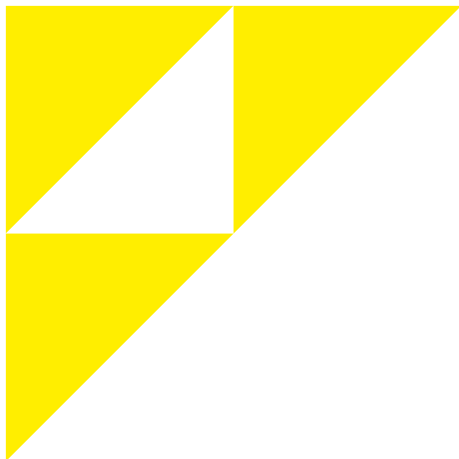


***EU Youth Conference in
Ghent, Belgium.***

***Final Conference Report:
Deliberation on Inclusion
Practices***

EU
NEEDS
YOUTH



Title: **EUYD10 EU Youth Conference in Ghent, Belgium. Final Conference Report: Deliberation on Inclusion Practices**

Authors: Ondřej **BÁRTA** and Dan **MOXON** on behalf of People, Dialogue and Change

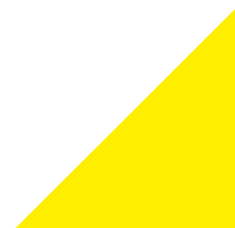
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Executive Summary

The EU Youth Conference (EUYC) took place in Ghent, Belgium, on **2nd to 5th March 2024** under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The thematic framework of the 10th Cycle of the EU Youth **Dialogue (EUYD10) was defined by Youth Goal no.3 “Enable and ensure the inclusion of all young people in society” and summarised** under the title “WE NEED YOUTH”. This report summarises the conference deliberations and provides verbatim outcomes of the working groups along with many detailed annexes, such as a conference programme, biographies of speakers, or the final poem by young facilitators.

The most important part of the EU Youth Conference in Ghent took place in working groups in which participants supported by the editing team designed ideas on the future of inclusion in Europe, **creating six recommendations**. Member States and European institutions are urged to **enhance support for young people facing poverty and financial exclusion** (R1) through measures like promoting affordable housing, improving job accessibility, and enhancing financial literacy. Additionally, there's a call to **ensure accessible and youth-friendly healthcare**, including mental health services (R2) and to bolster **funding and training for educators** to foster inclusive learning environments (R3) while **improving youth media literacy** (R4). Furthermore, **promoting inclusive education and youth work** (R5) and implementing **policies to combat discrimination and biases** (R6) are emphasised, with a focus on **involving young people in policy development** processes. Initiatives such as dismantling systematic discrimination and fostering continuous learning about diversity are underscored, suggesting a collaborative approach between policymakers and young people to address these challenges comprehensively and inclusively.

Furthermore, the working groups prepared **34 possible implementing measures** to provide concrete examples of initiatives that could support making the abovementioned recommendations a reality. The possible implementing measures in the domain of structural barriers included: conducting research to enhance mobility for young people in border regions; providing subsidies for youth housing through the Independent Youth programme; empowering European youth in rural and outermost areas digitally; offering free public transport to all youth; utilizing Vacancy Tax as financial incentives for social youth housing; and establishing high-quality financial literacy standards for all youth in the EU.

The possible implementing measures in the domain of **health and mental wellbeing** included: ensuring access to a psychologist in every school; incorporating diverse research groups in the criteria for health research funds; supporting education and initiatives for youth



mental wellbeing; including health as a ground of discrimination within legislation; and implementing a mental well-being training programme for educators and youth workers.

The possible implementing measures in the domain of **formal education and schools** included: integrating non-formal education led by NGOs into formal civic education; establishing legal frameworks for nationwide and inclusive regional student representative bodies; enhancing anti-discrimination practices in vocational education and training (VET); initiating joint educational initiatives with school students of diverse backgrounds; providing streamlined funding for young people facing fewer opportunities in education; and implementing lifelong teacher training on inclusion.

The possible implementing measures in the domain of **non-formal and informal education and youth work** included: promoting professionalized youth work across Europe through structural investments and trainings; ensuring capacity building and continuous dialogue between youth workers and stakeholders; increasing access to funding opportunities at the local level; implementing youth-centered participatory budgeting; establishing mobile youth work initiatives; and formalizing recognition of volunteer youth work.

The possible implementing measures in the domain of **information** included: conducting youth information and critical thinking workshops in schools; exploring reliable news sources and promoting verifiable information; launching campaigns for quality information and media literacy to empower youth; establishing inclusive youth spaces serving as information hubs; and systematically ensuring that EU information is made accessible and inclusive for all.

The possible implementing measures in the domain of **discriminatory attitudes and cultures** included: incorporating inclusive language in EU policy documents; promoting continuous learning to foster acceptance and awareness of diversities; adopting an intersectional and representative approach across all strategies; ensuring equal rights by implementing the Youth Test at all levels; allocating EU funding for intergenerational spaces within European municipalities; and preventing prejudice through acceptance of minority groups and promoting self-reflection through education.



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Introduction

The EU Youth Conference (EUYC) took place in Ghent, Belgium, on 2nd to 5th March 2024 under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The thematic framework of the 10th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue (EUYD10) was defined by Youth Goal no.3 “Enable and ensure the inclusion of all young people in society” and summarised under the title “WE NEED YOUTH”. The EUYC Ghent was the second conference under the Trio Presidency Spain-Belgium-Hungary, and it had the following aims:

- to become a successful, memorable, and inclusive event,
- to explore the results of the EUYD consultations, find common ground and formulate main recommendations linked to the European Youth Goal no.3 “Inclusive Societies”, and
- to celebrate the 10th Cycle of the EUYD, increasing its visibility and political awareness.

These aims were achieved through deliberations in working groups in which participants of the EUYC Ghent contributed to (a) creation of recommendations to be included in the Council Conclusions prepared by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, and (b) design of implementing measures to be included in annex of the same policy document. The editing team was supporting the EUYC Ghent participants in creating the recommendations, by collecting ideas via the team of harvesters, drafting recommendations, and preparing a final draft based on further reflections from the EUYC Ghent participants. The participants of the EUYC Ghent were supported by a web-based application in which the agenda, profiles of all participants and speakers, as well as videos and photos were shared.

All in all, the EUYC Ghent hosted the following participants:

EU institutions [Eurodesk (1), ERYICA (1), EYCA (1), SALTO IP (1), SALTO ID (1), European Commission (7), EU Council of Europe – Youth partnership (1), YFJ (4)]	17
Ministerial delegates	59
Youth delegates (111) + IYNGO (10)	121
TOTAL	197

The EUYC Ghent came from the following countries: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and Ukraine.





Apart from the participants that took part in the working group discussions following other stakeholders were involved during the EUYC: Crew (36) (Presidency team, JINT vzw, eventronics, stampmedia, digital facilitators, graphic facilitator, editing team, EU researchers, Eurodesk young journalists), Helping hands (28), Facilitators (12), Harvesters (10), Accompanying persons (2), Inclusion practices (62), Policy makers (19), Speakers (23), Artists and animation team (22). This results in a total number of participants and staff of 411.

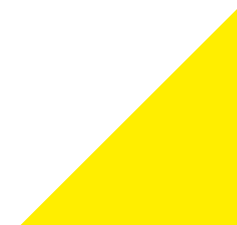
The EUYC Ghent operated within the [Green and Ethical Framework and Inclusion Measures](#), such as providing extra support for participants with special needs before and during the event, using pronouns on the name badges, establishing clear guiding principles for participation, provision of earplugs, provision of translation, selection of a diverse team of facilitators and harvesters, access to silent and prayer rooms, or presence of dedicated trust persons. This framework was developed during the European Year of Youth together with young people.

This report summarises the key discussions from the EUYC Ghent, and it also provides verbatim outcomes of the working group efforts, as well as the full conference programme in the annex. Furthermore, [Instagram](#) and [YouTube channels](#) were available, as well as a [dedicated website](#).

Diversity Survey

The EUYC Ghent participants were offered a chance to participate in a diversity survey where several questions concerning the background of the various delegates were asked. In total, 144 participants took part in the survey (in comparison with 106 at the EUYC Alicante), constituting a response rate of 73.1% (in comparison to 48.4% at EUYC Alicante). It is important to keep this response rate in mind as it clearly shows that not all of the EUYC Ghent participants took up the opportunity to fill in the diversity survey and all results only refer to those who kindly did.

Only a small minority of survey respondents was aged 16-18 (4%; in comparison with 7% at the EUYC Alicante), while most respondents were aged 19-25 (41%; same as at the EUYC Alicante) and over 30 (33%; in comparison to 31% at the EUYC Alicante), with a rather large group of respondents aged 26-30 (21%; in comparison to 22% at the EUYC Alicante). Most of the survey respondents were female (54%; in comparison to 58% at the EUYC Alicante) with less than 1% of those who identified as other gender or preferred not to answer.





31% of the survey respondents claim to have been victims of hate speech (the same as at the EUYC Alicante) and 39% of them claim to have been victims of discrimination (in comparison to 44% at the EUYC Alicante). When it comes to belonging to various minorities, survey respondents claimed to belong to the following ones:

- Ethnic minority: 11% (same as at the EUYC Alicante)
- Religious minority: 8% (in comparison to 5% at the EUYC Alicante)
- LGBT minority: 17% (in comparison to 19% at the EUYC Alicante)
- Linguistic minority: 9% (in comparison to 7% at the EUYC Alicante)
- Living with a disability: 3% (in comparison to 6% at the EUYC Alicante)
- Living with long-term health conditions: 12% (in comparison to 18% at the EUYC Alicante)
- Living in a rural or remote area: 20% (in comparison to 19% at the EUYC Alicante)

Only 1% of the survey respondents fell into the category of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs; in comparison to 3% at the EUYC Alicante), with 62% of respondents working full time (in comparison to 57% at the EUYC Alicante), 22% working part time (in comparison to 28% at the EUYC Alicante), and 37% being in full time education (the same as at the EUYC Alicante). More than half of the survey respondents claimed to come from families with university backgrounds (57%, in comparison to 54% at the EUYC Alicante), while 11% of the survey participants were deeply worried about financial matters in their everyday lives (in comparison to 17% at the EUYC Alicante). Lastly, 31% of respondents claimed to have been newcomers to the EUYD processes, with the EUYC Ghent being their first ever activity within the EUYD context (in comparison to 41% at the EUYC Alicante).

It is apparent that the EUYC Ghent results show a very similar profile to the EUYC Alicante participants, suggesting a potentially similar levels of participant diversity at the EUYCs. This may also be due to promotion of continuity of the national delegations by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU.



Official Opening

Ms. Beatrice Ciobanu, youth delegate on behalf of the Belgian National Youth Councils welcomed all participants in Ghent for the EU Youth Conference, and introduced the first speaker, Mr. Dalle.

Mr. Benjamin Dalle, Flemish Minister of Brussels, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction welcomed everyone at the conference, stressing that 38 countries are represented at the EUYC Ghent. Minister Dalle also encouraged participants to explore the city of Ghent which became the European Youth Capital in 2024. Minister Dalle further outlined the connection between the current EU Youth Dialogue cycle and the EU Youth Strategy, underlining the European Youth Goal no. 3 “Inclusive Societies” as being the core focal point of the cycle. Minister Dalle stressed that almost 30 000 young people engaged in the EUYD consultations, and that the consultations results summarised in the two reports (Bárta, Moxon 2024 and Moxon, Bárta 2024) create a solid basis for deliberations during the EUYC Ghent. Minister Dalle also mentioned overlapping crises that affect young people: climate crisis, ongoing wars, housing crisis, and mental health crisis. Moreover, it was stressed that young people with fewer opportunities are the ones who tend to struggle the most when facing such obstacles and crises. Diversity and inclusion are to be the pillars of supporting young people through these challenges, with three concrete tools that can be mentioned. Regulation is the first one, with a robust framework for youth work and youth as a must to provide stability and funding for the sector. Umbrella youth organisations are the second tool, as supporting umbrella organisations means supporting local youth work bodies. Thirdly, youth and children should also be the target group of a mainstreamed and dedicated strategy and an implementation action plan. Minister Dalle also stressed that participation of young people is crucial, especially allowing for taking into account their opinions when designing such policies. Minister Dalle also outlined how outcomes of the EUYC Ghent will be integrated into the Council Conclusions prepared by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Youth mainstreaming, supporting youth in vulnerable situations, but also putting youth participation at the forefront, are all among the objectives of the EUYC Ghent. Minister Dalle also mentioned the importance of the follow-up, and of the transparency and the dissemination of results back to the young people.

Ms. Iliana Ivanova, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education, and Youth opened by thanking the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU for their work on the EUYC Ghent. She emphasised the outreach of the EUYD, noting that 130,000 people had taken part in EUYD consultations over the last five years. Regarding the topic of the cycle, Ms. Ivanova noted that the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination were at the heart of all EU policies. However, she highlighted that the EU had some distance left to go in this area as over one third of young Europeans lived in poverty or were at risk of social exclusion. Ms. Ivanova stated that the EU was committed to listening to young people when making policies, citing the new EU Youth Check as a flagship programme for youth policy mainstreaming, alongside the participative processes of the EUYD. She finished by reminding all participants that the upcoming EU elections were also one of the most important vehicles for having their voices heard.

Mr. Nicholas Kujala, Board Member of the European Youth Forum, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to address participants of the EUYC Ghent. He reiterated that almost 30 000 young people participated in the EUYD10 consultations and that youth representatives should use these voices as a basis for further deliberations, focusing on identifying possible implementing measures to support youth people belonging to various minority groups. Mr. Kujala stressed the achievements of the EUYD such as the European Youth Goals, or the Youth Guarantee, but also underlined that more efforts are needed for the EUYD results to be implemented at the EU level, such as several concrete EUYD recommendations that are still not in place, for example: launching multi-sectoral programmes on the field of agriculture and youth policy, introducing youth co-management systems, or creating a youth climate ticket. Mr. Kujala also stressed the role of the International Youth NGOs which contribute to the EUYD processes despite not being

financially supported in doing so. Mr. Kujala pointed out the limited resources, lack of political will, or shrinking civic spaces as hindering forces of youth participation all across the EU. Mr. Kujala highlighted that the EUYC Ghent is a unique opportunity to contribute to the European policymaking, but also to networking and discussing on possible implementing measures on local and national levels. Mr. Kujala stressed that meaningful follow-up is a must to ensure the EUYC Ghent is a successful event.



Figure 1: Graphic recording of EUYC Ghent by Dorottya Budavári-Nagy (graphic recorder and illustrator)



Introduction of the EUYC Ghent

Ms. Clara Drammeh and Ms. Lotus Li, the main facilitators of the EU Youth Conference in Ghent, welcomed everyone at the conference, sharing an outline of the current cycle, the EUYD10, with the consultation phase being done and results being available to build on during the EUYC Ghent. Facilitation from the consultation to the implementation phase is now needed, and therefore possible implementing measures are one of the aims of the EUYC Ghent. A video of young people sharing views on social inclusion has been shown, with some of them stressing the need of young people from different walks of life to come and work together, and to have policies that encourage creation of such an environment. Tolerance and appreciation of differences and diversity were also mentioned as key cornerstones of inclusion.

A video of young people referring to the EU Youth Dialogue was also shown, outlining that the EUYD is a very complex process that can be hard to understand by young people. As a step towards increasing awareness of the EUYD, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU created a video on how the EUYD works, showing it to the EUYC Ghent participants and inviting them to share it via available channels. Ms. Drammeh and Ms. Li also introduced the objectives of the conference, mentioning the key role of the working group sessions, with the working groups outcomes creating basis for further policy steps at the EU level. Ms. Drammeh and Ms. Li also introduced a video explaining how the working groups operate and how the editing team supports their work. The editing team was created as a support mechanism for the EUYC Ghent participants to allow them to focus on deliberations and idea creation, while the editing team drafts concrete wording of the final up to 6 recommendations. The team consisted of representatives of the Belgian Presidency team, of youth bodies, and of researchers. The working groups were offered space to provide further reflections on the drafts during the conference itself. Up to 34 possible implementing measures were also to be created by the working groups directly, and these are to be verbatim included in the annex to the Council Conclusions. Key milestones for each day were presented, and inclusion and environmental frameworks were introduced. All videos are available [online](#).

Panel Discussion on Social Inclusion

A panel debate on social inclusion took place, with the following expert panellists:

- **Mr. Antoine Bakhsh**, student of political sciences and student representative,
- **Mr. Benjamin Dalle**, Flemish Minister of Brussels, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction,
- **Ms. Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot**, Director for Youth, Education, and Erasmus+ at the European Commission, and
- **Mr. Nicholas Kujala**, Board Member of the European Youth Forum.

Mr. Bakhsh opened the panel, identifying that social inclusion required a worldview switch. It is important to believe that anyone, regardless of background, can make a valuable contribution to society. We should not limit the aspirations and roles of people based on their backgrounds.

Minister Dalle followed this point, stating that changing worldviews means starting from the idea that every person counts and has talents. He identified that various policy mechanisms were needed for this such as youth mainstreaming, or joint coordinators for youth and children's rights. Minister Dalle also raised concerns about the rise of populist and extremist parties in the upcoming elections.



Mr. Kujala highlighted that many of our aspirations for social inclusion required the need for investment and funding. He highlighted the importance of international youth NGOs (IYNGOs) receiving funding to support their engagement in the EUYD processes. Mr Kujala emphasised that National Youth Councils and IYNGOs were well placed to engage young people with fewer opportunities in policy making through their outreach programmes.

Ms. Eriksson Waterschoot noted that the EUYD was a pioneering tool in youth engagement in policy making. She commented that more efforts are needed to make better use of its outcomes. This means ensuring that it touches on relevant themes and concrete topics, as well as ensuring recommendations are followed up at national levels. Ms. Eriksson Waterschoot stated that to support youth mainstreaming the European Commission is encouraging all EU

- Member States to have a national youth coordinator, all of whom would be connected together through the European Commission's youth stakeholder platform.

Presentation of the Consultation Reports

Mr. Ondřej Bárta, freelance youth researcher supporting the EUYD10, presented the outline of the consultation phase of the current EUYD cycle. National Working Groups submitted consultation reports and results of the standardised surveys, which together with the results of the EUYC Alicante served as a basis for the two available consultation reports ([Bárta, Moxon 2024](#) and [Moxon, Bárta 2024](#)). Mr. Bárta further outlined the results of the standardised survey in which almost 11 000 young people took part, and which showed that young people do not see inclusion as very well implemented in their respective environments. Furthermore, the results suggest that different groups of young people view inclusion differently, and that intersectionality (i.e., cumulative disadvantage) may also play a role.

Mr. Dan Moxon, Director of People, Dialogue and Change and a researcher supporting the EUYD10, summarised the results of the qualitative consultations which took place at the national levels, and also at the EUYC Alicante. He elaborated on various results within the consultation domains of access to education and learning environments, the role of education and educators, health care, work and employment, other social support, and the role of the youth field. Mr. Moxon mentioned barriers to social inclusion such as discriminatory behaviour of educators, discrimination in work recruitment processes, barriers in housing or transport, and many other. He also elaborated on changes which are needed, such as accessible and inclusive learning environments, investments into education, diversity initiatives for employers, improved mental health support, or access to information. Mr. Moxon also highlighted the role of the youth field with respect to advocacy, creating opportunities for social cohesion, or places of mutual support.

Sharing Social Inclusion Practices

A showcase of social inclusion practices was organised for the EUYC Ghent participants. About 30 organisations presented their processes and initiatives, and all of them are listed and described in the Annex 5. The aim of the fair was to inspire participants, by providing space to explore some existing organisations, projects and policy initiatives that are already working towards a society that is more inclusive for all young people, including young people with fewer opportunities.



Working Group Sessions

During Sunday 3rd March 2024, and Monday 4th of March 2024, six working groups in the total length of 8 hours and 45 minutes, featuring also a session with policymakers in the length of 1.5 hours (please see Annex 4 for the list of policymakers), allowed EUYC Ghent participants to deliberate on the six key topics as follows (please see Annex 2 for their detailed descriptions):

- **Change the system - structural barriers to inclusion**
- **The role of Information and social inclusion**
- **Health and mental wellbeing - a means to social inclusion**
- **Inclusive learning environments – schools and formal education**
- **Inclusive learning environments - non-formal and informal education / youth work**
- **Challenging discriminatory attitudes and cultures**

The working groups were supported by teams consisting of facilitators and harvesters. While the facilitators were focusing on the group and deliberation dynamics and workflow, the harvesters were collecting ideas and supporting the process of drafting concrete possible implementing measures.

The session with policymakers during which the participants had an opportunity to refine their work based on further deliberations brought many interesting insights. Some of the policymakers urged the working groups to pay attention to the language they use, being sensitive to various nuances and connotations, but also using widely-known terms. Other policymakers stressed the importance of SMART approach in order to plan possible implementing measures with specific results, as well as importance of taking into account the existing body of research on any given topic. Funding and youth mainstreaming were also discussed, together with the importance of policy cycles. Some of the policymakers highlighted concrete policy initiatives, frameworks, and papers which are relevant to the topics at hand, suggesting the working groups to take them into account in their work. Some of the policymakers also shared concrete good practices from the EU Member States, such as Latvia, Belgium (Flanders), or the Netherlands.



Figure 2: Graphic recording of EUYC Ghent by Dorottya Budavári-Nagy (graphic recorder and illustrator)

Plenary Conclusions

EUYC Ghent facilitators **Ms. Clara Drammeh** and **Ms. Lotus Li** reflected on the work of the day undertaken by the participants. They highlighted the emphasis on time dedicated for the working groups at the EUYC Ghent and they noted that producing 34 possible implementing measures and 6 recommendations provides basis for future policy and implementation processes in the coming months.

Mr. Pieter Jan De Graeve (project officer at SALTO Inclusion & Diversity) and **Ms. Sophia Dolhain** (member of the team supporting the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, The Flemish Department of Culture Youth and Media) joined the stage to elaborate on the work of the editing team. They outlined that the working process has been smooth. The first step was to look at the desired outcomes and social change identified by the working groups and to begin turning these into the first draft of the recommendations. Mr. De Graeve noted that the areas identified by working groups had complimentary themes, which made the process easier. He stated that when recommendations were shared with conference participants the next day, the reflections collected from the participants were positive and allowed for further improvements to the draft recommendations. Ms. Dolhain outlined that the next stage was to check again the next day if the recommendations were still aligned with the possible implementing measures. She noted that the EUYC Ghent recommendations would be incorporated into the draft Council Conclusions which are negotiated by the EU Member States through the EU Youth Working Party in order to adopt them by the Council of Ministers in May.



Figure 3: Graphic recording of EUYC Ghent by Dorottya Budavári-Nagy (graphic recorder and illustrator)⁴



Closing Session

The EUYC Ghent facilitators **Ms. Drammeh** and **Ms. Li** welcomed the participants to the last day of the EUYC Ghent, including those watching the live stream. They summarised the proceedings of the EUYC Ghent, utilising the visual recording by Dorottya Budavári-Nagy (graphic recorder and illustrator), outlining how the outcomes of the EUYC Ghent were created. They introduced **Mr. Milan Calloens** (coordinator of the three National Youth Councils of Belgium for the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU) and **Ms. Sophia Dolhain** (policy officer for Youth Affairs at Flemish Government and a member of the team supporting the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU) from the editing team on stage, giving them the opportunity to dive into the work of the team and how the ideas of the EUYC Ghent participants were utilised. All in all, 6 recommendations were created by the editing team, based on the notes from the team of harvesters who collected ideas during the working group deliberations. Furthermore, those recommendations were offered for reflection back to the EUYC Ghent participants during the second day of the conference, before they were finalised. The recommendations are to be included in the body of the Council Conclusions of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The recommendations are as follows:

“Member States and European Institutions are encouraged to:

- *R1. Better support young people experiencing poverty and financial exclusion to transition to financial independence and security by taking steps to promote affordable housing, increasing access to quality work and employment, addressing mobility barriers, and ensuring young people’s financial literacy.*
- *R2. Ensure young people’s access to affordable, youth-friendly and personalised quality health care and mental health support systems. Additionally, create safe and open environments for young people to speak freely and learn about health and mental well-being.*
- *R3. Increase funding, capacity building and other support for educators to be engaged in lifelong learning on: inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities; capitalising on diversity of young people; creating safe spaces for sharing and learning with and by young people from different backgrounds; and youth-centred personalised teaching and learning approaches.*
- *R4. Improve the capacity of people working with and for youth to effectively disseminate youth friendly information in order to make information accessible about rights and opportunities. Additionally, strengthen media and information literacy of youth to recognise trustworthy information and safe information navigation.*
- *R5. Promote and invest in education and youth work in order to: make learning environments more accessible and inclusive for young people with fewer opportunities; tailor to young people needs; increase collaborations between formal education, non-formal education and informal learning and across other sectors.*
- *R6. Put in place policies to dismantle systematic discrimination, unconscious bias, hostile attitudes and to encourage continuous learning about all kinds of diversities as well as unlearning prejudices. Such policies should be co-developed with young people with relevant lived experiences in all fields.*

Furthermore, the working groups prepared more than 34 possible implementing measures to provide concrete examples of initiatives that could support making the abovementioned recommendations a reality.

The possible implementing measures in the domain of structural barriers included: conducting education research to enhance mobility for young people in border regions; providing subsidies for youth housing through the Independent Youth programme; empowering European youth in rural and outermost areas digitally; offering free public transport to all youth; utilizing Vacancy Tax as financial incentives for social youth housing; and establishing high-quality financial literacy standards for all youth in the EU.

- **The possible implementing measures in the domain of health and mental wellbeing included:** ensuring access to a psychologist in every school; incorporating diverse research groups in the criteria for health research funds; supporting education and initiatives for youth mental wellbeing; including health as a ground of discrimination within legislation; and implementing a mental well-being training programme for educators and youth workers.



Figure 4: Graphic recording of EUYC Ghent by Dorottya Budavári-Nagy (graphic recorder and illustrator)



The possible implementing measures in the domain of formal education and schools included: integrating non-formal education led by NGOs into formal civic education; establishing legal frameworks for nationwide and inclusive regional student representative bodies; enhancing anti-discrimination practices in vocational education and training (VET); initiating joint educational initiatives with school students of diverse backgrounds; providing streamlined funding for young people facing fewer opportunities in education; and implementing lifelong teacher training on inclusion.

The possible implementing measures in the domain of non-formal and informal education and youth work included: promoting professionalized youth work across Europe through structural investments and trainings; ensuring capacity building and continuous dialogue between youth workers and stakeholders; increasing access to funding opportunities at the local level; implementing youth-centered participatory budgeting; establishing mobile youth work initiatives; and formalizing recognition of volunteer youth work.

The possible implementing measures in the domain of information included: conducting youth information and critical thinking workshops in schools; exploring reliable news sources and promoting verifiable information; launching campaigns for quality information and media literacy to empower youth; establishing inclusive youth spaces serving as information hubs; and systematically ensuring that EU information is made accessible and inclusive for all.

The possible implementing measures in the domain of discriminatory attitudes and cultures included: incorporating inclusive language in EU policy documents; promoting continuous learning to foster acceptance and awareness of diversities; adopting an intersectional and representative approach across all strategies; ensuring equal rights by implementing the Youth Test at all levels; allocating EU funding for intergenerational spaces within European municipalities; and preventing prejudice through acceptance of minority groups and promoting self-reflection through education.

These possible implementing measures are to be included as an annex of the Council Conclusions of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU and can be also found verbatim in the Annex 3 of this report.

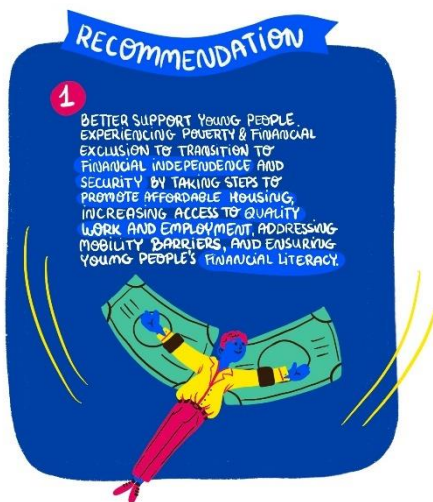
Reaction Panel on the Outcomes of the EUYC Ghent

Ms. Isabelle Weykmans, Minister for Youth for a German Speaking Community of Belgium, stressed that the outcomes of the EUYC Ghent show intersectionality and complexity of the issues at hand, as well as the need for including young people in addressing these complex matters. She also underlined that youth policy is established at a cross-section of youth engagement, international deliberations, and national and local consultations. As an example, digital equality needs to be established, and hence a decision has been made to connect every house in the German Speaking Community to the internet via a stable cable connection by 2026.

Mr. Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, highlighted that in fighting poverty early childhood is usually at the forefront of measures in place. Nevertheless, he also underlined that it would be a mistake to only target the support on children, outlining many transition moments in lives of young people which are key to overcoming economic disadvantages, such as entering various schools, or the labour market. Unconditional basic income for young people was mentioned as a strong potential measure to support young people in their transitions. Apart from material deprivation, shame and cultural barriers in finding housing, healthcare, employment, or educational opportunities are also key to tackle, as poverty may have life-long consequences for anyone who finds themselves in such a situation.

Ms. Katrīna Leitāne , President of the Youth Group at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), highlighted the opportunities for deliberations during the EUYC Ghent, appreciated the time and energy devoted by all EUYC Ghent, and commitment it shows to youth participation. She stressed the advisory role of the EESC within the system of the EU bodies, underlying the support of the EESC to the EU Youth Test, or for intergenerational solidarity.

Ms. Nina Grmuša, Bureau Member of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, underlined the importance of policymakers and young people coming together to regularly work on policies together in an international environment. She also stressed the passion of young people for the cross-sectoral and complex topics that were debated during the EUYC Ghent.





RECOMMENDATION

3 PROMOTE AND INVEST IN EDUCATION AND YOUTH WORK IN ORDER TO: MAKE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS MORE ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES; TAILOR TO YOUNG PEOPLE NEEDS; INCREASE COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN FORMAL EDUCATION, NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND INFORMAL LEARNING ACROSS OTHER SECTORS

RECOMMENDATION

4 INCREASE FUNDING, CAPACITY BUILDING AND OTHER SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS TO BE ENGAGED IN LIFE-LONG LEARNING ON: INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES, CAPITALISING ON DIVERSITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE; CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR SHARING AND LEARNING WITH AND BY YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS, AND YOUTH-CENTERED PERSONALISED TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES.

RECOMMENDATION

5 IMPROVE THE CAPACITY OF PEOPLE WORKING WITH AND FOR YOUTH TO EFFECTIVELY DISSEMINATE YOUTH FRIENDLY INFORMATION AND ACCESSIBLE ABOUT RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES ADDITIONALLY STRENGTHEN MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY OF YOUTH TO RECOGNISE TRUSTWORTHY INFORMATION AND SAFE INFORMATION NAVIGATION

RECOMMENDATION

6 PUT IN PLACE POLICIES TO DISMANTLE SYSTEMATIC DISCRIMINATION, UNCONSCIOUS BIAS, HOSTILE ATTITUDES AND TO ENCOURAGE CONTINUOUS LEARNING ABOUT ALL KINDS OF DIVERSITIES AS WELL AS VIOLENCE PREJUDICES SUCH POLICIES SHOULD BE CO-DEVELOPED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WITH RELEVANT LIVED EXPERIENCES IN ALL FIELDS.

Figure 5: Graphic recording of EUYC Ghent by Dorottya Budavári-Nagy (graphic recorder and illustrator)



Next steps in the 10th Cycle of the EUYD

Ms. Biliana Sirakova, EU Youth Coordinator at the European Commission, stressed that more can be done to follow-up on the outcomes of the EUYD, mentioning the Youth Check and the Youth Guarantee as examples of successful follow-ups. She also invited all participants to create follow-up initiatives, including support of dissemination of the EUYD outcomes. She mentioned new branding and design are to be created for the EUYD.

Mr. Nicholas Kujala, Board Member of the European Youth Forum, mentioned outreach of the EUYD to be one of its strengths, with youth from disadvantaged backgrounds being given the space to co-create the community they are living in. He also mentioned weaknesses including funding for the NWGs and IYNGOs. Improvement of the process of the EUYD is key, and young people should be at the heart of such changes, such as green and sustainable frameworks, youth infrastructure, and other.

Ms. Laure Verstraete, Youth Delegate on behalf of the Belgian Youth Councils, summarised challenges of being a youth delegate, including monitoring and follow-up of the EUYC outcomes. Inclusive aspects are crucial, with silent rooms, contact persons, or dedicated catering partners who share the vision of the organisers, but also branding and image of the EUYD that everyone would recognise. She also wished the upcoming Presidencies to have smooth cooperation within the EUYD processes.

The EUYC Ghent participants were invited to share their ideas on further improvement of the EUYD, and concrete suggestions were mentioned, such as explicit guidelines on organising the EUYCs, or an increased visibility and dissemination, but also continued deliberations on the EUYD improvements in the future.

Mr. Armand Meys, desk officer for International youth and cultural policy at the Department of Culture and Youth of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, stressed the achievements of Mr. Jan Van Hee and his role in furthering the EUYD, underlining the connection between the local and the European, and his expertise in the EUYD, and he thanked him for all his support of the EUYD over the years.

Mr. Jan Van Hee thanked everyone, saying that all he did was doing his job with passion.

Takeover took place between the youth delegates from Belgium and Hungary. **Ms. Laurena Marx**, **Ms. Israe Aiach** and **Mr. Valentin Williame** as representatives of all Belgian National Youth Councils passed on the EUYD10 responsibilities to their counterpart **Ms. Réka Gaján** from the Hungarian National Youth Council, wishing all the best to the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. Ms. Gaján thanked her Belgian colleagues for well-done work on furthering the EUYD, for keeping up hope for better futures, and for making the youth voices count.

Ms. María Rodríguez Alcazar, President of the European Youth Forum, underlined the hard work of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU in the EUYD domain. She also stated that co-creation is at heart of the EUYD and EUYCs, highlighting the concrete outcomes of the EUYC Ghent. She encouraged the youth delegates to take the outcomes back to the national and local levels and to use the outcomes to make the youth voices heard. She appreciated presence of the European Commission representatives at the EUYC Ghent, but also stressed the need for cooperation at the EU level in follow-up processes to build on the EUYC Ghent outcomes.

Ms. Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot, Director for Youth, Education, and Erasmus+ at the European Commission appreciated the EUYC Ghent process, but also the venue, and cultural programme. She also thanked the youth delegates for their work on the possible implementing measures and recommendations, stating that it is up to the European institutions to follow-up on these outcomes. She stated that more than 60 actions are planned by the DG EAC in the



domain of youth mainstreaming, communication, visibility, but also in the domain of implementation of the EU Youth Check. Demonstrating impacts of the EUYD is a key challenge, with relevant follow-up on all levels being a cornerstone of such impacts. She also mentioned the upcoming European elections which will influence the future of the EU. She also thanked Mr. Jan Van Hee for all his work and support of the EUYD, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, and of the Youth Working Party.

Mr. Benjamin Dalle, Flemish Minister of Brussels, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction thanked all participants for creating the recommendations and possible implementing measures, as a form of identifying policy solutions. Listening to youth and taking action with youth are to be the driving force behind meaningful change. He also mentioned room for improvement in terms of monitoring and follow-up mechanisms and proposed to create a framework for monitoring and feedback of the EUYD. Minister Dalle underlined that the newly created recommendations are cross-sectoral, and hence cover the whole palette of the lives of young people. This goes hand in hand with the necessity for youth mainstreaming, as represented for example by the EU Youth Test. He acknowledged that further steps will be undoubtedly taken by the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, including at the EUYC Budapest in the second half of 2024. Minister Dalle also stressed that while inclusion lies at the heart of the EU as a peace-project, youth and children in Gaza are not as fortunate. He urged immediate ceasefire in Gaza and respecting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. He also thanked representatives of Ukraine for coming to Belgium to discuss the future of Europe and its youth. He thanked everyone included in the organisation of the EUYC Ghent, and Ms. Sofie Van Zeebroeck for the event coordination.

The EUYC Ghent was closed by a live recital of a poem by two of the facilitators of the EUYC Ghent: **Mr. Gaffar Rampage**, and **Mr. Kelvin Akpaloo** (see Annex 6 for the poem).

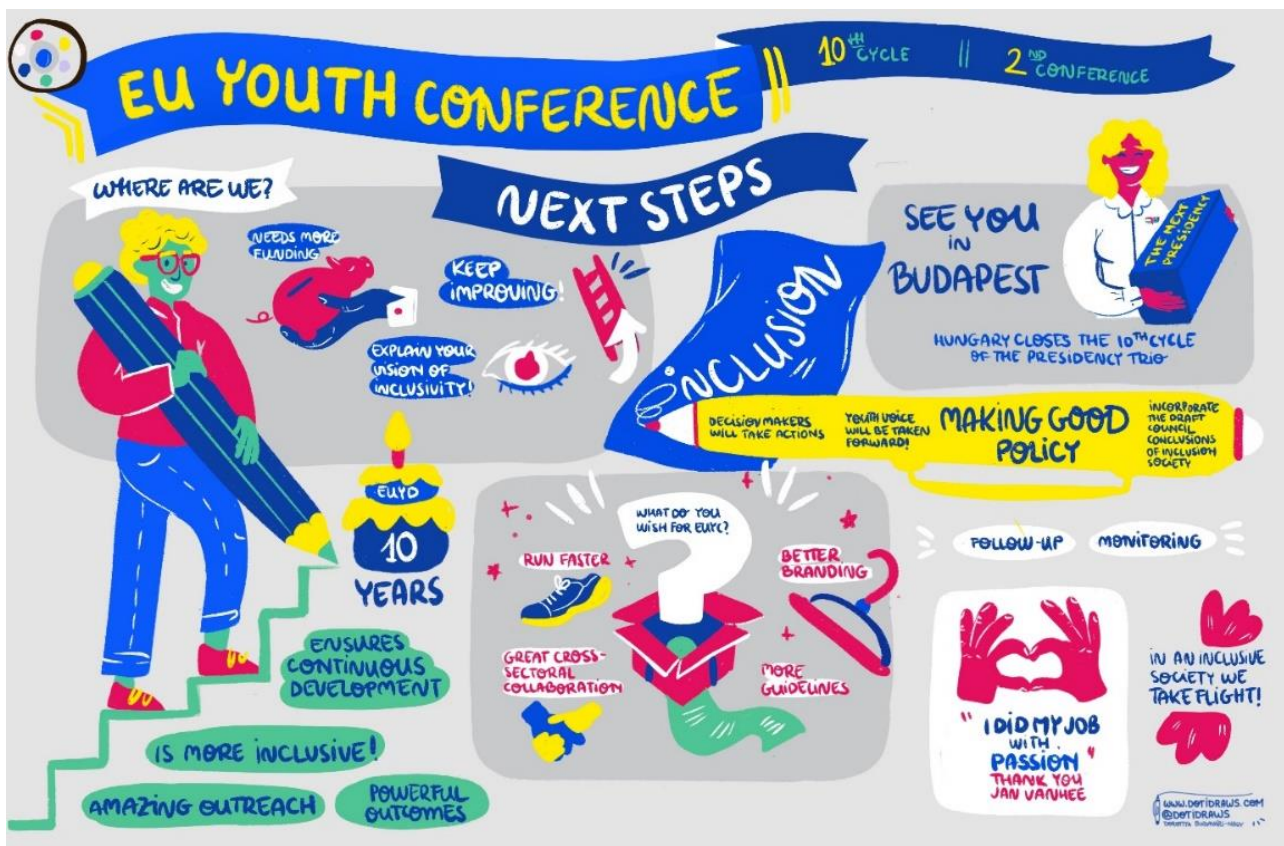


Figure 6: Graphic recording of EUYC Ghent by Dorottya Budavári-Nagy (graphic recorder and illustrator)



Annex 1: Programme of the EUYC Ghent

SATURDAY, MARCH 2d

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 12:00 – 22:00 | Arrivals and hotel check-in |
| 14:00 – 17:00 | Arrival and registration at VIERNULVIER – De Vooruit
Cultural and sportive activities (optional) |
| 17:30 – 19:00 | Welcome by Presidency team and Ghent European Youth Capital
briefing for participants and division of working groups |
| ➤ 19:00 – 22:00 | Informal opening by Hafsa El-Bazoui, deputy Mayor of the City of Ghent (cancelled)
walking dinner |

SUNDAY, MARCH 3d

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 08:00 – 09:00 | Registration of participants |
| 09:00 – 10:45 | Official opening <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Opening speech</u> by Benjamin Dalle, Flemish Minister of Brussels, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction• <u>Opening speech</u> by Iliana Ivanova, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth• <u>Opening speech</u> by Nicholas Kujala, Board Member of the European Youth Forum |

Panel interview on the topic of social inclusion

- **Benjamin Dalle**, Flemish Minister of Brussels, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction
 - **Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot**, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+ at the European Commission's Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
 - **Nicholas Kujala**, Board Member of the European Youth Forum
 - **Antoine Bakhsh**, *young person*
 - Getting to know each other
 - Presentation of consultation report by the researchers team
- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 10:45 – 11:15 | Coffee break |
| 11:15 – 12:30 | Onboarding in working groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ WG1 & WG2: Change the system – structural barriers to inclusion▪ WG3: Health and mental wellbeing – a means to social inclusion▪ WG4: Inclusive learning environments – schools and formal education▪ WG5 & WG6: The role of information and social inclusion▪ WG7 & WG8: Inclusive learning environments – non- formal & informal education/youth work▪ WG9 & WG10: Challenging discriminatory attitudes and cultures |
| 12:30- 14:00 | Lunch break |
| 14:00 – 15:30 | Sharing of good practices for social inclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Jongerenwerking OCMW Gent: The Youth Support Team▪ JES vzw: Because it is young people that make the city!▪ iDROPS: Inclusively Wired▪ Overkop: Low-threshold support in wellbeing through leisure and care▪ Go Boom: About female & queer representation▪ Jong vzw: Young people of Ghent share their experiences▪ Amal: Parkoers▪ Konekt: The learning programme of Brake-Out |



- **KAA Gent Foundation:** More than football
- **Urban Foxes:** Presenting different projects
- **Culture Goes Europe (CGE) & Soziokulturelle Initiative Erfurt e.V. & Urban Foxes:** Placemaking for Inclusion (cancelled)
- **Homaar:** Growth space for youngsters that connect creativity, youth care and youth work
- **Komaf:** Where leisure is connected to inclusion and diversity
- **Betonne Jeugd and Netwerk tegen Armoede:** Methods to fight poverty and social exclusion
- **Link in de Kabel:** Improving digital and media literacy in a playful way
- **Les Guides:** A movement FOR young people, BY young people
- **ATD Quart Monde:** Including young people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in policy making
- **Education Globale et Développement:** Getting to know the World Workshop
- **Le Forum Bruxelles contre les inégalités:** How to involve "at-risk" young people in a dialogue with professionals, researchers and institutions?
- **LEJO:** Teenage mothers
- **Université de Paix:** Mediators' seeds, Objective: Group, and #BetterTogether
- **Ghent Education Centre (Edina & OKAN):** Strengthening newcomer education
- **YEN Youth of European Nationalities:** An exploration of best practices: Exchange Market, Code of Conduct and Minority Youth Advocacy
- **Y-E-N Youth Express Network: Ties up!** Reconnect with youth post-pandemic project
- **Extra-C and ENIL (cancelled):** The Extraordinary Citizens project
- **Rural Youth Europe/4H:** Mental health at 4H farms
- **Minus One:** Underground cultural centre for youth in Ghent
- **Merhaba:** Empowering the LGBT+ community with a migrant background
- **European Commission I & II:** Towards a European degree

15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 – 17:30	Working groups session I: Identifying desired changes
17:30 – 19:00	Break
19:00 – 23:00	Belgian cultural gala evening and dinner

MONDAY, MARCH 4th

9:00 – 10:30	Working groups session II: From visions to actions
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 – 12:30	Working groups session III: Preparing for a dialogue
12:30- 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 15:30	Dialogue session with policy makers in working groups
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 – 17:30	Working groups session IV: Finalising the outcomes
17:30 – 18:00	Closing of the day in plenary
18:00 – 19:00	Break
19:00 – 20:00	Silent disco walk (optional)
19:00 – 21:00	Dinner
21:00 – 02:00	Festive evening organised by the Youth Councils at Minus one



TUESDAY, MARCH 5th

9:30 – 11:00 Presentation of working groups outcomes

Reaction panel on the outcomes of the EUYC

- **Isabelle Weykmans**, Minister for Youth of the German-speaking community of Belgium
- **Olivier De Schutter**, UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and candidate member of the European Parliament
- **Katrīna Leitāne**, President of the EESC Youth Group
- **Nina Grmuša**, Bureau Member of the Advisory Council on Youth

Group picture

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break

11:30 – 13:00 Next steps in EUYC process by TRIO Presidency

Interactive panel discussion on the future of the EU youth dialogue

- **Biliana Sirakova**, EU Youth Coordinator
- **Nicholas Kujala**, Board Member of the European Youth Forum
- **Laure Verstraete**, youth delegate Belgian national youth councils

Handover to Hungary

Short closing speeches

- **María Rodríguez Alcázar**, President of the European Youth Forum
- **Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot**, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+ at the European Commission's Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
- **Benjamin Dalle**, Flemish Minister of Brussels, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction

13:00- 14:00 Lunch break

14:00 - ... Departure of participants



Annex 2: Working Group Topics

1. Change the system - structural barriers to inclusion

Structures and systems in our society can provide advantages to one group of people and be systematically disadvantageous to other groups. Social support measures are not always tailored to the specific needs of young people with fewer opportunities. These social and economic barriers prevent the full inclusion of all young people in our societies.

This group will explore the large-scale, social, and economic issues that create social exclusion, particularly access to housing and employment, and the role of public space and infrastructure. The group will identify possible implementing measures that can help address these barriers.

2. Health and mental wellbeing - a means to social inclusion

Young people's health and wellbeing, particularly mental health, is crucial for their social inclusion and active participation in society. Challenges related to health and wellbeing can create barriers for young people and may affect some groups of young people more than others.

This group will identify possible implementing measures related to young people's access to quality health care and mental health support. It will also explore the role that youth work and the youth sector can play in promoting youth health and mental wellbeing as a means to enabling their active participation in society.

3. Inclusive learning environments – schools and formal education

Formal education environments, such as high schools and universities, are among the main spaces through which young people access learning and education. According to the consultation results, schools are not always effective at promoting the inclusion of all young people. Many groups face issues of poor access, or experience exclusion within school settings. According to the consultation results, the actions (or inactions) of teachers, problems with curricula, as well as the general environment and culture within schools can even reinforce social exclusion.

This group will identify possible implementing measures that can promote inclusive learning environments in schools, universities and other formal education settings. It will explore equitable access to quality education and learning, inclusive learning, and the role of educators in promoting social inclusion in schools.

4. Inclusive learning environments - non-formal and informal education / youth work

There are many spaces and places in which young people learn outside of formal education. Learning can occur in environments such as youth centres, youth organisations and youth structures, where it might be guided by non-formal educators or youth workers. Learning can also occur informally in our day to day lives and in public spaces. According to the consultation results, learning environments are not always effective at promoting inclusion of all young people. Some environments, and the actions (or inactions) of educators linked to them can even reinforce social exclusion.



This group will identify possible implementing measures that can promote inclusive learning environments in non-formal and informal settings. It will explore equitable access to quality education and learning, inclusive learning, and the role of educators in promoting social inclusion, within non-formal and informal settings.

5. The role of Information and social inclusion

As Europe undergoes digital transformation the ability to access, use, create and share information is becoming increasingly central to all of our lives. However, not all young people have the same access to digital tools, quality information, or possibilities to develop media and information literacy competences. Information disorder (disinformation, misinformation and malinformation, sometimes called “fake news”) is a major contributor towards the spread of polarisation in our society. Young people need both access to trustworthy information and the competences to identify and critically assess the information they receive.

This group will identify possible implementing measures that can make young people's access to quality information more equitable and develop young people's media and information literacy competences. It will consider the role of youth work and the youth sector in helping develop quality information that is accessible to all, and well targeted to meet the needs of different groups of young people.

6. Challenging discriminatory attitudes and cultures

According to the consultation results, experiencing prejudice, negative stereotypes and hate speech is common for many groups of young people. Young people are experiencing these things when seeking employment, within education, on social media platforms, when trying to access healthcare or other support, and in many other fields of life. Discriminatory attitudes of others lead many young people to feeling unsafe, have opportunities denied from them, and are part of many young people's experiences of exclusion.

This group will identify possible implementing measures that can challenge discriminatory attitudes and cultures across all areas of life. It will consider what practical actions are needed to promote a Europe that is welcoming, tolerant and accepting of all young people at a cultural and societal level.



Annex 3: Recommendations and Possible Implementing Measures

Recommendations

R1. Better support young people experiencing poverty and financial exclusion to transition to financial independence and security by taking steps to promote affordable housing, increasing access to quality work and employment, addressing mobility barriers, and ensuring young people's financial literacy.

R2. Ensure young people's access to affordable, youth-friendly and personalised quality health care and mental health support systems. Additionally, create safe and open environments for young people to speak freely and learn about health and mental well-being.

R3. Promote and invest in education and youth work in order to: make learning environments more accessible and inclusive for young people with fewer opportunities; tailor to young people needs; increase collaborations between formal education, non-formal education and informal learning and across other sectors.

R4. Increase funding, capacity building and other support for educators to be engaged in lifelong learning on: inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities; capitalising on diversity of young people; creating safe spaces for sharing and learning with and by young people from different backgrounds; and youth-centred personalised teaching and learning approaches.

R5. Improve the capacity of people working with and for youth to effectively disseminate youth friendly information in order to make information accessible about rights and opportunities. Additionally, strengthen media and information literacy of youth to recognise trustworthy information and safe information navigation.

R6. Put in place policies to dismantle systematic discrimination, unconscious bias, hostile attitudes and to encourage continuous learning about all kinds of diversities as well as unlearning prejudices. Such policies should be co-developed with young people with relevant lived experiences in all fields.



Possible Implementing Measures

1. CHANGE THE SYSTEM: STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

<p>1.1 Research about boosting mobility for young people in border regions</p> <p>The European Commission should conduct a research on cross-border transportation in rural areas and measures to be taken to facilitate the cooperation between regional transportation. A special focus should be on the effect of creating more cohesion between cross-border pricing systems that centers on young people with fewer opportunities.</p> <p>➤ A tool-box of suitable measures is to be created.</p> <p>This should lead to decreasing the prices, so the consumer has a more affordable ticketing system.</p>	<p>EU, Regional</p>
<p>1.2 Independent Youth: Subsidies for youth housing</p> <p>This measure targets all youth in the age group from 16 to 30 years old, that includes students, employed youth, NEETs etc. by providing them housing subsidies based on their social economic background and status. The implementation of this measure ensures the equity in for fair subsidies.</p> <p>This should lead to independence and well-being of youth in all aspects of social participation.</p>	<p>EU</p>
<p>1.3 Digital empowerment for European youth in rural and outermost areas</p> <p>The European Commission should encourage the member states to ensure an equal digital access for young people across Europe. This entails establishing widespread Wi-Fi availability in rural areas and providing access to laptops for underserved communities. By prioritising digital inclusion, we empower young people with the tools they need to do remote work, develop their skills, and access digital services.</p> <p>This should lead to Increase the employability and the access to information.</p>	<p>EU</p>
<p>1.4 Free public transport for all youth</p> <p>Provide free public transport to all youth, improving access to schools, jobs, and social opportunities, and allowing disadvantaged areas to grow around public transport major hubs. This initiative reflects the EU's acknowledgment of youth struggles and strives to address them effectively.</p> <p>This should lead to reduced inequalities cross-sectionally and sustainably.</p>	<p>National</p>



<p><i>1.5 Vacancy Tax serving financial incentives for social youth housing</i></p> <p>Houses unoccupied for over two years (occupied less than one month annually) qualify for <i>Vacancy Tax</i>. Collected funds with this tax are used to incentivize landlords to make their housing stock eligible as social housing market, targeting young people with fewer opportunities.</p> <p>This should lead to engaged landlords in youth housing schemes; broaden opportunities for youth.</p>	National
<p>▶ <i>1.6 High-quality financial literacy standards for all youth in the EU</i></p> <p>Having a sound understanding of financial literacy empowers young people so that they can be confident in facing life's challenges and working toward their long-term goals. An integrated approach is needed to implement a comprehensive financial literacy program by involving a wide range of stakeholders such as schools, businesses, banks, and non-profit organizations.</p> <p>This should lead to empowering youth for financial literacy and lifelong project planning.</p>	National

2. HEALTH AND MENTAL WELLBEING

<p><i>2.1 Access to a psychologist in every school</i></p> <p>Member States and candidate countries should ensure psychologist availability throughout all stages of formal education. Embedding psychologists in schools can enhance mental health access and aid in early stigma reduction. Active engagement with the entire school community in preventive practices is vital. These psychologists, independent from teaching staff, should have the authority to recommend further professional support for a student without requiring parental consent.</p> <p>This should lead to easier access to psychologists and the prevention of mental health problems.</p>	National
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<p>2.2 Include diverse research groups in criteria for health research funds</p> <p>The European Commission should include diverse research groups in criteria for research funds in the medical field. Based on McKinsey & Company research “Closing the data gaps in women’s health”, there is a gender bias in medical research. This leads to exclusion of the majority of the population in effective functioning healthcare. This problem especially affects young women, since they are less likely to be diagnosed.</p> <p>This should lead to a lower mortality rate and equal healthcare system for young people.</p>	EU
<p>2.3 Supporting education and initiatives for youth mental wellbeing</p> <p>The European Commission and member states, building on the 2023 Strategy for Mental Health, should support programmes that enhance well-being and mental health awareness of young people through non-formal education, exchange of good practices and research-based information. Sharing, promoting and popularizing the existing methodologies and programmes should be conducted through diverse platforms within the Member States. EU candidates are encouraged to implement this measure as well.</p> <p>This should lead to raising stakeholder capacities and strengthening mental resilience of youth.</p>	EU
<p>2.4 Include health as a grounds of discrimination within legislation</p> <p>Member states should include health in the list of grounds of discrimination; health includes mental health and physical health conditions. To protect individuals from discrimination in for example the workplace and education. The legal framework shall protect (citizens) students and employees with such conditions and provide them with necessary resources to equally thrive in their environments.</p> <p>This should lead to equal access to education and work for all people.</p>	EU
<p>2.5 A mental well-being training programme for educators and youth workers</p> <p>Educators and youth workers should receive mandatory, initial and continuing, empathy and life-skill training to effectively communicate, provide mental well-being support and inspire awareness-raising among youth, adapted to their needs. In addition, relevant authorities should maintain continuously updated materials, taking advantage of existing EU tools and programmes. This should be properly financed by the relevant authorities. EU candidate countries are also encouraged to implement this.</p> <p>This should lead to youth having access to staff trained in mental health support.</p>	EU

3. INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS - FORMAL EDUCATION & SCHOOLS

<p>3.1 Integrating non-formal education led by NGOs into formal civic education</p> <p>Stimulate schools to involve youth-led NGOs, in collaboration with youth workers, in implementing the civic education curriculum with non-formal methods. The initiative should be supported by the EU institutions. The course should use the national curriculum and be prepared together with youth workers and teachers. The youth-led NGOs' lessons enable young people to learn about civic society, have more opportunities to engage and increase social inclusion by providing a peer-to-peer practical learning experience.</p> <p>➤ This should lead to providing opportunities to engage and learn practical skills through civic education.</p>	<p>National, local, EU</p>
<p>3.2 Establishing legal frameworks for nationwide and inclusive regional student representative bodies</p> <p>Member States should implement these legal frameworks to define student self-governance, promote civic engagement, and mandate a degree of deliberative power in governance, allowing students to become significant stakeholders in decision-making processes at all levels. These structures must prioritise intersectionality in their activities and throughout their structure, ensuring the existence of inclusivity & diversity officers. The legal framework must safeguard students' freedom to voice their concerns and feedback.</p> <p>This should lead to strengthening student representation, self-governance and participation, and democratic confidence.</p>	<p>Local, Regional, National</p>
<p>3.3 Enhancing anti-discrimination practices in vocational education and training (VET)</p> <p>Setting up a support system for students seeking work placements and easing the path through apprenticeship recruitment procedures by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implementing legally binding anti-discrimination policies, to be included in agreements between VET-institutions and corporations offering apprenticeships; ● Requiring employers to register apprentices for workplace liability insurance; ● Anonymizing application procedures for apprentices seeking work placements, as to ensure their identity (gender, age, ethnic background) is not a cause for discrimination <p>This should lead to reducing the likelihood of discrimination in the recruitment procedure and within work placements of VET apprentices.</p>	<p>Regional, national, EU</p>

<p>3.4 Joint educational initiatives with school students of diverse backgrounds</p> <p>Young people from diverse backgrounds, including youth with fewer opportunities (e.g. cooperation between special needs schools and other schools), collaborate in non-formal settings on joint initiatives. The schools organise joint activities with one goal, focusing on peer-to-peer learning in the process. The activities remove barriers for young people to interact and enrich one another. Funding is essential for everyone to have a fair chance at participating.</p> <p>This should lead to shared experiences, better knowledge and understanding between different youth groups.</p>	<p>Local, national</p>
<p>3.5 Streamlined funding for young people facing fewer opportunities in education</p> <p>Allocate specific funding to establish support programs in educational institutions for learners experiencing various forms of disadvantage at all stages of education. This funding will be earmarked for tailored support services, including the provision of assistive technologies and the development of infrastructure to meet the diverse access needs of these learners.</p> <p>This should lead to enhanced educational access and success for marginalized learners.</p>	<p>Local, national, EU</p>
<p>3.6 Lifelong teacher-teaching on inclusion</p> <p>Have specific Erasmus+ ‘train the trainer’ projects on inclusion and diversity for teachers, who then share their knowledge and skills with peers in their school(s). Develop national/regional programmes for schools to exchange and evaluate inclusion and diversity practices. This should enable schools to improve their approach to inclusivity and diversity and facilitate continuous reflection on their own practices.</p> <p>This should lead to teachers gaining a better understanding and skills on inclusion.</p>	<p>Regional, National, EU</p>

4. INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH WORK

<p><i>4.1 Promote professionalised youth work across Europe by structural investments and trainings</i></p> <p>Recognising informal learning and youth work in creating inclusive spaces. Encourage evidence-based academic research to support the impact of youth work. The fundings should be sustainable and structural, ensuring better youth services and inclusion trainings. Strengthen the recognition of youth workers' expertise through common standards.</p> <p>➤ This should lead to safeguarding the rights of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.</p>	<p>EU, national</p>
<p><i>4.2 Ensure capacity building and continuous dialogue between youth workers and stakeholders</i></p> <p>This measure will be achieved in three phases: (1) the consultation phase, where youth workers, non-formal and informal educators will participate in a dialogue with policymakers to create a map of their needs; (2) the action plan creation, where decision-makers agree on a set of actions in goal-oriented topics defined in the previous phase; (3) implementation and evaluation phase, where the measures are executed and their impact is assessed.</p> <p>This should lead to guaranteeing that youth workers' needs are achieved and continuous dialogue implemented.</p>	<p>National</p>
<p><i>4.3 Increased access to funding opportunities at the local level</i></p> <p>Introduce a localised and simplified funding framework for non-formal education and youth empowerment. This should be funded by dedicated budgets sourced by existing programs on the European and National level. This funding should enable community-driven initiatives for disadvantaged youth. Information about the framework should be easily accessible through different and relevant communication channels and structures. To access the funding, there needs to be a straightforward application process through user-friendly platforms.</p> <p>This should lead to disadvantaged youth accessing and benefiting from well-funded non-formal education.</p>	<p>Local</p>
<p><i>4.4 Youth-centred participatory budgeting</i></p> <p>Through non-formal approaches, data-driven results, and participatory structures, local youth are empowered to engage with various stakeholders in participatory budgeting. This fosters social inclusion, breaks down barriers, and promotes literacy among youth. Furthermore, it will stimulate knowledge in regards to non-formal education.</p> <p>This should lead to increased youth participation; strengthened community cohesion; enhanced economic opportunities.</p>	<p>Regional, local</p>



<p><i>4.5 Mobile youth work</i></p> <p>In order to reach young people with fewer opportunities, member states should provide resources for mobile youth work. The mobile youth work will, jointly with local stakeholders, work to provide support, information and programs to young people facing social exclusion. It will reinforce the collaboration between youth workers and local stakeholders and is aimed at providing equal access to opportunities to experience non-formal education for young people facing social exclusion.</p> <p>➤ This should lead to equal access to opportunities to experience non-formal education.</p>	<p>National, local</p>
<p><i>4.6 Formal recognition of volunteer youth work</i></p> <p>Assure free training for volunteer youth workers in order to continuously gain or improve the awareness and competences necessary to create inclusive, safe spaces for youth in cooperation with youth organisations. At the end of the training, the volunteers receive certificates that are linked to benefits such as university credits, transport, cultural discounts etc. These trainings will provide the necessary knowledge and awareness about discrimination, (social) exclusion and mental health.</p> <p>This should lead to an increase in the amount and knowledge of volunteer youth workers.</p>	<p>National</p>

5. THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

<p>5.1 Implementing youth information and critical thinking workshops in schools</p> <p>Non-formal workshops, co-designed with young people, should be delivered in schools by youth organisations, targeting students, especially those with fewer opportunities, in order to tackle disinformation. Member States are encouraged to embed these interactive workshops within formal education. The funding for the youth organisations to implement these workshops should come from initiatives of the European Commission.</p> <p>This should lead to youngsters having long-term critical thinking and media literacy skills.</p>	<p>EU, local</p>
<p>5.2 Exploring reliable news, sources and verifiable information</p> <p>Independent Inclusion Platform where you can check facts. The platform provides inclusive tools to educate and improve media literacy. Knowing that the platform already partially exists in some member states, we encourage a peer learning activity to share good practices, especially focusing on young people with fewer opportunities. To ensure the correct inclusive implementation we encourage youth from diverse backgrounds to be involved in the drafting of the platform.</p> <p>This should lead to avoiding prejudices and empowering young people with fewer opportunities.</p>	<p>EU</p>
<p>5.3 Campaign for quality information and media literacy to empower youth</p> <p>The EU institutions in cooperation with the Member States establish a campaign with long-lasting effects by providing resources for societal, educational and informational initiatives and programmes targeting young people. It raises awareness on the quality of youth's informational and media consumption as a powerful factor for social inclusion. It produces stronger media exposure in Europe, with the UN Global media and information literacy week as a possible focal point.</p> <p>This should lead to youth that can identify quality information and fight disinformation.</p>	<p>EU, national</p>
<p>5.4 Establishing inclusive youth spaces working as information hubs</p> <p>Member states should support municipalities in establishing local youth spaces which are appealing to young people with experimental spaces for learning and well-equipped for both youth and youth workers. These spaces should be well-resourced and equipped both financially and in terms of HR. Youth workers should be well-informed & well-educated, they should be able to guide young people to reliable sources of information and to create quality programmes.</p> <p>This should lead to well-informed, empowered and active young people.</p>	<p>Regional, local</p>

<p>5.5 EU made simple: Information made systematically inclusive for all</p> <p>EU institutions should have a systematic approach to make all public EU information such as websites, policy measures and programmes, that is relevant to youth, available on easy-to-read and accessible language through audio-visual formats, sign language and all European languages. Establishing criteria and guidance on how to formulate this information. Using focus groups to make quality check for its accessibility before publishing.</p> <p>This should lead to empowerment to benefit from opportunities and raised trust in EU.</p>	EU
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6. CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES AND CULTURES

<p>6.1 Use inclusive language in EU policy documents</p> <p>The EU should review active policy documents and where needed replace discriminatory phrases/terms/words with inclusive alternatives. All new policy frameworks should be formulated in inclusive language and assessed in view of representing all human beings, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, ethnicity, origin and disability. These guidelines should be followed when translating policies into other official languages, to ensure that the inclusive aspect is adhered to.</p> <p>This should lead to all people concerned by these documents to feel represented and included.</p>	EU, National
<p>6.2 Continuous learning focusing on acceptance and awareness of diversities</p> <p>To tackle discriminatory attitudes and cultures, continuous learning with a focus on acceptance and awareness of diversities should be promoted at all stages of a citizen's life. The learning material should emphasise cultural exchange, inclusivity, intersectionality and mixing of societal groups. It should be accessible (online/offline) and easily transferable to different areas of society, including mandatory education for children and the employment sector.</p> <p>This should lead to awareness of diversities which will shape people's general acceptance.</p>	EU, national
<p>6.3 Adopting an intersectional and representative approach to all strategies</p> <p>Member states should adopt an intersectional approach in every policy domain when implementing mechanisms and strategies (e.g. making the EUYD more inclusive, creating or properly implementing national plans) to counter discriminatory attitudes and cultures. This must be reached by involving people with lived experience through engaging representative structures in a sustainable participatory process, with care for those affected, and in accordance with the UNCRC and other human rights conventions.</p> <p>This should lead to a society that guarantees full respect for an individual's needs.</p>	National



<p>6.4 Guaranteeing equal rights: Spreading proper Youth Test at all levels</p> <p>Not all young people’s needs are considered during policymaking processes therefore it creates difficulties in the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights for youth. A proper <i>Youth Test</i> considered as an impact assessment tool should have two phases: a pre-evaluation phase on the eventual impact on youth of the proposed bill and a post evaluation monitoring short and long term effects produced by the adopted law.</p> <p>This should lead to respecting the needs and difficulties of young people.</p>	<p>EU, national, regional, local</p>
<p>6.5 EU funding for intergenerational spaces within European municipalities</p> <p>Organised, non-organised groups/individuals and local governments can apply for funding for safe and free spaces to connect people/groups. Communities have the opportunity to come together and learn to have value for each other.</p> <p>The spaces should be: free, accessible, safe and should ensure the involvement of a diversity of groups.</p> <p>The end-users should be participating/involved in the (re)designing of unused spaces from appliance till management and operation.</p> <p>This should lead to 1500 spaces being (re)designed within the EU.</p>	<p>EU, national, local</p>
<p>6.6 Preventing prejudice through acceptance minority groups and educating about self-reflection</p> <p>Promote acceptance of minority groups through increased representation in various forms of media such as textbooks, films. Support production of movies that accurately depict minority groups and ensure visibility on national TV.</p> <p>Promote formal education by supporting teachers to attend self-reflection teaching programs without using holiday time. Provide grants to facilitate participation and integrate self-reflection teachings in classrooms.</p> <p>We seek ongoing backing for activities to educate about self-reflection, along with tailored support for dormitory initiatives.</p> <p>This should lead to fostering mutual understanding, combatting prejudice, and empowering educators.</p>	<p>EU, national, regional, local</p>



Annex 4: Policymakers Supporting Working Groups

1. CHANGE THE SYSTEM: STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Policymaker: Biliana Sirakova

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

✔ *Institution the expert is associated with / works at: European Commission*

Role at the institution: EU Youth Coordinator

Policymaker: Hafsa El-Bazioui

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: City Council of Ghent

Role at the institution: Deputy Mayor of Global Solidarity, Youth, Facility Management and Personnel.

Policymaker: Katrīna Leitāne

Country the expert resides in: Latvia

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Role at the institution: President of the EESC Youth Group

Policymaker: Merel Terlien

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: Flemish Administration

Role at the institution: Staff member of the Flemish Diversity Officer

2. HEALTH AND MENTAL WELLBEING

Policy maker: Tine Radinja

Country the expert resides in: Slovenia

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: Municipality of Škofja Loka, Slovenia / Committee of the Regions

Role at the institution: Mayor / Member

Policy maker: Despo Sergiou

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: European Commission, DG EAC, Unit 'Youth and Volunteer Solidarity'

Role at the institution: Policy Officer on SNE-Youth Policy and Programmes

3. INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: SCHOOLS AND FORMAL EDUCATION

Policy maker: Evita Willaert

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: City Council of Ghent

Role at the institution: Alderwoman for Education, Family Policy and Outreach

Policy maker: Annalisa Cannoni

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: European Commission, DG EAC, Unit 'Schools and Multilingualism'

Role at the institution: Policy Officer



4. INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

Policy maker: Dries De Smet

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: Cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Youth, Benjamin Dalle

Role at the institution: Advisor Youth Policy

Policy maker: Karen Vandeweghe

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: European Commission, DG EAC, Unit 'Youth and Volunteer Solidarity'

Role at the institution: Deputy Head of Unit

Policy maker: Aïssatou Cissé

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: District Council of Borgerhout

Role at the institution: Alderwoman of Culture, Transport, Heritage and Communication

5. THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Policy maker: Marta Touykova

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: European Commission, DG EAC, Unit 'Youth and Volunteer Solidarity'

Role at the institution: Head of Sector for Youth Policy



Policymaker: Katia Segers

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: Free University Brussels (VUB) / Flemish Parliament

Role at the institution: Professor of Communication Sciences / Member of Parliament

Policymaker: Katrien Herbots

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: Cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Youth, Benjamin Dalle

Role at the institution: Advisor Youth and Children's Rights

Policymaker: Kim Van Sparrentak

Country the expert resides in: The Netherlands

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: European Parliament

Role at the institution: Member of the European Parliament



6. CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES AND CULTURES

Policy maker: Pascale Falek

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: European Commission. Unit of Fundamental Rights

Role at the institution: Policy Officer in the office of the Coordinator on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life

Policy maker: Leen De Bolle

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: Flemish Administration

Role at the institution: Vlaams Diversiteitsambtenaar (Flemish Diversity Officer)

Policy maker: Astrid De Bruycker

Country the expert resides in: Belgium

Institution the expert is associated with / works at: City Council of Ghent

Role at the institution: Deputy Mayor of Equal Opportunities, Welfare, Participation, Community Work and Public Greenery



Annex 5: Social Inclusion Practices Presented at the EUYC Ghent

Organisation name: **Betonne Jeugd vzw + Netwerk tegen Armoede**

Website: <https://betonnejeugd.org/contact/> en <https://netwerktegenarmoede.be/nl>

Good practice name: Methods to fight poverty and social exclusion

Good practice description:

The Network against Poverty is a collaboration of 61 associations with the aim of eradicating poverty and social exclusion. These associations focus on people living in poverty. The network was founded in 2003, when the Flemish Poverty Decree came into force. The network supports these organizations and plans consultations with them to hear what is going on with people living in poverty.

The Network against Poverty works closely together with other poverty networks in Brussels within the Brussels Platform Poverty, in Belgium within the BAPN (Belgian Anti Poverty Network) and with other sister organizations in the rest of Europe within the EAPN (European Anti Poverty Network).

Betonne Jeugd vzw is a youth organisation for young people in poverty, those in socially vulnerable situations, as well as homeless youth. The way we organise our society exacerbates poverty and exclusion. Poverty is facilitated by society's services. Through structural social exclusion, people's rights are at risk. Fundamental societal changes are needed to help eradicate poverty.

Betonne Jeugd pursues social emancipation and aims to boost the image of people in poverty.

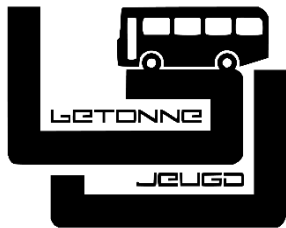
Betonne Jeugd brings together young people in their free time by offering a safe base on wednesdays, fridays and saturdays. They can chill, cook and eat together, talk, paint, play football ... be young and feel less worried. Together with the young people we work with we strive to change social structures that stand in the way of creating a fairer society.

We use following methods to fight poverty and social exclusion:

- Being present
 - The workers are reachable for the young people and listen actively to the boundaries that they experience due to poverty. Trust, respect and acceptance are vital tools. They form a bridge figure to services, schools... and mediate when necessary.
- Empowerment
 - We motivate the young people to be an active member of Betonne Jeugd by offering very accessible volunteer work. This is the first step to rebuilding the self-esteem of members.
- A safe home base: Threefold
 - A home is where you feel safe, a place to retreat or experiment. We create an atmosphere of safety for our young people
 - A home base is a place where you can go freely. Walk in and out at all moments of your life, you are always welcome, you always know someone. The young people that we first worked with now come with their children.



- A home is a family, that's what Betonne Jeugd is, one big family. We do not select the groups by, gender... We organise activities based on the interests of our young people
- Peer support
 - Challenging administration and services, our youngsters support each other and give each other the newest information. Some youngsters are buddies for other youngsters, like a big brother/sister.
- policy advice.
 - Poverty is facilitated in society's services, to change this we gather the evidence from our young people and present those that can change the situation: from policy makers such as ministers, government departments and city authorities through to schools, social organisations and services



Organisation name: **OverKop Gent**

Website: <https://gent.overkop.be/huizen/overkop-gent>

Good practice name: Low-threshold support in wellbeing, through leisure and care.

Description:

OverKop is a Belgian organisation dedicated to the well-being of young people, with a specific focus on mental health. The organisation aims to provide low-threshold and accessible support to all youngsters, and young individuals facing psychological challenges, stress, or other difficulties in particular.

The OverKop initiative focuses on creating safe and welcoming spaces called "OverKop houses," where young people can come together, talk, and seek professional assistance if needed. These houses serve as meeting places where young individuals feel understood and have access to information and support related to mental health.

OverKop collaborates with various partners, including local authorities, welfare organisations, and healthcare professionals, to establish an integrated support network. The goal is to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and encourage young people to openly discuss their emotions and challenges.



Organisation name: Amal vzw

Website: <https://www.amal.gent>

Good practice name: Parkoers

Description:

Ghent is home to a large diversity of people. Every resident has their own character, origin and story. Together, they form a whole: together we are all (“Amal”) Ghent. As the Agency for social and civic integration in Ghent, Amal makes diversity tangible for everyone who lives in Ghent: non-Dutch speaking newcomers, people whose families have been in Ghent for generations, companies, or organisations.

Amal has been supporting non-Dutch speaking newcomers in finding their way around for about 50 years. Together with our partners in Ghent, we guide and accompany newcomers using a tailor-made approach. We refer them to Dutch language courses, organise courses offering practical tips on practical aspects of life in Flanders, help them in their search for work, education, recreation and more. This way, people get to know each other and the city feel at home.

Integration is a two-way road. That is why we make Ghent city services and organisations more accessible to people with a migratory background. We provide advice and support for their language and diversity policies and provide social interpreters and translators. We bring Ghent residents closer to each other.

Amal is a name and as such it is very personal, but it also means ‘all’ or ‘everybody’ in the Ghent colloquial speech, and it focuses on the collective at the same time. That is why we invite everyone to be open to diversity. Because living well together in diversity is easier if we do it Amal (all) together. This is how we make Ghent a home for ‘Amal’ (all of us).

Parkoer is an integration programme tailor-made for young people, from the age of 17 to 19 years old, which results in a certificate that can be used when applying for Belgian citizenship. Each newcomer gets custom-made individual counselling around topics such as education, work and finances, leisure, administration and housing.

Then there’s also the two-week summer programme. The teens get morning classes on about 11 themes for example work, education, health and more. In the afternoon there’s a fun activity to get to know the city of Ghent. This activity is a great opportunity for them to practise their Dutch and make new friends.



- Organisation name: **Onderwijscentrum Gent , (Ghent Education Centre)**

Website: <https://stad.gent/nl/onderwijscentrum-gent>

Good practice name: Strengthening newcomer education: what we learned in Ghent from local and European collaboration

Description:

Moving to an unknown country, finding your way in a new society, learning a completely new language: being a newcomer is often a very challenging experience. It is therefore of the utmost importance to support Newly Arrived Migrant students (NAMS) in the best way possible, both in their educational trajectories, their processes of language learning and their attempts to find a place in society. As is the case in most European countries, a lot has been initiated in Flanders to help and support NAMS with respect to achieving educational success, but there are still plenty of challenges remaining.

In 2015, EDINA (EDucation of International Newly Arrived migrant pupils) was set up as an international consortium because of the challenges schools and teachers faced in including newcomers in the educational system. Education practitioners felt (and still feel) a need to improve the circumstances in which NAMS are integrated in our education systems and our society, and to improve the strategies and skills of teachers to help newcomer pupils adequately. In the course of the several EDINA projects, with the continuous financial support of the European Erasmus+ programme, the consortium has developed an online toolkit with useful information, expertise and tools for schools, teachers and municipalities. Whereas the EDINA project (2015-2018) and the EDINA GoPro project (2019-2022) focused primarily on newcomer education in itself, the currently on-going EDINA Be GREAT project (2023-2026) shifts its focus to the transition of NAMS pupils to a form of follow-up education. moments of transition tend to be challenging for all pupils, but even more so for newcomers, who need to leave a 'safe haven' in newcomer education to transfer to the 'regular' education system. Therefore, it's vital to prepare and strengthen *all* schools in working with NAMS pupils, not just the ones offering newcomer education.

For the Ghent Education Centre (*Onderwijscentrum Gent*), NAMS have been an important target group since the start. The secondary schools in and around Ghent who organise NAMS education (called 'OKAN' in Flanders) work closely together in strengthening the education and support for newcomers, and in this talk we will focus on a few of the initiatives we take in helping (schools who help) newcomers achieve educational success and finding their way in our society. The focus will be on the domain of education, highlighting the importance of both local and European collaboration to boost professionalisation and expertise-building.



Onderwijs centrum.gent

Organisation name: **Homaar vzw**

Website: <https://www.homaar.be/>

Good practice name: Growth space for youngsters that connect creativity, youth care and youth work.

Description :

'A place to be and become who you are.'

This is how our young people describe us.

We are Homaar , 'Groeiplek voor jongeren ('space for young people to grow').

It's a place for young people between the age of 15 to 23 years, who struggle with mental health and feel emotionally stuck. They may feel down or depressed, experience anxiety, have low self-esteem... which can make it hard to go to school, work or just lead daily life.

In our Homaar growth spaces we create a homely and warm atmosphere where everyone feels welcome and at ease. The young people come to our growth space for a two-week program, during the day, where we work together in creative workshops. Music, art, poetry, dancing... are accessible and attractive media to work through themes one is struggling with.

Next to the power of creativity, peer-to-peer learning is an essential component of our programs. We work in small groups with a maximum of 6 young people. In a non-stigmatizing atmosphere, they can connect with other youth who often experience similar problems. This sense of belonging is crucial! The conclusion often is 'it's ok not to be ok'.

In addition to the focus on the group, there is a lot of room for personal attention. Conversations happen spontaneously during a walk, cooking or doing puzzles, each at their own pace.

With our two-week programs, we create a moment to breathe, reflect, play, let go, be inspired and connect to each other as well as to talents and interests. At the end of the two weeks, we sit together with each young person and look at what is needed afterwards to grow further. We focus on their strengths and qualities to continue and facilitate (re)connection with hobbies, youth work, mental health and wellbeing. Young people start to believe in their growth potential again. It's all about agency and ownership!

In addition to the two-week program, we organise free creative workshops open to all youth, the ones that have already been on our programs or want to get to know our growth place.

Homaar provides an answer to the gap that currently exists between outpatient and residential care. We work preventively to avoid further escalation and build a bridge between youth work, youth care and welfare.



Currently, there are 4 growth spaces in Flanders and Brussels. Our ambition is to continue our growth and have a Homaar house in every province so even more youngsters can enjoy it!
We look forward to sharing more about our growth spaces with you!



Organisation name: Youth of European Nationalities / Jugend Europäischer Volksgruppen (YEN/JEV)

Website: <https://www.yeni.org/>

Good practice name: A multi-faceted exploration of best practices in our organisation: Exchange Market, Code of Conduct and Minority Youth Advocacy

Description:

"YEN is a youth organisation which works for the promotion and further development of language, culture, identity and rights of European autochthonous, national, linguistic and ethnic minorities. YEN's advocacy aims at maintaining this cultural heritage and promotes general understanding among nations and individuals. To achieve our goals we use a variety of activities. A main element of our work is implementing international youth exchanges, international seminars, congresses, workshops, cultural and social events. We believe that intercultural exchange is a key to achieving greater understanding and to empowering young people from minorities.

In this presentation you will discover the multifaceted landscape of our organisation's exemplary practices, celebrating a harmonious blend of values and initiatives that define our commitment towards a society that is more inclusive for all young people. From our Minority Exchange Market and Code of Conduct, to the best practices from our member organisations and the demands of minority youth in light of the European elections, this session promises a comprehensive exploration of the diverse best practices that shape our organisational ethos."





Organisation name: Public Centre for Social Welfare/Social Services of the City of Ghent/ Department for Welfare and Society

Website: <https://stad.gent/nl/samenleven-welzijn-gezondheid/ocmw-gent>

Good practice name: the Youth Support Team

Description:

The City of Ghent focuses on providing all necessary services to foster children's optimal (self) development, including proactively protecting children and their access to rights. Actively promoting children's participation is essential, as children and young people are considered full citizens.

The Social Services of the City of Ghent will illustrate this focus on 3 levels :

1. Level of policy making : local municipality – City of Ghent

We present the city of Ghent's approach to reducing child poverty, with a particular focus on young people, as youth up to the age of 25 are included in this scope. We pay special attention to the transition age of 18, where young people make their entry into adulthood, and where we perceive a gap in the continuation of services from child care towards adult care.

2. Field level : the Youth Support Team

We will illustrate how general principles regarding services for citizens are implemented. The team coach from the Youth Support Team within the public centre for social Welfare will present its specific approach and ambition. The Youth Support Team specifically targets young people, between 18 and 25, who leave institutional care or had a disturbed childhood and/or who are a teenage parent. Services offered to this group may include income support, social activation, housing support, legal advice and counselling, psychological support, etc., depending on the individual's needs and requests. The main aim of this Team's services is to foster positive identity development and a full (re)inclusion in society.

3. Case level : a testimony

Geoffrey is a young man who has a history in institutional child care and later in foster care. He became a service user when he had to live on his own at the age of 18. He will illustrate how, when and where he felt empowered by our services, and will present his recommendations based upon his own story and experiences





Organisation name: **4H Sweden - Rural Youth Europe**

Website: <https://www.ruralyoutheurope.com/>

Good practice name: Mental health at 4H farms

Description:

- 4H Sweden is a youth organization bringing together 10,000 members in clubs and on city farms, with 2.5 million visitors each year. 4H is working towards meaningful free time for all youth and teaches them about leadership, democracy as well as nature and animals. 4H Sweden's vision is for all young people to develop into engaged, prosperous, responsible people with respect for their peers and the environment.

This is enabled through the motto 'learning by doing' and the four keywords: Head, Heart, Hand and Health. As a platform for many young people, it really important to ensure that everything is done with their best interest at heart. 4H requires no specific gear, people can come just as they are, and everyone is welcome.

Many young people struggle with their mental health, and it is an issue found in all levels of society, including the rural areas. Therefore, it is a topic everyone needs to consider and to prioritise. Wherever young people decide to spend their leisure time, adults and older leaders will become role models in some way, in some cases they become one of few positive role models.

To actively and deliberately work to create a safe space for the youth that attend the activities can make a big difference. A safe space where they feel heard and encouraged to be themselves. This requires safe leaders and an accepting environment. It is not uncommon that leaders receive worrying information from a child, and it is therefore crucial that leaders know what to do with that information.

There are many ways to create a safe space and to work with mental health and different rural organisations have different concepts. 4H in Sweden has initiated a project to investigate and implement practices on local 4H farms.

The project 'Mental Health at 4H Farms', funded by the Swedish Inheritance Fund "Allmänna Arvsfonden", is working to promote mental health of young people with the help of the animals on the farm and through health groups. The health groups work to destigmatize talking about mental health, both proactively and for those people who are struggling.

What happens when involving the farm's animals? The project is an upscaling of a concept from one of the city farms, which, years ago started health groups for girls. Interviews with participants made it clear that they think 4H is a safe space and therefore this is now going to be implemented on city farms all over Sweden. Within this project staff and young leaders will receive training on how to handle difficult conversations and mental health issues. Participants will get a safe space to thrive in, through free health groups for young people aged 10-16. 4H is highly aware of the importance of investments in the health of young people. This project enables us to have an impact on a new level.



Organisation name: **Urban Foxes**

Website: <https://www.urbanfoxes.org/>

Description :

Urban Foxes, is a non-profit based in Brussels, founded in 2014 with the mission of striving for sustainable, inclusive, beautiful, happy and co-created cities. We work on the cross-section of urban pedagogy, architecture, placemaking, environmental issues, and youth work. Tackling topics such as air quality, public space, urban playing, heritage and new democratic tools. By taking the role of an active & critical citizen we believe one can be an important catalyst in the co-creation of our future cities and communities. We specialise in experimental youthwork, creating non-formal tools and methodologies, and facilitate these processes to involve often forgotten stakeholders in the city making process. Thereby advocating for the SDG's in an urban environment and promoting and facilitating active youth participation and the co-creation of inclusive, beautiful and engaging places. We believe that young people should be included (more) in decision-making processes that affect them, and are convinced that non-formal education has the power to not only inform (young) people on sustainability and urban matters but also to include them in the larger scheme of the city making process.

The **Academy for Urban Action (AUA)**: With the support of the Minister of Youth, Minister Dalle, and the Brussel Fonds, a new and experimental form of urban youth work was created. With the collaboration of the VUB (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), we designed a pedagogical blueprint for a self-steering Living Lab for youngsters working on urban and environmental issues. Thereby linking youth work to the academic and socio-cultural world. In 8 phases the young people go from immersion in the topic, with the involvement of experts (both academic and creative), to the co-creation of a prototype. During the process, the young people develop their talents & reflect on their personal and our collective futures. Thanks to Erasmus+ funding this innovative blueprint was implemented in both Palermo (IT) and Oslo (NO) and has received the 2022 Oslo Triennale Award.

With **TRACK** Brussels, Urban Foxes brings to life the unutilised and decayed former Train Museum in Brussels' North Station, thanks to the financial support of the Flemish Government (Broedplekken). TRACK is an experimental crossroad linking creation, education and performance in Brussels' North station. An urban lab for research into shared and mixed space usage, new forms of collaboration and a creative economy that is social, circular and financially sustainable. **New Inherit**, our latest Creative Europe project, will create synergies between European collaboration and local implementation of innovative measures to use heritage Spaces for young creatives and innovators, thereby also focussing on collectively re-imagining, adapting and using these spaces with a focus on local and societal needs.

DURF: With DURF, the Flemish government (Coördinatie Brussel-Vlaanderen), Minister Dalle and Urban Foxes, approached youth participation from a completely unique perspective. A youth jury with youngsters between 14 and 24 was selected, with our guidance and facilitation the youngsters teamed up with policy makers and people from the administration, to not only create a project call (with a budget of 200,000 euros) aimed at projects improving Dutch



language skills, youth participation and innovation, but also to evaluate the proposals and formulate official advice for the Minister.



Organisation name: **iDROPS**

Website: <https://www.idrops.org/>

Good practice name: Inclusively Wired

Description:

AD(H)D, gifted, ASD, dyslexia, HSP, Tourette's, OCD or just ... neurodivergent. Some people see things a little differently. And that's what the world is actually always looking for: a refreshing view, a new insight, in other words - creativity.

All these different views of the world constitute the richness of neurodiversity.

With its project Inclusively Wired, iDROPS aims to create a leisure, education and work context that embraces and supports neurodiversity. Through design, we strengthen the resilience and self-confidence of neurodivergent youth. As a society, we grow richer by drawing from a broader source of ideas and creativity, collectively working toward a sustainable world.

To spread this positive message, Inclusively Wired hosts workshops, summer camps and community days where neurodivergent youth and people from healthcare, education, media, policy makers, believers and neurodivergent individuals come together to learn from each other, take action and share experiences.





Organisation name: **Le Forum Bruxelles contre les inégalités (Forum, Bruxelles against inequalities)**

Website: <https://www.le-forum.org/>

Good practice name: How to involve "at-risk" young people in a dialogue with professionals, researchers and institutional people in the goal to achieve social transformation?

Description:

The project is named "' Preventing disruption in young people's life path"

We work with young people between the ages of 15 and 25, who are experiencing or have experienced a breakdown in one or more of their social networks (family, school, employment, institutions, relationships, etc.), whatever the cause (misunderstanding, lack of motivation, delinquency, mental disorders, violence, etc.) or the consequences (placement, homelessness, legal measures, exclusion, dropping out, etc.).

How ? Through 3 axes :

- **The causes identification laboratory:** a space for young people to express themselves, with the aim of identifying and formalising the causes, situations, moments and transitions leading to precariousness, invisibilization, violence (perceived, felt, provoked, intra-familial, between peers, institutional, etc.), in other words, to break with the so-called classic spheres of participation and integration: family, school, employment, etc. To achieve this, young people's views are gathered through podcast workshops (in partnership with ASBL Comme Un Lundi).

- **The group:** made up of professionals from the social-health sector in the broadest sense, representing the different spheres linked to young people and the difficulties they face. This is a space for the collective elaboration of professional knowledge, which is put into dialogue with the young people's experience and knowledge.

- **The manufacture of preventions :** a meeting place for young people, professionals, researchers and people from relevant institutions to analyse the material produced during 2023 and create a prevention tool and political advocacy that can be adapted in various forms. This third part will be based on a methodology inspired by *ATD Fourth World , named "Merging of Knowledge".

For that, we try to reach the young people who are normally far away from any other participation programs. That requires preparation, partnerships, methods, time and at the end, improvisation and creativity.





Organisation name: **ATD Fourth World / ATD Quart Monde**

Website: <https://www.jeunessequartmonde.be/> (Belgian youth website) and <https://www.atd-fourthworld.org/> (ATD Fourth world international)

Good practice name: Including young people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in policy making

Description:

We will share good practices on how to organise events and projects that include young people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. In order to do so, we will present a youth advocacy campaign that was organised in 2021-2023 by the ATD Fourth World european youth dynamic. We want to show how youth policies regarding poverty and inclusion can be made not only for them, but with them.



Organisation name: **JES VZW**

Website: <https://jes.be/>

Good practice name: Because it is young people that make the city!

Description:

JES is a youth organisation addressing all children and young people in the cities of Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent. We support them in different areas: leisure, education, work, training and welfare. JES has a positive view of urban life. We always seek new opportunities and possible collaborations and we are happy to share our expertise on this. Children and young people should feel at ease and at home in their town. We support them with various activities and projects in their search for the right place in the city and for their talents and competences. JES nudges them so that they feel empowered and can grow as an individual, as a group and as full inhabitants of the city. With an unconventional and constructive view of urban challenges, JES really makes the difference. Together with the children and young people and with our partners we are building the city of tomorrow. **Because it is young people that make the city!**



Organisation name: **Konekt**

Website: <https://konekt.be/nl>

Good practice name: The learning programme of Brake-Out

Description:

Konekt is a non-profit organisation with the slogan “Live life to the fullest in an inclusive society”. Konekt is radically committed to providing a world where people with and without disabilities can contribute based on their talents. We inspire and mobilise society to make inclusive learning, living and working the standard in Flanders. This is done through training, raising awareness, empowerment and collaboration with the educational and employment sectors.

One of Konekt's programmes is Brake-Out, is a three-year initiative, by Konekt where participants actively build their future with and take control of their own lives. The programme is designed for 18-30 year olds, seeking direction. It provides a potential solution for individuals with mental disabilities, ASD, or ABI seeking a fulfilling adult life. Brake-Out offers participants a place to explore their options together with peers, with talent discovery and future planning as key components. Ultimately it provides a stepping stone to a rewarding future life.

What are your talents? What do you really love to do? How can you use your strengths in different situations? At Brake-Out, the answers to these questions are discovered as a group. Brake-Out is an adventure undertaken collectively with other young adults, trainers, coaches, family, and supporters. This journey does not need to be navigated alone.

A fixed group of fellow students participate two days a week with one or more trainers. In addition they receive individual supervision of the Break-Out coach. Participants stay for one day at the course location (in Ghent, Leuven, Antwerp, or Bruges). During workshops, thematic sessions, and projects, participants discover their talents in a group setting. They also cultivate self-confidence, gain successful experiences and become more resilient. On the second day, participants visit places where they can work or spend their free time and where they can discover new people.

Brake-Out works in different modules on talents, decision-making, dream development, learning, practice, and taking on roles. Life themes such as housing, relationships, and leisure are also addressed. Everything is linked to four learning modules: belonging, having significance, engaging talents, and doing it yourself. The programme adapts, as much as possible, to the interests and talents of the group. As the project progresses, the guidance becomes more individual. Then, the students take on active roles in learning about workplaces that match their interests and talents.



Platform-K is another subsidiary of Konekt. They create professional dance productions with dancers with and without disabilities. By offering contemporary dance training to dancers with disabilities, Platform-K fills a blind spot in the Flemish performing arts landscape.

Konekt, Brake-Out and Platform-K have won numerous (international) awards and acknowledgements in recent years. It is very gratifying for them when they manage to inspire juries and the public with their vision on talent, inclusion, and social enterprise.



Organisation name: **Merhaba**

Webiste: www.merhaba.be

Good practice name: Empowering the LGBT+ community with a migrant background

Description:

LGBTQ+ people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, etc) are still being excluded, discriminated against, or faced with unequal opportunities in our society. This applies not only to LGBTQ+ people, but also to people with a migration background, and thus certainly to people who have both an LGBTQ+ identity and a migration background. Merhaba is an organisation that unites and empowers these people. Together with them, we build towards a more inclusive and caring society where each of us feel safe and at home. From this experience, we strongly believe in the practice of creating safe(r) spaces. How we create safe spaces depends on the activity. We would like to introduce you to our Merhaba, a chit chat café that illustrates the practice of how to create a safe(r) space.

merhaba



Organisation name: **Les Guides**

Website: www.guides.be

Good practice name: A movement FOR young people and BY young people

Description:

- “Since its creation (1915), The Guides have aimed to make girls autonomous and independent by giving them the opportunity to take responsibility within a group. In 1933 a Guide group was created to bring the Guiding methods for girls with health problems (blind, deaf, hospitalized, etc.). Initially attended by girls from the bourgeoisie, the Guides now reach a much more varied audience at a socio-economic level and has been open to boys since 1979. The values of solidarity and openness have always been a founding principle of Guiding, so it's not surprising that their policy of inclusion and diversity continues to be a priority and is adapting to reality today. To help our young leaders in their role as animators, each year we write an educational kit allowing members to integrate theory while discussing practical cases. Recently, we released: “Les Guides and migration”, “Les Guides and mental health”, “Les Guides and disability”. Coming soon, we have 10 turn-key activities to sensitise the kids and/or show the possible adaptations when welcoming a child with special needs.

We also have a “diversity and inclusion trunk” that we use at our events to increase awareness on various topics (gender equality, LGBTQIA+ themes, disabilities, migration, etc.).”



Organisation name: **EDUCATION GLOBALE ET DÉVELOPPEMENT**

Website : www.peaceducation.org

Good practice name :World Workshop

Description:

Imagine a world where every young person, no matter where they come from, can feel at home. That's what we're aiming for with our innovative peace and values education project in Belgium. We create a space where young newcomers and young people from immigrant backgrounds can forge links with other young people from different



cultures, both Belgian and non-Belgian, and develop their self-confidence. We celebrate diversity and promote mutual respect.

Using non-formal education methods, we turn learning into an exciting adventure. Young people are invited to share their emotions and express their opinions on subjects such as cultural diversity, the differences and similarities between cultures, and the values common to all humanity. It's a real exploration of themselves and the world around them.

We firmly believe that education in peace and values is the key to preventing conflict and promoting a more inclusive and harmonious society. By working with young newcomers, young people from migrant backgrounds in general, and young Belgians in particular, we help them to become responsible, peaceful citizens with a view to greater social cohesion.

But our project doesn't stop there! We also offer a safe space where these young people can feel understood and accepted. We organise activities to promote exchange and dialogue between young people from different cultures. We work closely with partner schools to train teachers and educational staff, providing them with tools and innovative methods to facilitate the inclusion of young people from immigrant backgrounds.

In short, our mission is to support young newcomers in their integration process in Belgium, and young Belgians in their understanding of the migration process and cultural diversity, but in the uniqueness of universal human values, by offering them tools and skills to foster mutual understanding, solidarity and respect between cultures. We work with schools, youth centres and community centres to reach a wide audience of young people and ensure a positive, lasting impact on their daily lives and futures.

Together, we're building a more inclusive and harmonious world.





Organisation name: **Go Boom**

Website: <https://www.girlsgoboom.com/>

Good practice name: About female & queer representation

Description :

- Girls go BOOM is a feminist collective that strives to put more women and queer people on stage, mainly in the alternative music scene. We believe that female & queer representation is very important because everyone deserves to be heard and seen. Aside from concerts we also organise multiple activities in our clubhouse, situated in Ghent.



Organisation name: **JONG vzw**

Website: <https://www.vzwjong.be/>

Good practice name: Young people of Ghent share their experiences about JONG vzw

Description:

Yasmin, Ranim, Sensuela, Mehmed and Levi would like to invite you into their world. They live in the vibrant neighbourhoods of Brugse Poort, Malem, Rabot and Dampoort (all colourful and lively areas of Ghent). They're all participants of activities which vzw Jong organises. They're eager to give a small snippet of their experiences.

Yasmin and Ranim, would like to talk about their participation in the girls' activities program. A safe space where girls can be themselves and participate in various fun and leisure activities and learn to shape their own identity. Mehmed, Levi, Yasmin and Ranim would like to talk about their experiences as children's animators during school holidays. They organise and participate in activities for children where the focus is on having a fun time but also on their welfare. All the activities are very accessible, meaning they do not have any requirements or costs. They'll also talk about the obstacles they encounter in their day to day lives and talk about why vzw Jong feels like a second home to them.

Finally, you'll hear from Sensuela and her experiences with a youth guidance counsellor. A more individual approach where different life welfare issues are tackled.



Organisation name: **Fundación Manos Tendidas**

Website: <https://www.extra-c-project.eu/>

Good practice name: Extraordinary Citizens (Extra-C)

Description :

“Extraordinary Citizens” is a European Project formed by partners from 5 countries (Spain, Portugal, Lithuania, Greece and France) which launched in January 2023.

The project has several objectives that aim to encourage and facilitate the inclusive participation of young people with intellectual and physical disabilities in our society, as well as to address the protection and promotion of Human Rights among this category of people. The project is particularly linked to the right to vote. As the European Parliament elections draw ever closer, it is important to raise awareness of the rights of all people and to ensure that they can be freely exercised.

Thus, this Project is mainly based on three essential pillars: Respect, Dignity, and Inclusion. Indeed, the Project goes in harmony with the fundamental principles that can be found in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Youth Goals developed by the European Union.

As a result, the Project is very much in line with goals such as, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, reduction of inequalities, and peace, justice and strong institutions.

To date, a study on democratic participation and rights of young people with intellectual and physical disabilities has been produced and generated in all partner countries. The study was the basis for the development of the next steps of the project. Parallel to the study, focus groups were organised with the participation of people representing those with intellectual diversity, representatives of organisations working with people with intellectual diversity and people from youth councils.

At the same time, training has also been carried out for professionals on democratic participation focused on people with intellectual and physical diversity so that they can accompany this group during the process of the elections to the European Parliament next June 2024. This training is currently being shared at national level.

For the next steps, there will be training provided for the target groups and to create spaces for dialogue in which to bring together people with diversity, decision-makers in public institutions, youth representatives and workers. We work



to make everyone's voice count and be heard. Enabling and ensuring that fundamental rights within the European Union are fulfilled.



Organisation name: **Université de Paix / University of Peace**

Website: www.universitedepaix.org

Good practice name: *Mediators' seeds, Objective: Group, and #BetterTogether*

Description:

Al Gore once said "Yes we can solve the climate crisis because we have all the technology we need to do it. But 'will we solve it' is a human-order problem and depends on **how we manage conflict !**"

At the University of Peace* we strongly believe that for improving future adults' behaviour we should start with kids. That's why we teach kids - from toddlers to teenagers - and professionals who accompany them, the socio-emotional skills they will need throughout their lives to know themselves better, to accept and include others with their differences, to communicate with words rather than with fists, and to manage conflicts in a positive way.

Starting with tools for LIVING TOGETHER, to equip them better for DOING TOGETHER !

-
* Created in 1960 by D.Pire, Belgian Nobel Prize laureate for Peace





Organisation name: **Link in De Kabel**

Website: <https://www.lidk.be/>

Good practice name: A different youth work approach: improving digital and media literacy in a playful way for children and youngsters in a socially vulnerable situation.

Description :

Link in de Kabel is a youth organisation, active throughout Flanders, that works on e-inclusion.

Our mission is to strengthen social inclusion by making children, youngsters and their context digitally competent and resilient. Therefore, we organize physical activities related to and involving digital media, both at school and in the spare time of children and youth. By creating a fun and playful, informal learning environment, we offer children and youngsters opportunities to discover and learn how to use digital media in a competent, critical and creative way.

Our target group mainly consists of children and young people who find themselves in a socially vulnerable situation: children and youngsters from underprivileged families, young non-native speakers, children and youth in residential care. Research shows that these children and youngsters 1) are less represented in classical youth work, and 2) receive less support concerning digital and media literacy, both at home and in school.

Link in de Kabel reaches out to them by going to places that feel familiar and safe. Therefore, we work closely together with community work and youth welfare organisations, youth care facilities and schools that organise reception classes for non-Dutch-speaking newcomers. Contrary to most youth organisations who mainly work with volunteers, our youth workers are professionals who have experience in working with our target group or an educational background in social studies.

At the start of 2023 we opened our first youth house in the city centre of Leuven, within the walls of culture house 30CC. 'Shift' is a digital and creative youth house for youngsters between 12 and 25 years old. It is a unique mix of a high-tech lab, an artist studio and a youth house. Young people are welcome without subscription to experiment with both mainstream and high-tech digital media such as a photo camera, a 3D-printer or a motion capture suit. Our aim is to create an inclusive environment where both youngsters with a less and more privileged background feel safe and inspired, and are open to learn from each other.





Organisation name: **Youth Express Network (Y-E-N)**

Website: <https://youthexpressnetwork.org/>

Good practice name: Ties up! Reconnect with youth post-pandemic (project in Hungary, Alsotold)

Description :

- Youth Express Network is a European network of grass-root youth organisations. Our vision is to reach an inclusive society, where young people, their needs and participation are recognised, valued and appreciated. Our member organisations all work at local, regional and/or European level on the social inclusion of young people. Our Board is pan-European and composed of young people. Our coordination office is based in Strasbourg, France. We encourage young people with fewer opportunities to make their voice heard in local, regional and international institutions. Since 1993, we have organised more than 120 international activities bringing together youth organisations, social/youth workers and young people with fewer opportunities.



Organisation name: **Minus One**

Website: <https://www.minus-one.be/>

Good practice name: Underground cultural centre for youth in Ghent

Description:

Minus One is an underground youth culture centre in Ghent. An open space where young people are welcome to be themselves, step outside their daily routine and gain new perspectives on the world in a safe environment. Minus One is a party venue where young organisers have the opportunity to experiment with their events and are guided in their personal development.

Minus One supports, guides and informs young entrepreneurs and creatives, offering tailored learning opportunities. Minus One strengthens (sub)cultures and takes a critical look at society.

All these aspects are further solidified by offering networking opportunities for organisers, by setting up a citywide community project that amplifies the voices of young organisers, by organising festivals, by providing activities for the



neighbourhood, and by realising creative workshops that support and nurture the entrepreneurial spirit of young people through personalised guidance.

The methodology of Minus One is made up of several aspects focused on each individual target audience.

We provide an accessible and affordable venue for young organisers and one-on-one guidance for their first parties. In addition to the various (sub)genres that find their home in Minus One, we also provide space for proms, student clubs, theatre and other types of gatherings. Together with Democrazy and VierNulVier, we're also launching a new project to amplify the voices of younger organisers and collectives towards policy makers and give them the opportunity to host events at locations where they might not immediately have access. With Jeugd Van De Nacht (Youth of the Night), we aim for an organisation driven by young people that can address the needs of youth in nightlife. One-on-one guidance for organisers and their entrepreneurial spirit is also offered.

For artists, we offer a development trajectory. Mijn Eigen Zin (My Own Way) informs young people who want to take their first steps in the professional field and for more advanced artists, we offer support and opportunities. Additionally, artistic impulses are provided through creative workshops and networking events.

There is also a project for the neighbourhood where Minus One is located. The Rabot neighbourhood is the poorest and most densely populated area in Ghent. With our Open House, we provide a "chill space" where young people can meet, play PlayStation and talk to our youth workers. Specifically for young girls from the neighbourhood (mostly Muslim), Meisjestijd provides a safe space where they can engage in activities tailored to their interests.

Additionally, at Minus One, we strive to involve these diverse target groups in joint projects. We do this through festivals, activities, camps, and opportunities. We place a strong emphasis on a safe space policy with a focus on safe raving and inclusion. Minus One is a place where all forgotten youth can find refuge. We are there for them and listen to their needs.





Organisation name: **Lejo**

Website: <https://lejo.be/>

Good practice name: TEENS: activities for teenage parents and their children

Description :

TEENS is unique in Flanders as the only leisure initiative that specifically organizes activities for teenage parents and their children.

Here, they have the opportunity to exchange experiences with peers, enjoy carefree moments, and reflect together on what it means to be a (teenage) parent. The initiative aims to break the social isolation of teenage parents and their children. Relaxation, social interaction, and exchange are central to this mission.



Organisation name: **KAA Gent Foundation**

Website: www.kaagentfoundation.be

Good practice name: More Than Football

Description :

The KAA Gent Foundation uses the power of football as a tool for social development in sports-for-development programs. The KAA Gent Foundation believes that sport has the power to realize social dreams. Sports-for-development activities are organized under the leadership of community coaches to grow personal and social skills. The KAA Gent Foundation presents its methodology and shows how young people can benefit from various sports-for-development programs.



Organisation name: **Komaf**

Website: <https://komaf.be>

Good practice name: Where leisure is connected to inclusion and diversity

Description :

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.



Organisation name: **Culture Goes Europe (CGE) - Soziokulturelle Initiative Erfurt e.V. (CGE e.V.) and**

Urban Foxes

Website: <https://www.cge-erfurt.org/>

<https://placemaking.4learning.eu/>

Good practice name: Placemaking for inclusion (PM4I)

Description :

Placemaking 4 Inclusion - Reviving Active Citizenship for Reshaping the Societies (PM4I) aims to empower youth work providers and youth organisations by using the placemaking methodology and practices to ensure the social inclusion



of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in jointly shaping their local communities. In this project, Placemaking initiatives often seek to improve the well-being of local communities through creative and collaborative responses to local issues. Placemaking can be transformative for young people from marginalised groups, and consequently supportive of young work and non-formal education.

Placemaking has become influential for practitioners in numerous fields, including the arts, community development, and education. In these settings, place-based initiatives often seek to improve the well-being of local communities through creative, collaborative responses to local issues. This engagement can support youth work and non-formal education. Critical pedagogies can be transformative for young people from historically marginalised groups.

The consortium aims to utilise the placemaking approach to enable young people in local communities to take part in actively shaping the inclusive urban environment. This is done through co-creation among different stakeholders in communities of diverse cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. The project consortium brings together 7 organisations (from Belgium, Germany, Spain, Norway, Italy and Greece) across sectors with a high level of complementarity in terms of experiences and expertise, and the implementation of the project represents an opportunity to capitalise on and valorise partners' backgrounds. These initiatives open the way to new approaches to curriculum building, which are transferable to any youth organisation operating in social fields.

The consortium aims to tackle the following needs:

- Need to explore new and innovative practices, adapt the existing ones to youth organisations' context so they can adequately address the needs of young people of diverse backgrounds and, therefore, increase the quality of youth work and non-formal education provision at local, national and/or European level.
- Need for expertise transfer among (youth) organisations in the area of placemaking, creativity, culture management, architecture education and entrepreneurship of young people.
- Need for non-formal education providers to introduce innovative practices in youth leadership and education through cross-disciplinary creative solution finding through youth work, informal and non-formal approach.



Place Make It



Organisation name: **European Commission**

Website: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14077-Joint-European-degree_en

Good practice name: Towards a European degree

Description :

- The Commission is currently preparing a Communication on a Blueprint towards a European degree. The Communication will set up the vision and possible avenues for setting-up a European degree.

The initiative seeks to tackle the multiple administrative and legal obstacles within the EU to make it easier for higher education institutions to offer transnational programmes between several universities from different countries and leading to a joint degree for their students.

The European degree will be based on European criteria that will reflect the European learning experience and the skills acquired by the graduates. It will demonstrate how ready these graduates are to navigate and succeed in a world where challenges and opportunities have no borders.

It could be delivered as a label to start with, and progressively as a degree by the national or institutional authorities.

Benefits

Students' needs will be at the centre, with the opportunity to be part of different academic communities, and to make the most of an interconnected European Education Area.

European degrees will offer several benefits, including:

- More opportunities to study in different European countries, with automatic credit recognition.
- Experience innovative joint study programmes and a seamless academic experience across campuses in different countries.
- Gain skills leading to higher employability worldwide.

The proposal would create a European framework that would make it easier for universities to set up joint degrees if they wish to do so, on a voluntary basis.

Framework for the initiative

The aim is to present a European framework that would make it easier to deliver transnational joint degrees as a result of quality assured transnational programmes that are student-centred, inclusive and promote multicultural learning experiences for students.



Next steps

The Communication on a Blueprint towards a European degree will be presented in Spring 2024.

The Commission will then engage in active dialogue through 2024 with Member States, higher education stakeholders and youth organisations to prepare the next steps towards the establishment of a European degree.





Annex 6: Closing Poem by Young EUYC Facilitators

We take flight

by Kelvin Akpaloo & Gaffar Rampage
Written for EUYC Ghent 2024

▸ **Inclusion.**

What a beautiful word
it's like a beautiful bird
so beautiful
even the rainbow admires its beauty

As it flies so high
in the sky majestically
with no fear of falling
conquering the force of gravity

Inclusion.

is calling
from the top of the 404
where we see its soul soar
from the ground to the seventh floor
it's not so far

step by step
we count our implementing measures
step by tiny step
we stand on the shoulders
of everyone who has come before us
because when we go together
it's not so far

It's not so far
as it dances in the clouds
the wind blowing through its wings
hovering on the surface of the earth

Gliding from one harvester to the other



facilitating its ways around separation and segregation
freedom is what it sees

Inclusion.

is like a silent disco
demanding that we walk on
inviting us into its warm embrace
giving us a taste
of what's to come
the anticipation, the joy
the way it plays with our heartstrings like a toy

Together with the young, our voices strong
we march to the land of justice, where we belong

Our journey towards
inclusivity's summit
Guided by love
no room to plummet

—

But Kelvin, they do plummet

Who?

Young people

Young people who?

our friends back home
curiously watching our Instagram stories
it's the third week we're on the road
from Alicante to Ghent
from Budapest to all the youth capitals we went

the vegan participant
who's been stuck in a glass box all-day
with stomach rumbling she walks all the way
to lunch but amongst the salmon and chicken
she can find no vegan option



the bartender from last night's party
smiles widely as he asks What would you like?
it's the three hundred and twenty fourth beer he's served tonight
but by the time the night ends
he will still look with confusion
if you ask him about
the Council's conclusions

- the trans woman on the street
with chronically cold feet
she just moved here and doesn't know much
doesn't even speak Dutch
looking for home but she's
too migrant for the queers
too queer for the migrants

don't you see them?
don't you see them.. plummet?

Wow, Gaffar, I was so naive
blinded by the world I couldn't see
all I saw was opportunities so grand
no limitations only provisions

And the European Youth Mobilities
given to the youth and for youth
thinking that no one is left behind and that was the truth

Nowadays, we live in a world where separation
has poisoned our souls and mind
instead of celebrating our togetherness
we are too focused on our differences

Turning you and I
the youth against each other,
making us believe
that one is better than the other

—

Inclusion.

what a beautiful word



it's like a beautiful bird
so beautiful
even the rainbow admires its beauty
as it flies so high in the sky majestically
with no fear of falling.

Inclusion.

- Is calling
from the hearts of the youth
where we see their soul soar
from the grassroots to the policymaker's door
it's not so far

Step by step
we count again our implementing measures
step by tiny step
carrying the voices of everyone who is not here before us
because when we go together
it's not so far

it's not so far
as it dances in the clouds
the wind blowing through its wings
hovering on the surface of the earth
gliding from one delegate to the other
dancing its way around separation
and segregation
freedom
is what it sees

Inclusion.

Is like the Not-A-Belgian-Gala
demanding that we stay on
inviting us into its glamorous embrace
serving us a taste
of what's to come
the anticipation, the joy
the way it plays with our heartstrings
like Aunty Susan's gaze

together with the young



our voices strong

We move towards the future of the youth
where we belong

So let's soar together
hand in hand
towards a future
where we all stand

■ Inclusion, our guiding light
in an inclusive society
we take
flight

Annex 7: Biographies of EUYC Ghent Speakers

CLARA DRAMMEH - European Facilitator

Clara Drammeh is a dedicated professional in the youth and policy sector, promoting culturally sensitive and inclusive approaches in dialogue processes to foster international cooperation. In 2020, she founded [Mixed Message Moderation](#), providing facilitation, training, and consultation services to help organizations address issues related to diversity, equity, and participation. She holds a degree in International Relations and is a certified systemic facilitator trained at the German Academy for Systemic Moderation.

With over six years of experience in European youth policy and advocacy, Clara has worked as a facilitator and trainer in political and civil society contexts, contributing to shaping several political events and processes, such as the EU Youth Dialogue, the Youth 7 as one of the G7 engagement groups as well as WHO Europe #Youth4Health. She also volunteers as an External Representative to the World Organization of the Scout Movement in Europe, advocating for the needs of young people.



LOTUS LI - National Facilitator

Lotus Li is the national facilitator of the EUYC Ghent. Three years ago, she was elected as a youth advisor of the Flemish Youth Council and since then she hasn't left the field of youth policy. Her biggest passion project is Untold Asian Stories, an organisation of which she is co-founder and president. Besides, she is doing her masters in International Politics. The golden thread in her work is searching justice, at the intersections of climate justice, racial justice, mental health justice...



BEATRICE CIOBANU - Forum des Jeunes - youth delegate of the Belgian youth councils

Beatrice from Forum des Jeunes is 24 years old. One year ago she started working in the Belgian youth sector, a field that she finds inspiring and gives her hope to keep on improving our European societies.





ILIANA IVANOVA, EU Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

Iliana Ivanova, a Bulgarian politician and economist, served in the European Parliament from 2009 to 2012 before being appointed to the European Court of Auditors. On September 19, 2023, she became the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education, and Youth.



BENJAMIN DALLE - Flemish Minister of Brussels, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction

From 2000 to 2005, he studied law at the University of Ghent. He then obtained his LL.M. in International Legal Studies from New York University. He completed his studies with a three-month internship at the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva.

After his studies, he went to work as a lawyer at the Brussels Bar and was also a part-time assistant at KULeuven, under judge and professor André Alen. From 2007 to 2011, Dalle served as advisor to Deputy Prime Ministers Yves Leterme, Jo Vandeurzen and Steven Vanackere. In December 2011, he became director of the policy cell of Servais Verherstraeten, Secretary of State for State Reform and Public Buildings Administration. From 2014 to 2016, he was deputy chief of cabinet to Justice Minister Koen Geens.



In March 2016, Benjamin Dalle was appointed head of CD&V's study department, Cedar. He would continue to hold this position until his appointment as Flemish minister in October 2019. Benjamin Dalle has long been active in Brussels politics. Among other things, he served as chairman of the party's Brussels Capital Division and was also a co-opted senator replacing Steven Vanackere from January to May 2019.

NICHOLAS KUJALA - Board member of the European Youth Forum

Nicholas started volunteering at a local youth council at the age of 13, followed by several roles in the Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi. Through volunteering, he developed his passion for advocacy and policy work as well as his expertise in youth rights equality and security topics. Nicholas currently works on aviation weather prediction for the Finnish Meteorological Institute and studies natural sciences at the University of Helsinki.





SOPHIA ERIKSSON WATERSCHOOT - Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+ at the European Commission's Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot is Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+ at the European Commission's Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. She is in charge of European cooperation on higher education, schools and youth policy, managing Europe's flagship programme for education, training, youth and sport Erasmus+ with a budget over €26 billion 2021-2027. She launched and manages the European Solidarity Corps, an EU youth volunteering programme, and coordinated the 2022 European Year of Youth. She launched flagship actions under the European Education Area and the EU Youth Strategy, such as European Universities, Teacher Academies and DiscoverEU. She has previously held various positions within the European Commission in the field of strategy and investment in education, employment policy, European Semester, European cohesion funds, cultural policy and business statistics. She studied economics, business, political science and EU affairs in Sweden, France and Belgium, including an Erasmus student exchange.



ANTOINE BAKHASH - Student of political sciences and student representative

Antoine is a student of political sciences at the VUB and Ghent University and currently pursuing a traineeship with a war journalist. Over the past years, he has been active in student representative organisations: first as international and European officer at the Flemish Union of Students (VVS) and afterwards as Human Rights and Solidarity coordinator for the European Students' Union (ESU).

Antoine was born and raised in Aleppo, Syria and came to Belgium as a refugee in 2016. He was one of the faces of the documentary "Five Years Here" ("Vijf Jaar Hier") about asylum seekers and refugees in Belgium.

Previously, Antoine was also a trainer on gender equality, LBGT+ rights and sexual health. He is passionate about minority rights, inclusion, higher education, migration and equity policies.



SOPHIE VERBRUGGHE - Staff member Flemish Youth Council

Sophie Verbrugge is a staff member of the Flemish Youth Council (Vlaamse Jeugdraad) working on international and European youth affairs and the Belgian Presidency of the EU.





DAN MOXON - Director of People, Dialogue and Change

Dan is a researcher supporting the EUYD process and has been working on this since the 6th cycle. Outside of youth dialogue, his work focuses on how children and young people's participation can influence policy and practice, as well as the development of participatory structures and processes. Originally a youth worker at local and regional level in England, he now works throughout Europe and beyond supporting a variety of organisations and institutions to develop their approach to inclusive, meaningful youth participation.



ONDŘEJ BÁRTA - EU researcher

Ondřej is a freelance youth researcher and consultant whose assignments on national and international levels cover areas such as youth participation, youth policy, youth mobility, or volunteering. He supports youth participation processes (e.g., the EU Youth Dialogue), and he works as an expert with various international bodies. At the same time, he works in the area of evaluation and impact research, where he conducts both the macro level (youth policies) and the micro level (single projects) evaluations on both national and international levels, as well as writes open access publications. He appears regularly on various conferences and expert meetings where he tackles youth-related research findings.



SOPHIA DOLHAIN – Policy Officer - Department Youth, Culture, Media, member of the editing team

Sophia Dolhain, Policy Officer at the Department of Culture, Youth, and Media of the Flemish authorities, is a member of the Belgian EU Presidency 2024 team in the field of youth. In her role, she contributed to the introduction of Council acts on youth affairs, put on the agenda by the Belgian EU Presidency, such as the Council conclusions on inclusive societies for young people. She also actively participates in the negotiations on these policy texts, within the Council's Youth Working Party.





PIETER JAN DE GRAEVE – SALTO Inclusion and Diversity Officer

Pieter-Jan is working as SALTO Inclusion and Diversity officer since 2021. Previously he worked as researcher at the Catholic University of Leuven and the University of Ghent, focusing on the topic of poverty. He has a master in Sociology and Conflict and Development. At the EUYC in Ghent he joins the editing team as an expert.



MILAN CALLOENS - Flemish Youth Council - Facilitator and member of the editing team

Milan is currently coordinating the involvement of the three Belgian youth councils in the Belgian Presidency of the EU. He used to be the EU youth delegate of the Flemish Youth Council in the 7th and 8th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue. At this EU Youth Conference, Milan is a facilitator and member of the editing team.



ISABELLE WEYKMANS - Minister for Youth at the German-speaking Community

After graduating from the Royal Athenaeum in Eupen, Minister Weykmans decided to study political science at the University of Notre Dame de la Paix in Namur and the ULB. At the time she specialised in international relations and European studies at the European Institute in Nice and Berlin. She gained her first experience through internships with Minister Bernd Gentges and the then Senator Berni Collas, who hired her as a political advisor after her studies. In 2004, she ran for the first time as the third substitute candidate on the PFF's European list. After the elections, she was the first woman to be elected Minister of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, making her the youngest European Minister. Since then, Minister Weykmans has been re-elected three times and confirmed as a member of the government.





NINA GRMUŠA - Bureau Member of the Advisory Council on Youth

Nina is a Bureau Member of the Advisory Council on Youth, where she focuses on the portfolio around access to rights. She is also the external representative of European Federation for Intercultural Learning (ENIL) and a volunteer youth worker, with experience and interest in mobility and sustainability in youth work. Her research interests relate to intersectionality and gender, environment, and active citizenship participation.



OLIVIER DE SCHUTTER - UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights; Professor at the UCLouvain and SciencePo

Olivier De Schutter is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights since May 2020. He is a professor at UCLouvain and SciencesPo (Paris) and a member of the Global Law School Faculty at New York University. Holder of an LL.M. from Harvard University and a PhD from UCLouvain, he taught at the College of Europe (2008-2016), Columbia University (2008-2013), and Yale University (2016-2017). He was also a visiting professor at UC Berkeley (2013-2014), where he contributed to the founding of the Berkeley Food Institute. In 2013, he was awarded the prestigious Francqui Prize for his contribution to international law in human rights and through the theory of governance.

Expert in economic and social rights, Mr. De Schutter served as the Secretary-General of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) from 2004 to 2008. He was appointed the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food in 2008, succeeding Swiss sociologist Jean Ziegler, and held this mandate until 2014. Elected a member of the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in 2015 and re-elected in 2019, he resigned from this position to accept the mandate of Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.

Since 2015, Mr. De Schutter has co-chaired the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food), a group of experts from various disciplines developing proposals for the reform of food systems. Mr. De Schutter has numerous publications on economic and social rights, the links between human rights and development, and the conditions of ecological transition.

Long committed to the task of ecological and social transformation, he is running in the June 2024 European Parliament elections, occupying the 2nd position on the Ecolo list, the French-speaking Belgian Greens.





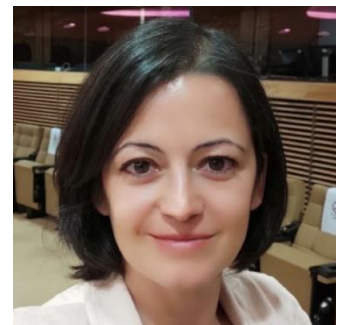
KATRĪNA LEITĀNE - President of the EESC Youth

Katrīna is President of the EESC Youth and has 10 years of experience in the youth field when she started as a volunteer in a local youth centre and now a member of the EESC. She participated in Erasmus trainings and had developed several Erasmus+ projects. Now, she is looking forward to involving more youth in the EESC and establishing fruitful cooperation aiming to improve the life quality of youth in the EU. She is Alumni of the Young Elected Politicians 2020 programme launched by the Committee of Regions: Member of the European Local Leaders (ELL), and Member of the Nation Working Group for the European Union Youth Dialogue, Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia.



BILIANA SIRAKOVA - EU Youth Coordinator – European Commission

Biliana Sirakova was appointed as the first EU Youth Coordinator in June 2021. Working in the European Commission, in the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, she aims to strengthen cooperation between all Commission services on youth issues and to integrate the youth perspective into all relevant EU policies. She has been a European Commission civil servant since 2010. Biliana's educational background is in economics and management; she holds a bachelor's degree from Ohio Wesleyan University (US) and a postgraduate certificate from Kingston University (UK). She has eighteen years of professional experience across the public, private and non-profit sectors. Biliana's work has revolved around building and managing relationships with diverse stakeholders and communicating for impact and learning. In the framework of the European Year of Youth, Biliana is responsible for the engagement of European youth stakeholders and National coordinators of the Year.



LAURE VERSTRAETE - youth delegate of the Belgian youth councils - Vlaamse Jeugdraad (VJR)

Laure Verstraete has been an active member of different youth organisations since the age of 15. She became the European Youth Representative for the Flemish Youth Council in 2022. Currently, she is coordinating the three Belgian youth councils during the Belgian presidency of the EU in youth.





RÉKA GAJÁN - EU and International Officer of the National Youth Council of Hungary

As EU and International Officer of the National Youth Council of Hungary Réka has, what she calls, “a very colourful job”. She work alongside the Vice-President, who oversees the international affairs of our Youth Council. In the NYC of Hungary, the aim is to represent the Hungarian Youth to the best of their knowledge, create international youth networks, implement international projects, and do advocacy work.

As a young person, Réka had always been convinced that she could change the world. Later, she realized that “only we, as a community, can change the world for the better”, which is what she tries to achieve, step by step.



LAURENA MARX - Youth delegate of the Belgian youth councils Youth Council of the German-speaking Community (RdJ)

Laurena, 26, from Eupen, representing the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community since September 2023. Also involved in a scouts movement since 2015 (member since 2003). Currently doing a Traineeship at the Council of the EU.



MARÍA RODRIGUEZ ALCAZAR - President of the European Youth Forum

María (she/her) became an activist and advocate for human rights at 14, when she joined the secondary school union in her village in Spain. Since then, she has been representing young people in various capacities, including the Vice President of the Spanish Youth Council (CJE). She is now a PhD student at Ghent University and the United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies, and she holds a bachelor’s degree in International Relations and a Masters in African Studies.





EVITA WILLAERT - Schepen van Onderwijs, Opvoeding, Gezinsbeleid en Outreachend Werk in Gent -Alderman for Education, Education, Family Policy and Outreach in Ghent

Evita Willaert is Alderman for Education, Education, Family Policy and Outreach Work in Ghent.

Evita has been committed for years to all of Ghent's citizens, especially those who sometimes lack a spokesperson. The fight against poverty and inequality is what particularly drives her engagement in politics. Evita is in very close contact with the teams on the ground and is their mouthpiece in Flanders, where there are many levers, for example Education and Childcare. Her work focuses on equal opportunities, poverty reduction and inclusion.



KATIA SEGERS - Professor Communication Sciences and Member of the Flemish Parliament

Katia Segers is professor of Communication Sciences at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and Member of the Flemish Parliament for Vooruit.



KIM VAN SPARRENTAK – Dutch politician – Member of the European Parliament for the Green/Europe Free Alliance

Kim van Sparrentak is a Dutch politician who serves as a Member of the European Parliament for the Greens/European Free Alliance. She is part of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. Kim van Sparrentak previously was a member of the GroenLinks youth organization "DWARS" and the Federation of Young European Greens, which she both temporarily led. She holds a master's degree in Urban Environmental Management from the University of Wageningen.





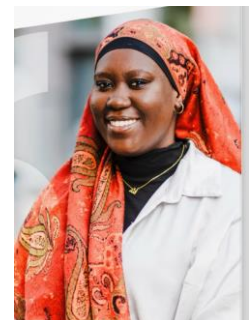
HAFSA EL-BAZIOUI - Deputy Mayor City of Ghent

Deputy Mayor Hafsa El-Bazioui started her professional career as an educator, while combining it with volunteer work. She was always prepared to help out with initiatives that improved social cohesion in Ghent. In 2018, Hafsa won the award for 'most beautiful New Year's letter of Ghent', in which she asked for more tolerance and less harsh words. In that same year, she was elected into the city council, and in 2022 she became Deputy Mayor for global solidarity, youth, facility management and personnel. For her, being inclusive and making sure all Ghent citizens can participate in the way their city works are of the utmost importance.



AÏSSATOU CISSÉ - Alderwoman in Borgerhout, Antwerpen

Born in Belgium, Aïssatou Cissé, with Senegalese and Mauritanian roots, has emerged as a young political figure. At 21, she became the first black and youngest district alderwoman in Flanders, overseeing key domains such as culture, transport, heritage, and communication.



KATRIEN HERBOTS - Cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Youth, Benjamin Dalle

After finishing her Law studies and Additional Studies in Criminological Sciences at KU Leuven (Belgium), children's rights and themes such as youth (aid) and (juvenile) delinquency form a common thread in Katrien's working life. She gained professional experience and insights by working in academic settings, knowledge centres and practice and umbrella organisations. She followed additional courses including a Master class in Public and Social Profit Management (Antwerp Management School), working in and with groups and communication techniques.

Katrien currently works as an advisor on Youth and Children's Rights at the cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Brussels, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction, Benjamin Dalle. Her assignments include the coordination of a Flemish youth and children's rights policy through a number of policy instruments, the coordination of the scientific basis of youth and children's rights policy and policy work on cross-cutting themes for children and young people such as integrity, radicalisation and polarisation, equal opportunities and suicide prevention, among others.





PASCALE FALEK - Policy Officer at the European Commission, DG Justice, Unit C2 Fundamental Rights

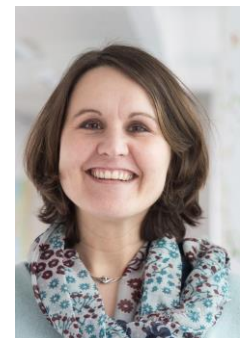
Dr. Falek works since 2020 as Policy Officer at the European Commission, DG Justice, in the Office of the European Coordinator for combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, Ms. Katharina von Schnurbein. She is in charge of files related to education, research, Holocaust remembrance, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism, fostering Jewish life and leading the global fight against antisemitism. Before joining the Commission, she worked as Curator and then Director of the Jewish Museum of Belgium. As research project manager at the Belgian State Archives, she co-published an archival source guide on Jewish history 19-20thcenturies. She has a Master degree in Contemporary History (Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2003), a Master of Studies in Jewish Studies (Oxford University, 2004), a Master of Arts in European Studies (College of Europe, Natolin, 2005), and a PhD in History and Civilization from the European University Institute (Florence, 2011).



KAREN VANDEWEGHE - DG EAC, European Commission - Deputy Head of Unit 'Youth and Volunteer Solidarity'

Karen Vandeweghe has been Deputy Head of Unit of the Unit B.3 'Youth and Volunteer Solidarity' at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture since January 2021. This unit coordinates the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes, and sets out the main orientations for EU youth policy as well as the 2019-2027 European Union Youth Strategy.

Prior to that, from 2018-2021, she was project manager for DiscoverEU, launching the pilot action in 2018 and developing it into a full-fledged Erasmus+ programme action. She also has experience in interregional cooperation, having worked for the INTERREG programmes at the European Commission (DG REGIO) and in the region of Bratislava (Slovakia), as well as in the areas of health inequalities, ageing and migration issues, through her work for European NGOs (EuroHealthNet and AGE Platform) and the Belgian Ministry of the Interior





MARTA TOUYKOVA - DG EAC, European Commission - Head of Sector for Youth Policy in Unit 'Youth and Volunteer Solidarity'

Marta Touykova is Head of Sector for Youth policy in the Youth and Volunteer Solidarity unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture – DG EAC. She is mainly in charge of the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy, the EU Youth Dialogue and cooperation with EU Member States and youth stakeholders. She was involved in the design and implementation of the European Year of Youth 2022 and its legacy. She was also member of the negotiation team of the European Solidarity Corps programme in 2019-2020.

She was previously in the international unit of DG EAC, in charge of cooperation with Eastern Partnership and Maghreb countries in the fields of education, youth and culture. She was the coordinator of the Eastern Partnership Platform 4 Contacts between People (2011-2015). Her focus was mainly on the modernisation of higher education systems in these regions.

Before joining the Commission, Marta was in charge of education, culture and youth cooperation with the new EU Member States in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

She studied law and political science in France and holds a PhD from Sciences Po Paris (Institut d'études politiques de Paris). She published peer-reviewed article on the democratic transition and political landscape of Bulgaria. She was an associated professor at Science Po Paris teaching political sciences and EU affairs.



DESPO SERGIOU - DG EAC, European Commission - Policy Officer on SNE-Youth Policy and Programmes in Unit 'Youth and Volunteer Solidarity'

Despo Sergiou is Policy Officer, SNE-Youth Policy and Programmes in Unit B3: Youth and Volunteer Solidarity, at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. The main areas of focus of this role are on mental health and wellbeing, inclusiveness, recovery, civil society cooperation, the legacy of the European Year of Youth, inter-generational dialogue and solidarity. She participates at the Youth Working Party and cooperates with the Presidencies of the Council of the European Union.

Prior to that, she was the Counsellor of Education, Youth, Culture and Sport, at the Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the EU (2016-2021) where she was involved in various EU priorities and actively followed the discussions in the EYCS Council preparatory bodies on inclusive education, key competences for lifelong learning, active citizenship, digital education, and smart youth work. She was member of the Youth Working Party (2016-2021) where she was involved in the preparation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 including the EU Youth Dialogue and in the negotiations of the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.





Between 2000 and 2016, she was a primary school teacher, while for several years she actively participated in various committees and non-governmental organisations, including the Life Skills Development Association and the voluntary organization KEN.TH.E.A (addiction treatment center-preventing substance abuse).

Despo has a Master's degree in Education: Pedagogical Sciences, Intercultural Education and Psychology and a Bachelor degree in Education.

TINE RADINJA - Mayor of Škofja Loka, Slovenia

Before being elected Mayor, Tine Radinja worked for the World Bank on social development in the Middle East and North Africa, and for the League of Arab States on representative NGO platform. He served as Deputy Mayor responsible for HR and nominations, legislative and statutory issues, sports, culture, and social affairs. He was also the president of the European Youth Forum - the world's biggest youth platform; and active in the Scouts movement. Now he is a proud father of two young scouts.



MEREL TERLIEN - Policy officer diversity and inclusion at the Flemish Administration

I am working as an advisor on policies with regard to equal opportunities, diversity, non-discrimination and inclusion within the Flemish administration. The mission of our team called 'diversity policies' is to establish on a Flemish government that represents underrepresented groups in society. Therefore we undertake action to attract underrepresented groups and support them in the workplace. We are fighting discrimination and strive for inclusion."





ANNALISA CANNONI - DG EAC, European Commission, Policy officer at the Unit for Schools and Multilingualism

Annalisa Cannoni is a Policy Officer in DG Education and Culture, unit Schools and Multilingualism, responsible for policy analysis and development on educational disadvantage, underachievement in basic skills and early school leaving. Prior work experiences at the European Commission include policy development in the field of adult education policy and vocational education and training, as well as programme management.



DRIES DE SMET - Advisor Youth Policy at the Cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Youth, Benjamin Dalle

Dries has always been a member of a local youth movement, was a volunteer board member at the youth centre, participated in the local youth council as a 16-year-old, became an animator, gave training and obtained the certificate of instructor in youth work. After studying social cultural work (bachelor - UCLL) and criminological sciences (master – KU Leuven), he started his professional career in youth work. As a staff member, he co-managed the business development of a non-profit organisation with a specific focus on youth holidays and formation. Afterwards, he became coordinator of the Flemish Youth Council before going to work at the youth minister's office.



LEEN DE BOLLE - Flemish Diversity Officer

Leen is the Flemish diversity officer. She was mandated by the Flemish government to work on equal employment opportunities for underrepresented groups. Leen has a team of about 10 employees. Together they are committed to attracting underrepresented target groups, removing barriers, fighting discrimination and achieving an inclusive culture.





ASTRID DE BRUYCKER - Deputy Mayor of Equal Opportunities, Welfare, Participation, Community Work and Public Greenery (Vooruit)

Astrid De Bruycker (38, born in Ghent) studied Classical Philology at Ghent University (UGent) and multilingual communication at Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), and took an additional course on 'Poverty and participation' at UGent. She previously worked at Children's Rights Coalition Flanders, Child Focus and Demos vzw. Children's rights, welfare and participation are the central themes in her work.

In 2012, Astrid made her political debut at sp.a (social-democrats). She was elected as a municipal councillor and took the oath of office in January 2013. For the October 2018 municipal elections, Astrid went full steam ahead for solidarity and sustainability from position 4 on the cartel list of sp.a and the Green Party. She received almost 4,000 preferential votes and became (from January 2019) deputy mayor of Equal Opportunities, Welfare, Participation, Community Work and Public Greenery for Vooruit (formerly: sp.a).

Her life motto is: 'Anything you give attention to, grows'. That is why, instead of focusing on the problem, she always looks for what truly works. She prefers to do so in cooperation with as many Ghentians and Ghent-based organisations as possible.



SOFIE VAN ZEEBROECK - Staff member training at JINT, Coordinator EUYC

Sofie Van Zeebroeck is active in the international youth mobility field since 2007.

For JINT vzw, the National Agency for Erasmus + youth and European Solidarity Corps, she served as Deputy Head 'planning and organisation' and currently as Strategic networking and cooperation officer.

Over the years she has gained specific experience in the areas of policy planning, youth information, participation processes, quality of learning mobility, sustainability, digital youth work and creativity and innovation. In 2024 she coordinated the European Youth Conference in Ghent on behalf of the Belgian EU presidency.

