasm for more emphasis on these topics. This conference was not a starting point, there was already a lot of experience; but is far from reaching its end goal. All participants hope for more ambition and investments. Especially EGL and DemRel will push these messages forward, in their expanding and evolving networks.
2. Can the output of the conference enrich the draft resolution on local youth work and democracy in a new Europe? Based on the report, a distinctive and clear proposal was delivered to the Belgian presidency, hoping to add new focus points and underpin what was already formulated in favour of local youth work. The proposal is part of this final report.

**YOUTH WORK IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT**  
**EXAMPLES OF DIVERSE REALITIES AND PRACTICES**

**20-23 OF FEBRUARY 2024**

**1** HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE, INSPIRE LOCAL YOUTH WORK and/or LOCAL YOUTH WORK POLICY, DEMOCRACY & PARTICIPATION?

**2 QUESTIONS**

**2** WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER AS THE MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGES for the DECISION MAKERS on the EU/CoE-FIELD?

**EXPERIENCE**

**INSPIRE**

**IMAGINE**

**ILLUSTRATE**

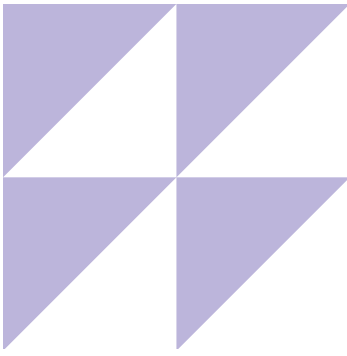
**you are the EXPERTS**

**GEERT BOUTSEN**

EUROPE GOES LOCAL

DEMOCRACY RELAY GOVERN WITH YOUTH

VISUALS BY MARA CALLAERT FOR [@VISUALITYEU](#)



## Advice based on the conference outcome to the Belgian Presidency

The conference was constructed around finding the answers to two overall questions. In this part, the formal answer to the second question is presented: what do you consider as the most important messages for the decision makers in the EU/CoE field?

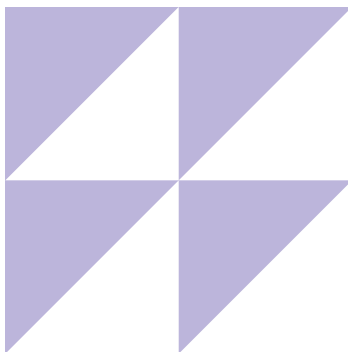
The Belgian Presidency kept a place holder in the draft resolution, to integrate the outcomes of the conference. The key findings were presented on Saturday 24 February.

### **Key findings of the European Conference on Local Youth Work and Democracy held between 20-23 February 2024 in Brussels during the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, by Dr. Guy Redig (Rapporteur General):**

1. Local youth work (1) offers an extraordinary environment to practice democracy and inspire pathways to an active engagement in society – with the strong conviction to give children chances to participate from as young as possible and (2) articulates the key characteristic of local youth work as a place where young people enjoy being young together, because play and playfulness are conditional for the development of many other positive effects, like learning and sharpening different competences, engagement in various democratic practices, the ability to take responsibility and accountability and (3) forms a bridge to many other pedagogical interventions like education, social and cultural work.
2. By investing in a robust and long-term local youth work policy, based on intense dialogue and participation, local governments create concrete conditions for the optimal development of local youth work. Therefore, municipalities need a framework that gives contours and inspiration to create tailor-made sturdy local support systems. MS should invest to shape this framework together with local actors in a pan-European network. This framework can be inspired by the notion “creating space” to be conceived as mental, physical, and political space in a long-term perspective, and should include efforts to optimise the qualities of both volunteer and professional youth workers.
3. The EU and the CoE, already active and stimulating local youth work (policy), can expand and intensify their efforts by further investing in networking, exchanging practices, stimulating surveys (among others by their Partnership on Youth) and so contribute to a common ground on the framework for local youth work policy.
4. There is a pressing need to sustain investments in more effective and efficient practices on difficult but priority goals like inclusion, equality, participation, democracy, and diversity. Local youth work and local youth work policy offer unique places to translate all these human values in concrete, hands-on practices, and in this way transforming slogans into good practices.



Photo: Freedom Photography



# Annex I: Summary of workshop inputs with links to their abstracts

(by Gajané Hakobyan)

The workshops were conducted in three rounds, each with two-three inputs of an inspiring practice. The presentations were followed by a discussion amongst the participants. This Annex is a list of all workshop inputs with a short summary and an abstract/description linked to the titles.

## YOUTH WORK AS A CONTINUUM

### [Vienna Children and Youth Strategy](#)

**Nada Taha Ali Mohamed**

**Austria**

The Vienna Children and Youth Strategy is the city's inaugural interdepartmental initiative focused on improving the lives of children and young people. It underscores a commitment to long-term youth participation, with ongoing implementation involving various stakeholders in youth work and administration since its inception.

### [The cado: a teen den where perform our rights](#)

**Luis Soravilla**

**Spain**

The CADO provides a space for teens to engage in decision-making and project development, aiming to address socio-political disaffection. Supported by the "Jóvenes Dinamizadores Rurales" network, it empowers teens to actively shape their community.

### [Strategy child friendly city - Zwijndrecht and the Belgian model of child-friendly cities](#)

**Mieke Hulin; Tieme Verlinde**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

Zwijndrecht's child-friendly city strategy involves surveys, in-depth research, and collaboration with stakeholders to engage youth in decision-making. The goal is to offer opportunities for youth growth, fostering collaboration between residents, youth work, and municipal services, earning Zwijndrecht recognition as a child-friendly city.

The workshop introduces Flanders' certification for "Child Friendly Cities," emphasizing the integration of children's rights into local policy through a three-step toolkit. Certification lasts six years and involves meeting criteria such as engaging children and stakeholders in policy-making. Bataljong oversees toolkit adaptation and serves as an ongoing ambassador for the initiative.

### [How to transform heritage in cities and villages to future youth places](#)

**Stefaan Vandecaleuze**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

"Bamm! bridges art/heritage and youth dialogue, expanding internationally. From Flanders to remote European regions, we offer insights on engaging youth in heritage, emphasizing dialogue for new perspectives."

### ['Kinderfreundliche Kommunen' – An impact analysis on the changes in child-friendliness in German municipalities](#)

**Anne Müller**

**Germany**

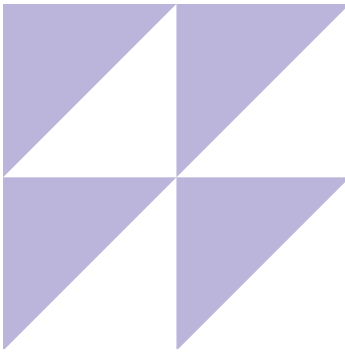
The 'Kinderfreundliche Kommunen' initiative has been enhancing child-friendliness in German municipalities for over a decade. An impact analysis showcased significant progress in prioritizing children's rights, fostering youth participation, and creating child-friendly environments.

### [Platform C: Platform Citizenship: Platform design for a child participatory decision-making culture in Flanders in times of crisis](#)

**Emily Mortier**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

Platform C in Flanders is a research project fostering a cultural shift among policymakers for increased child and youth participation in policy issues. Through participatory platforms designed with an ecosystemic approach, the workshop explains the project's approach, shares initial results, and illustrates child and youth involvement during the COVID period as a case study in crisis participation.



## YOUTH WORK AS A PROMOTER OF PLAY

### [Creating a framework to guide children and youth work – a complexity perspective](#)

**Sabine Vincon**

This workshop addresses the necessity of a complexity perspective in guiding children and youth work, emphasizing its relevance for stakeholders like youth workers, policymakers, and community members. The presenter shares insights from their ongoing work on creating a complexity framework for play, suggesting its potential application to inform policies and practices in youth work.

### [Actieplan Mee\(r\) naar buiten](#)

**Benedicte Roose**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

This action plan aims to provide a response to that and map what already exists, what works, where there are blind spots and how we can strengthen matters. The plan is built on what Sven De Visscher wrote in 'The socio-pedagogical significance of the residential environment': how are children able (the living environment as actual, material space), allowed (the limits placed on presence) and willing (actorship in public space) to be present in their living environment. It aims to bring together, inspire and encourage children and young people and enable them to spend more and better time outdoors, realising more play and meeting opportunities because they are willing, able and allowed to do so.

### [The role of playing the methodology of the youth movements in Belgium](#)

**Marij Germijns**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

### [Children's participation in designing a play space in the community](#)

**Rianne Jansens**

The workshop stresses children's role in designing community play spaces, aligning with their rights to play and contribute to local communities. Studies demonstrate the importance of involving children in the process, presenting challenges and opportunities for policymakers in fostering inclusive urban policies.

### [Playing 'a la carte' in an open system to play - Speelplein](#)

**Arno Beeckman, Simon Knaeps**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

For the VDS, "playing" is not the same as "playing at a playground". For the latter, there is a concrete idea of how this "playing at a playground" should be organised. The playing system that, within a vacation context, offers the best playing possibilities in our view is a strong 'open system of playing'. The concept is based on choice and variation.

### [Intergenerational play in public spaces and social wellbeing](#)

**Aysenur Bas**

The play "Intergenerational Play in Urban Public Spaces and Social Well-being" emphasizes the transformative power of play for all ages, fostering new experiences and social relationships in public spaces. Through a scoping review, the play explores how intergenerational play positively influences social well-being, contributing to urban design research for more inclusive and child-friendly cities.

## FRAMEWORKS FOR LOCAL YOUTH WORK

### [Lobbying for Youth Work makes a difference](#)

**Inez Adriaensen; Isabelle Rombauts; Claudius Siebel**

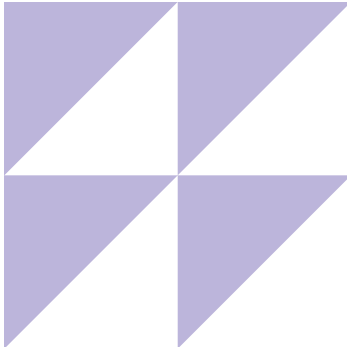
The play "Intergenerational Play in Urban Public Spaces and Social Well-being" emphasizes the transformative power of play for all ages, fostering new experiences and social relationships in public spaces. Through a scoping review, the play explores how intergenerational play positively influences social well-being, contributing to urban design research for more inclusive and child-friendly cities.

### [Mobile Youth Center in Toila Municipality](#)

**Elizaveta Shilman**

**Estonia**

To address the accessibility gap in youth services, young people and design students created a 3D model for a mobile youth centre. The operational sea container, initiated in June 2023, moves to different areas during the summer, providing a safe and social space for young people aged 7-26. The project has successfully increased diversity in youth services, engaged 191 youths, and garnered national attention.



#### [Youth Center Probishtip](#)

**Martina Jachevska**  
**North Macedonia**

The Youth Center in Probishtip empowers local youth with a focus on active citizenship, resulting from the “My Space” project. Managed by GRIT, it engages youth, offers diverse services, and actively involves them in decision-making processes, contributing to community development.

#### [Development of a youth center management model](#)

**Matej Matić**  
**Croatia**

The “Youth Center Management Model” engaged young people, civil society, and decision-makers to create a participatory governance model for a future youth centre in Šibenik. Through focus groups and a questionnaire, participants directly influenced the centre’s management, culminating in a finalized document for the planned 2024/5 construction.

#### [Youth Work/Ers Matter!](#)

**Medea Pavliashvili**  
**Georgia**

This workshop highlights innovative practices from three Georgian youth centres, showcasing a grassroots youth work program developed through non-formal education. Implemented by Umbrella with support from the European Youth Foundation, the project benefited over 100 local young people.

#### [StreetSmart Game-Changing Tools for Youth Workers](#)

**Lies De Vocht**  
**Belgium – Flemish community**

StreetSmart equips global youth workers with tools like StreetSmart Play and StreetSmart Learn, fostering engagement and empowerment among vulnerable youth. With over 5000 users, their impact spans various educational activities worldwide.

## FRAMEWORKS FOR KNOWLEDGE-BASED YOUTH WORK

#### [The Logbook](#)

**Jenny Haglund**  
**Sweden**

The Logbook emphasizes the need for practical knowledge in youth work, beyond theoretical tools, focusing on assessing effectiveness, youth engagement, and learning experiences. The Logbook is presented as a tool for gathering crucial information in knowledge-based youth work.

#### [NAPOR - quality assurance of youth work](#)

**Jelena Stojanović**  
**Serbia**

NAPOR sets 8 youth work standards, using an accreditation process for continuous improvement. Organizations receive a certificate, affirming their commitment to quality, recognized by members and supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. NAPOR actively promotes accreditation for enhanced youth work quality.

#### [Rural youth – implementing multicultural youth work in rural Finland through ESC volunteering](#)

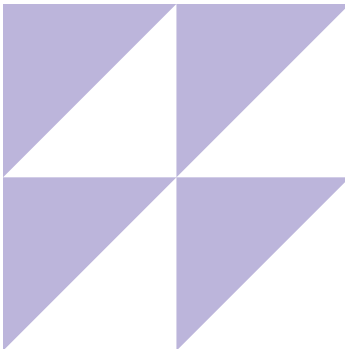
**Adrian Bonnet**  
**Finland**

This youth work initiative promotes intercultural understanding and volunteering in rural areas through cross-sectorial cooperation. By hosting European Solidarity Corps (ESC) volunteers, the project positively influences local youth attitudes, fostering intercultural awareness and language skills, while also providing valuable support to the city’s services.

#### [Regional Youth Network Meetjesman](#)

**Pieter-Jan Teirlinck**  
**Belgium – Flemish community**

The Regional Youth Network Meetjesman in East-Flanders collaborates to strengthen youth policies in rural Meetjesland. Through training, support for policymakers, and in-house consultancy, the network aims to create a better environment for children and youth in the region.



### [An example of regional youth work in rural areas: more dialogue, new approaches, strong cooperation](#)

**Robert Wiesemes**

**Belgium – German speaking community**

In East Belgium, the “4YOU(TH)” initiative, focusing on meeting places, youth representation, outreach work, and more, has successfully implemented regional mobile and open youth work over the past year, achieving positive local and regional impact.

### [The European Charter on Local Youth Work and the Changemakers Kit](#)

**Gil Nunes, Marie Falk, Eliza Bujalska**

Europe Goes Local’s European Charter on Local Youth Work sets quality standards for youth activities, emphasizing municipal cooperation, European integration, and stakeholder involvement. The accompanying Changemakers kit offers practical tools and examples for implementing the charter at all levels.

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL YOUTH WORK IN ENHANCING INCLUSIVITY

### [Development of boys in the suburb](#)

**Sara Lesch; Nour Ataia**

**Sweden**

Kooperativet Fjället’s workshop in a Gothenburg suburb focuses on promoting boys’ social development through initiatives like “Guydinner #Killmiddag” and the “Guy group,” resulting in improved relationships, reduced stereotypical masculinity, and increased gender balance.

### [Let’s meet in the square! – Budapest, district VIII](#)

**Fanni Mátyók**

**Hungary**

Discover ‘Let’s Meet at the Square,’ Budapest’s innovative child-participatory initiative, fostering play, connections, and skill development for children and youth every week. Join us to explore impactful initiatives shaping youth work and democracy in Hungary!

### [Filming in the Dark](#)

**Pavel Ruzyak**

**Czech Republic**

Osvěta Association’s “Filming in the Dark” initiative offers visually impaired youth accessible film training through interactive workshops and an AI-assisted camera, promoting inclusion and creating audiovisual content for a marginalized group.

### [Stronger together!](#)

**Sintija Bernava**

**Latvia**

“Stronger together” emphasizes inclusion, diversity, and recognition of learning for vulnerable children and youth in health care institutions. The initiative uses creative tools to enhance personal and professional development, addressing social disparities and promoting cross-sectoral cooperation. It contributes to building an inclusive society and fostering voluntary work in Latvia.

### [How Detached Youth Work Can Make a Difference: The Birzebbuga Case Study](#)

**Simon Schembri**

**Malta**

Detached youth work in Birzebbuga, led by Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ, resulted in the creation of a skatepark through collaboration with the Local Council and Malta Trust Foundation. The skatepark has positively impacted young people’s lives, providing a sense of community, empowerment, and improved communication with local authorities.

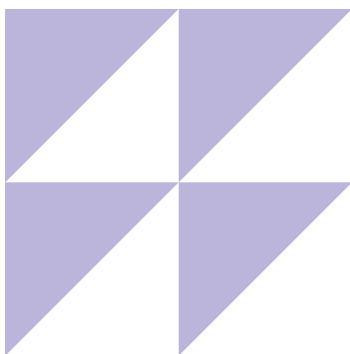
### [Betonne Jeugd - Antwerp](#)

**Sarah Lampen**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

Betonne Jeugd vzw empowers young people in poverty, offering a safe space and actively challenging societal structures. The impact includes personal empowerment, improved mental health, and societal benefits such as higher education and employment chances, reduced street loitering, and policy advocacy against homelessness.





# PARTICIPATORY CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

## [Democracy Reloading – Toolkit](#)

**Laszlo Foldi**

**Belgium - French community**

The Democracy Reloading Partnership, supported by Erasmus+, assists local authorities in enhancing youth participation in municipal decisions. The workshop introduces a Competence Reference Framework and practical tools for local use, with plans for ongoing learning in 2024-25, benefiting municipal youth officers, workers, and young people.

## [Almada](#)

**Vânia G. Cruz**

**Portugal**

The Municipal Youth Assembly of Almada involves students aged 14-18 in discussing themes like climate change and democratic participation. They propose and vote on recommendations for local action, such as establishing school assemblies. The assembly aims to promote youth engagement and address European values in a local context.

## [Youth Leader and Youth Board](#)

**Rita Kovacs**

**Finland**

The Youth Leader initiative empowers rural youth by providing project funds directly to them, promoting their involvement in decision-making and addressing local challenges. Rita Kovacs will explain the initiative's process and adaptability for use in different rural areas, municipalities, or NGOs.

## [Alles Kan - Ghent](#)

**Jeroen Paeleman**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

Alles Kan is a Ghent-based grant encouraging individuals aged 14 to 30 to organize projects for their peers, fostering entrepreneurship and creativity. It provides financial support and coaching, resulting in skill development and the stimulation of experimentation in the city's creative and cultural sectors.

## [Take the money and do something for youth](#)

**Nikolina Šoštarić Tkalec**

**Croatia**

"Take the Money and Do Something for Youth" is a participatory budgeting project in Pregrada, Croatia, where young people propose and vote on community projects. Through workshops and campaigns, the winning project receives 3000 euros for implementation, fostering youth engagement and efficient use of public funds since 2019.

## [Training on participatory democracy for civil servants in Belgium](#)

**Jehan Bottin**

**Belgium - French community**

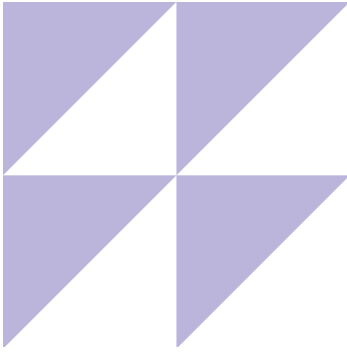
This research investigates the compatibility of participatory democracy with public officials' practices, highlighting challenges in decision-making despite the proliferation of participatory mechanisms. It offers practical insights for innovation managers in promoting citizen participation within public administrations.

## [Youth participation in youth work recognition and development projects – The resource group model](#)

**André Ruud**

**Norway**

Youth Work Norway's resource group model empowers youth in decision-making, fostering collaborative projects that address local needs and enhance participants' skills and motivation.



## SUSTAINABLE, FRAMEWORKS FOR MEANINGFUL LOCAL PARTICIPATION

### [Youth budget sint-niklaas \(jongerenbegroting\)](#)

**Laura Van de Vyver**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

Sint-Niklaas, a youth-friendly city in East Flanders, conducts an annual Youth Budget since 2021, where randomly selected young people decide on allocating a 20,000 euro budget to address priorities impacting their living environment. This initiative aims to incorporate the voices of children and young people across various policy domains affecting their living environment.

### [Helsinki Youth Budget – Participatory Budgeting with Youth](#)

**Ella Tanskanen**

**Finland**

The Helsinki Youth Budget involves over 10,000 young people aged 12 to 17 in participatory budgeting, fostering their engagement in planning services and activities. It aims to enhance democracy education and create meaningful interactions between youth and the city, maintaining a low-threshold approach over the past decade.

### [Youth co-design Cities of Learning](#)

**Johannes Bergunder**

**Lithuania - Germany**

“Youth co-design Cities of Learning” engaged 600+ young people in 8 countries, empowering over 120 youth leaders to shape policy recommendations on non-formal learning, sustainability, inclusion, participation, and mental health for policy reforms and youth empowerment.

### [J100 - Antwerp](#)

**Filip Balthau; Omar Bouiraamane**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

J100 in Antwerp empowers young people aged 16-30 through dialogue, collaboration, and nomadic activities across neighbourhoods, fostering inclusivity and amplifying diverse voices. The youth-led initiative focuses on skill development, societal discussions, and active participation.

### [Local Collective](#)

**Bram Geurds**

**The Netherlands**

The Local Collective project, led by the National Youth Council of the Netherlands, connects 85 local youth councils to promote sustainable youth participation in local decision-making through various activities like training, workshops, and events, aiming to amplify young voices, boost their engagement in governance, and nurture their personal growth.

### [What comes first, system or attitude? - Youth council - Kristiansand](#)

**Ole Martin Kyllø**

**Norway**

In Kristiansand, Norway, the municipal youth council, aged 13 to 19, actively influences decision-making. This workshop explores the balance between cultivating a positive attitude towards youth and implementing effective systems for their input, questioning which comes first in fostering a supportive environment for youth engagement.

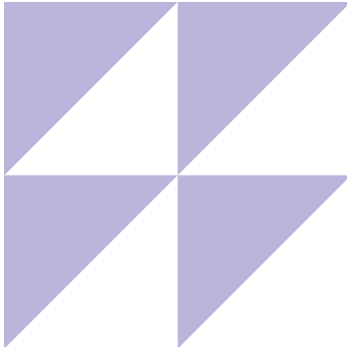
## THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORK IN PROMOTING CRITICAL THINKING AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

### [Building Communities brick by brick](#)

**Ilaria Zocco**

**Italy**

The “Building Communities brick by brick” workshop promotes dialogue and active citizenship through creative brick-based activities, fostering collaboration between young people and policymakers. With over 50 sessions involving 500+ participants, the workshop has produced an active citizenship manifesto.



### Jong Lokaal Kabaal - Hamont Achel, Zoersel and Beersel

**Fien Morren**

**Belgium – Flemish community**

“Jong Lokaal Kabaal” fosters sustainable dialogue among young people and policymakers in three cities, leading to youth-driven local sustainability actions like ‘Thursday = Veggie Day’ and a climate week. The project aims to influence municipal sustainability policies by amplifying the voices of young participants.

### Points Communs

**Gloria Lombardo; Duran Mirya**

**Italy - France**

“Points Communs” is an Erasmus Plus project fostering youth participation in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and Lombardy. It involves Eurodesk centres in Lyon and Sarezzo, engaging 30 participants in each event to enhance youth information and democratic engagement.

### Political Outreach to Youth: Enlightening Youth on Politics in a Comprehensible and Accessible Manner

**Laura Uyttendaele**

**Belgium – French community**

This workshop highlights engaging youth in politics, offering innovative strategies and insights from a voting aid app to make political information accessible. It aims to bridge the gap between youth and politics, promoting informed and active participation in democracy.

### Academy for Young Leaders in Civil Society

**Aida Becirovic**

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The Academy for Young Leaders in Civil Society empowers Bosnian youth through a comprehensive program focused on critical thinking and active citizenship. By bridging gaps in formal education, fostering reconciliation, and promoting hands-on projects, the Academy cultivates a diverse network of leaders driving positive change in their communities.

### To make strategy, takes strategy

**Endla Mitt**

**Estonia**

The project aimed to empower young people in decision-making by teaching them proposal expression and fostering dialogue with decision-makers. Successful outcomes included increased confidence, established connections, international cooperation offers, and plans for follow-up activities, positively impacting both the youth and the community.

## **ROLES AND NEEDS OF MUNICIPALITIES**

### City for Youth

**Mario Žuliček**

**Croatia**

The City for Youth certificate evaluates local youth policies based on 81 criteria across eight thematic areas. Cities meeting at least 50% of the criteria can obtain the label, valid for three years, promoting continuous improvement. The tool is accessible to youth councils and organizations for advocating specific initiatives at the local level.

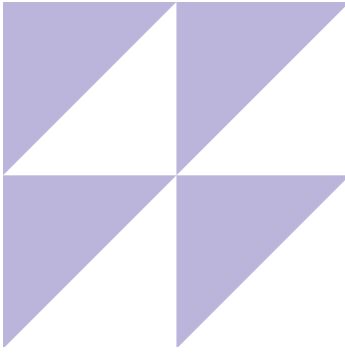
### Youth Capitals – how does the title impact the municipality?

**Ivan Neirotti; Mariia Pihura (Lviv); Céline De Coninck (Ghent);**

**Agnieszka Parol-Górna (Lublin); Dafina Peci (Tirana)**

The European Youth Capital project promotes youth engagement in decision-making. Representatives from Tirana, Lublin, Ghent, and Lviv will discuss their experiences with the EYC title in a 90-minute session, emphasizing its impact and legacy on community development.

Tirana pursued the European Youth Capital (EYC) title to empower youth through diverse programs, involving strategic planning and infrastructure improvements. Hosting the EYC boosted the city’s economy, enhanced civic engagement, and left a legacy of sustainable initiatives and international partnerships.



### [CRECCIDE asbl: support for municipalities in the implementation and monitoring of local children and youth councils](#)

**Evelyne Waonry**  
**Belgium – French community**

CRECCIDE supports municipalities in establishing local children and youth councils, educating them on democratic principles, rights, and environmental issues. The organization aims to empower young citizens to actively participate in civic life through continuous training and thematic workshops.

### [Komaf- Where leisure is connected to inclusion and diversity](#)

**Marte Ingels**  
**Belgium – Flemish community**

The “Komaf” project in Flanders aims to enhance youth participation by addressing inclusion and diversity barriers. Through an online platform and discounted training, it connects local youth workers, organizations, and governments to foster inclusivity in youth initiatives, promoting engagement among children and youngsters.

## **THE RELATION BETWEEN YOUTH AND PUBLIC SPACE**

### [QJ: a new headquarter for young people in Paris](#)

**Thomas Rogé**  
**France**

“Quartier Jeunes” in Paris, created post-COVID by the Mayor, is a hub for young people addressing unemployment and mental health in a historic building. With over 57,000 visitors in 2022, the project showcases innovative work processes and potential expansion.

### [Network of Youth Centres Ljubljana](#)

**Katarina Gorenc**  
**Slovenia**

The Network of Youth Centres in Ljubljana collaborates with various entities to offer diverse youth programs. Utilizing Logbook for impact monitoring, the network facilitated over 16,000 activities and 160,000 visits in 2022, supporting youth and fostering community innovation.

### [Girls make the city](#)

**Julie Van Garsse**  
**Belgium – Flemish community**

“GIRLS MAKE THE CITY” involves 25 young people in gender-sensitive urban planning at a Brussels skate park, generating nine proposals to reclaim public space. The project expands to Molenbeek in 2023 with “Girls Play The City,” addressing the needs of girls for exercising in a gender-inclusive public space.

### [Young service designers](#)

**Carlotta Figini**  
**Italy**

The Young Service Designers (YSD) project involves 18 youth workers and 120 young people from six EU countries in civic education and service design for local decision-making. Outcomes include 10 co-designed pilot services and a toolkit for youth policy development.

### [Youth in Urban Space: Building Young People’s Identity](#)

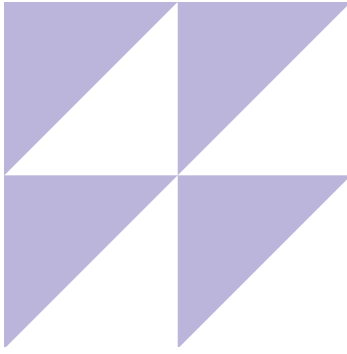
**Werner Prinzjakowitsch**  
**Austria**

The “Youth in Urban Space” project studied changes in how young people use public spaces, emphasizing their importance for identity formation and the need for gender-specific approaches in youth work. It also stressed the significance of long-term resources and local partnerships for effective interventions.

### [The Participation of Young People in Decision-making: 3-dimensional Approach \(Policy-making, Theory, and Practice\)](#)

**Özlemnur Ataol**

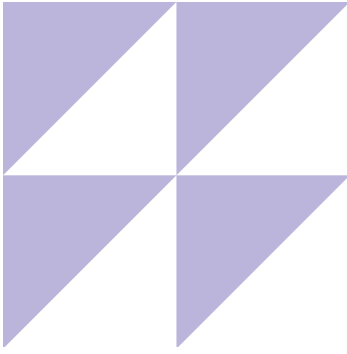
This workshop focuses on the invisibility of young people in decision-making and advocates for a 3-dimensional approach that combines policy-making, theory, and practice. It aims to explore a pathway for mainstreaming youth participation, offering guidelines for adults based on change theory.



### Children's Participation for developing a Play-friendly community: A matter of Rights, Voices, and Transformations

#### **Silvia Veiga-Seijo**

This project showcases a real example of children's participation for creating a better place to play in a deprived community. Children were co-researchers, taking decisions about the different stages. Children decided to create a puppet show and two songs (playful, creative and art-based methods) and we wrote collaboratively a report to advocate for their right to play. Children engaged with policy-makers and stakeholders in community events and are planning to discuss their issues at the Scottish Parliament.



# Annex II: Summary of thematic panel discussions

(by Judit Balogh)

The conference had six thematic panels in line with the different pillars. Each panel consisted of the representatives of European institutions, organisations, networks, or projects. While the parallel workshops focussed on local practices, the panels highlighted the European tools, support mechanisms, policies and programmes. The 5th panel brought together the representatives of different cities therefore it had a different approach than the other five panels, discussing the roles and needs of municipalities.

The style and depth of the below summaries vary as the notes were taken by different rapporteurs.

## YOUTH WORK AS A CONTINUUM

### 1. Play and playfulness, youthwork from childhood, child-friendly cities

- Child in the City Foundation (**Hans Migchielsen** - Chairman);
- EuroChild (**Ally Dunhill** - Director of Policy, Advocacy and Communications);
- UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative (**Mona Meienberg** - Head of Child Friendly Community & City Development)
- P4Play project - Cork Child Friendly Cities (**Katherine Harford** – Executive Director, Let's Grow Together! Infant & Childhood Partnerships and Chair of Cork Child Friendly City Forum)

### 2. Policies, strategies and frameworks for youth work

- EU-CoE youth partnership (**Tanya Basarab** - Research and Youth Policy Officer)
- KEKS (**Jonas Agdur** - Senior advisor)
- European Commission Youth Unit (**Babis Papaioannou** - Policy Officer)
- Strategic National Agency Cooperation on the European Youth Work Agenda (**Elke Führer** - Specialist for the European Youth Work Agenda)

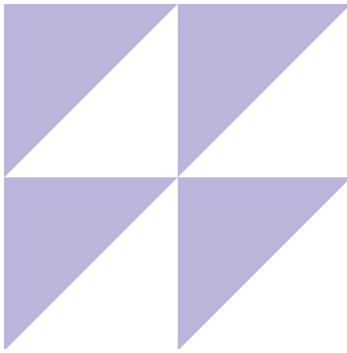
In the introduction, the panel explored the intersection between local and European initiatives concerning children and youth, with a primary focus on the role of play in bridging these two fields. Emphasizing the significance of play in child development, experts highlighted its integral nature to youth work and advocate for its recognition. The discussion delved into the rights of children to play and the consequences of its absence, particularly in urban spaces. Furthermore, there was an exploration of how play can empower young people, influence policy decisions, and foster a sense of belonging. Efforts to ensure meaningful participation of children in decision-making processes related to urban planning and policy development were also mentioned.

The fluidity of age categories was touched upon, challenging the categorization of 'youth work' and 'child work'.

Discussions revolve around the therapeutic and developmental benefits of play, emphasizing its importance in youth work and non-formal education. There's a call to legitimize the significance of play, as it is often undervalued and misunderstood by decision-makers. The need for greater synergy between child work and youth work is highlighted, advocating for a continuum approach rather than rigid age categories. Meaningful participation is emphasized, stressing the importance of incorporating feedback and providing safe spaces for young people to engage in decision-making processes.

There was a suggestion to integrate playful methods into policy-making processes involving young people, allowing for more creative and engaging approaches to youth participation.

In summary, the panels underscored the integral role of play in youth work and advocate for its recognition and incorporation into policy-making processes. They also emphasized the importance of bridging child and youth initiatives to support holistic development and meaningful participation of children and young people in decision-making.



## PARTICIPATION

### 3. Information, (youth) media, and information literacy

- Eurodesk (**Audrey Frith** – Director)
- EYCA (**Manel Sanchez Garcia** – Director)
- Stampmedia (**Anouk Torbeyns** - Editorial and youth supervisor)
- Mediawijs - Flemish Knowledge centre on Digital and Media literacy (**Andy Demeulenaere** – Coordinator)

### 4. How does Europe support participation and active citizenship?

- ERYICA (**Pepe Herrera** – Youth Participation Coordinator)
- DYPALL – (**Aleksandra Maldžiski** - Deputy Director)
- SALTO PI – (**Brigita Medne** - Youth Participation Coordinator)
- Youth dialogue (**Ondrej Barta** – researcher)

#### Introduction:

The panel discussions explored the diverse aspects of youth participation, with a focus on understanding the different forms of engagement and the strategies employed to foster meaningful participation among young people. The first panel highlighted the importance of initiatives such as Eurodesk and EYCA in promoting youth opportunities and engagement at both local and European levels. Meanwhile, the second panel explored the role of organizations like SALTO, DYPALL, and ERYICA in facilitating youth participation through various projects and initiatives. Key themes included the significance of media literacy, trust-building, and the need for accessible and engaging participation platforms.

#### First Panel Insights:

- Audrey Frith (Eurodesk): Emphasized the role of Eurodesk in promoting youth opportunities and removing obstacles for young people's participation. Highlighted the importance of quality youth information for democracy and the use of social media platforms for outreach.
- Manel Sanchez Garcia (EYCA): Discussed the role of EYCA as an association that supports youth policies and initiatives at both national and European levels, emphasizing the importance of youth engagement in democracy.
- Andy Demeulenaere (Mediawijs): Stressed the need to involve young people in media literacy efforts and emphasized the role of youth work in building trust and addressing challenges such as fake news.
- Anouk Torbeyns (Stampmedia): Highlighted Stampmedia's role as a youth organization and newsroom in empowering young journalists and facilitating critical reporting.
- The panelists discussed the future of youth information and media literacy, focusing on the importance of upcoming elections and the challenges posed by populism and euroscepticism.

#### Second Panel Insights:

- Brigita Medne (SALTO PI): Discussed SALTO's Youth Participation Strategy and tools such as the Youth Participation Toolkit, emphasizing the importance of alternative forms of participation and engaging young people in decision-making.
- Aleksandra Maldzinski (DYPALL): Highlighted DYPALL's projects aimed at promoting youth participation at the local level and discusses the Quality Charter on Local Youth Councils as a tool for assessing youth engagement.
- Pepe Herrera (ERYICA): Emphasized the role of information in fostering youth participation and discussed initiatives such as Citizen Panels and the EU Youth Test.
- Ondrej Barta (PEYR, RAY Network): Advocated for meaningful youth participation and stressed the importance of communicating results to young people to build trust and sustain engagement.

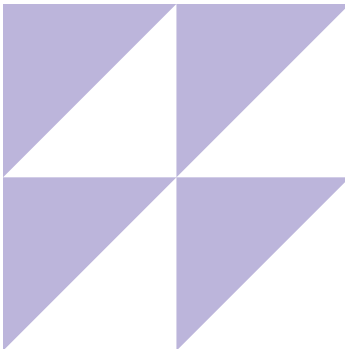
#### Conclusion:

The panel discussions shed light on the diverse strategies and initiatives aimed at enhancing youth participation. From promoting media literacy to facilitating alternative forms of participation, the panels underscored the importance of empowering young people and fostering trust to build a more inclusive and democratic society. There is a consensus on the need for increased awareness, collaboration, and communication of results to sustain youth engagement in the long term.

## MUNICIPAL POLICIES

### 5. The role of municipalities in providing quality youth work and ensuring meaningful participation of young people

- Lviv - the European youth capital 2025 – **Mariia Pihura**
- Paris - **Thomas Rogé**
- Vila Nova de Famalicão - **Sandra Manuela Silva**
- Kristiansand - **Ole Martin Kyllø**
- Vienna - **Nada Taha Ali Mohamed**



## 6. What does Europe offer to municipalities in the field of youth?

- The European Committee of the Regions – (**Stephen De Ron** - Member of Hesperange Municipal Council)
- CoE Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (**Veronique Bertholle** - deputy thematic spokesperson on Youth)
- ALDA (**Andrea Rilievo** - member of our Governing Board)
- European Youth Forum - (**Rares Voicu** - board member)
- Youth Initiative Centre Gyumri- (**Artur Najaryan** – president)

The panel discussions revolved around the role of municipalities in promoting youth work and meaningful participation among young people. Representatives from various municipalities shared their insights on cross-sectoral cooperation mechanisms and the importance of integrating youth perspectives into policy-making processes. Additionally, European organizations were discussed in terms of their contributions to youth participation initiatives.

The first panel highlighted the following key outcomes:

- youth policy implementation: municipalities should involve various departments, not just the youth affairs department, in designing and implementing youth policies;
- youth engagement: strategies should be based on the voices of young people, and their diversity should be acknowledged and supported;
- voting age: lowering the voting age requires providing age-appropriate information and engaging young people in discussions about elections.

The second panel focused on Europe's role in supporting youth participation and highlighted the following outcomes:

- local influence: municipalities play a crucial role in promoting democracy and fostering meaningful youth participation due to their proximity to young people;
- partnerships: collaboration between municipalities and European institutions is essential for promoting youth participation and exchanging ideas and practices;
- meaningful participation: meaningful youth participation requires time, political will, and systematic exchange between young people and decision-makers.

Audience Engagement:

The audience provided feedback and posed questions related to the essence of youth participation, expanding participation concepts, and the impact of European institutions on municipalities.

First Question Insights:

- youth participation: meaningful participation goes beyond voting and requires creating opportunities that young people find meaningful and accessible;
- youth empowerment: municipalities should take proactive steps to reach out to young people and ensure that their participation opportunities are easily accessible and relevant.

Second Question Insights:

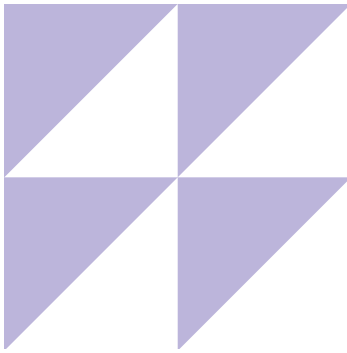
- European influence: European resources alone are not sufficient to attract citizens however, exchanges and encounters facilitated by European events are highly important;
- municipal role: municipalities embody European values and play a crucial role in promoting youth participation and implementing European policies.

Remarks:

- Importance of communication: there is a need for better communication of the impact of youth participation, especially in long-term decision-making processes.
- Role of European institutions: European institutions should consult municipalities more systematically and consider their expertise in decision-making processes.

The discussions underscored the importance of meaningful youth participation, the role of municipalities in promoting democracy, and the need for collaboration between local and European stakeholders to empower young people and implement effective youth policies.





## Annex III : Site visits

(by Gajané Hakobyan)

The conference also offered site visits where local organisations introduced their projects, initiatives and daily work.

### Co-creation: Artistic Creation with Children and Young People

#### **BRONKS theater**

BRONKS engages youth in co-creative projects, fostering creativity and collaboration. Participants develop skills, embrace diversity, and contribute to the community. The “You(-th) Take Over” initiative empowers youth to influence BRONKS’ operations.

#### BabbelART

##### **Lasso vzw**

BabbelArt is a versatile tool for engaging young people in discussions about art and culture, fostering creativity and planning cultural festivals. It provides insight into participants’ interests and talents, facilitating the start of cultural programs and festivals.

### The city operation in Brussels

#### **Chirojeugd Vlaanderen**

Chiro Youth Flanders supports urban Chiro groups in Brussels to promote social cohesion and diversity among youth, addressing challenges like leadership shortages and resource limitations while fostering community engagement and adapting to evolving needs.

### Public Speaking

#### **Felobel**

Felobel aims to empower youth through public speaking training, fostering confidence and effective communication for active citizenship. Their methodology emphasizes practice and feedback, leading to improved skills and self-expression. The initiative also builds a network of organizations nationally and internationally to share best practices in public speaking education.

### urban leadership

#### **JES vzw**

JES supports urban youth leadership by providing tools and platforms for their initiatives, empowering them to make a positive impact in their communities. Through competency-based training and visibility efforts, JES enhances the credibility and reach of young leaders, facilitating access to resources and support.

### YouthShot - Why Large-Scale Change is needed to solve the Most Pressing Social Issues

#### **CAPITAL vzw**

Youthshot fosters collaborative problem-solving for urban youth issues through co-creation with diverse sectors. Their initiative CAPITAL, launched in 2020, engages over 13,000 youths and collaborates with 20 companies and three governments to address challenges like youth unemployment, resulting in increased reach and collaboration.

### Stimulating, enriching and enhancing youth participation with the Certificate of Civic Engagement

#### **ULB Engagee**

The Certificate of Civic Engagement (CECi) promotes youth engagement through online courses, volunteer opportunities, and workshops, enhancing skills and fostering community integration. With 93% of participants reporting improved skills and motivation, CECi contributes to personal growth and sustainable civic involvement.

### Playcation

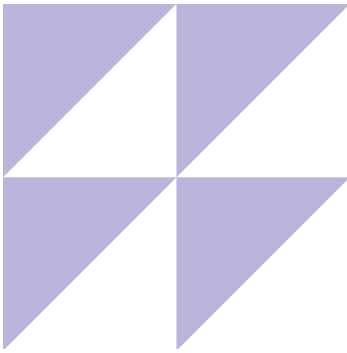
#### **Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie**

Playcation, by the Flemish Community Commission (VGC), creates opportunities for free play in Brussels, focusing on low-income areas. Through projects, it transforms public spaces into engaging play environments, encouraging children’s creativity and social interaction during the summer months.

### Urban Foxes: Academy for Urban Action & DURF

#### **Urban Foxes**

Urban Foxes engages youth in urban action through initiatives like the Academy for Urban Action (AUA), DURF, and Placemaking for Inclusion. AUA fosters youth-led urban projects, DURF involves youth in government decision-making, and Placemaking for Inclusion provides tools for youth involvement in sustainability efforts.



### **KRAS**

#### **Globelink**

KRAS engages youth in Flanders and Brussels through role-playing and decision-making on themes like identity, fostering active citizenship, and sustainable development, empowering them with competencies for social impact.

### **Working towards decolonization**

#### **KUUMBA**

VZW Kuumba fosters cultural exchange and awareness, bridging gaps between African communities and mainstream institutions by addressing Belgium's colonial history with Congo. Through tours, workshops, and events, Kuumba promotes dialogue and talent expression, expanding its reach and collaborations with major institutions.

### **Empowering Brussels girls through identity development and shared leadership**

#### **Molenbeek Rebels Basketball**

Molenbeek Rebels empowers girls in Brussels through basketball, fostering inclusion and diversity with shared leadership and ownership. Girls take on responsibilities, gaining self-confidence and teamwork skills, while workshops and training courses help them acquire competencies and diplomas.

### **The power of youthwork**

#### **VDS Brussels**

The Flemish Playground Service (VDS) trains and supports youth workers for holiday activities and playground operations, emphasizing participation and responsibility to empower young citizens for community engagement.

### **Youth Coalition – Molenbeek for Brussels 2030**

#### **Molenbeek for Brussels 2030**

The Youth Coalition – Molenbeek for Brussels 2030 involved 100 young people from Brussels to envision the city's future in 2030 across six commissions, fostering dialogue and optimism. This initiative created a network of committed young people and built connections across communities.

### **Psycho-social**

#### **D'Broej**

D'Broej aims to provide support for young individuals in an accessible manner, addressing various aspects of their lives. Their commitment extends to breaking down taboos, including topics such as mental health, academic challenges, and loneliness. Additionally, they dedicate themselves to safeguarding the right to leisure for young people who might otherwise face exclusion. By providing a safe haven, their goal is to establish a space where young individuals feel secure, allowing them to openly discuss matters that concern them.

### **Habbekrats is a youth welfare work**

#### **Habbekrats**

Habbekrats offers children and young people something precious and valuable: time and space. Therefore, at the start of 2021, Habbekrats will have 38,000 m<sup>2</sup> of youth space that is centrally located, transparent and maximally easily accessible. Habbekrats has 19 youth centres, most of them in Flanders and now also in Brussels. They give children/young people the time and space for leisure activities, various projects and also the welfare of the child is at stake. Besides the youth houses, there is also an adventure house used for the camps. The adventure house is located in the Ardennes. Every weekend and during the school holidays, we organise various themed camps, each highlighting a social theme.

### **Ajcfestival**

#### **Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Forum des jeunes et Bureau international Jeunesse**

On the occasion of the Belgian Presidency 2024 of the European Union, the Forum des Jeunes, the Bureau International Jeunesse and the Youth Service of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation wish to :

- offer young people a physical space for expression, exchange and participation
- raise the profile of youth activities in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation by proposing programming in collaboration with the youth sector