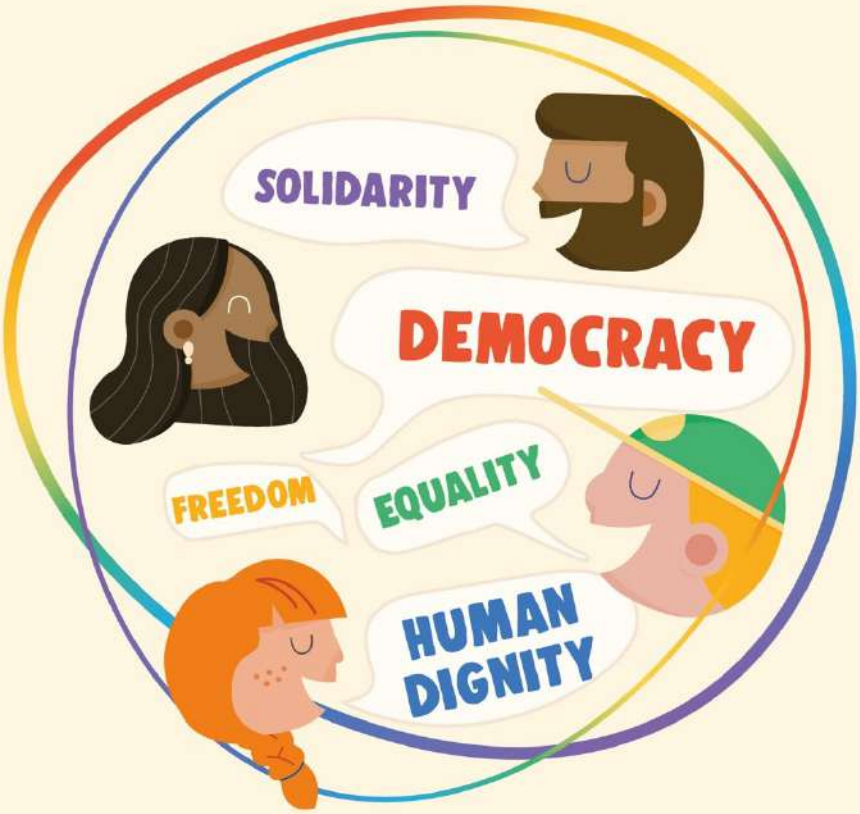
EUROPEAN UNION

AGENZIA NAZIONALE ERASMUS+ INDIRE



Paul Blokker • Sara Cocchi • Tommaso Visone

Mapping of research on (European) participation.

A selection of best practices

PEACE+
PARTICIPATION ERASMUS ALUMNI FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

PEACE+ PROJECT · WORK PACKAGE 5

ANNEX 1

Mapping of research on (European) participation

A selection of best practices

Report mapping relevant Horizon projects on (youth) participation, European citizenship and EU values

Report · June 2026

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Table of Contents

GLOSSARY **4**

INTRODUCTION **5**

HORIZON PROJECTS **6**

The Critical Change Labs for Building Democratic Cultures through Creative and Narrative Practice - Critical ChangeLab (Horizon Europe; grant agreement number 101094217) 6

YouthDecide 2040: Visions of Democracy with and for Future Generations Horizon Europe; grant agreement number 101177438) 7

Constructing AcTive CitizensHip with European Youth: Policies, Practices, Challenges and Solutions (CATCH-EyoU) 9

Sincrony - youth engagement (Horizon Europe; grant agreement number 101132459) 12

Reconciling Europe with its Citizens through Democracy and Rule of Law (RECONNECT) (Horizon Europe; Grant agreement ID: 770142) 14

Larpocracy: Developing Spaces for Deliberation and Democratic Skills through Role-Playing (Horizon Europe; Grant agreement ID: 101177307) 16

YouthDecide 2040: Visions of Democracy with and for Future Generations (Horizon Europe; Grant agreement ID: 101177438) 19

ERASMUS+/JEAN MONNET PROJECTS **21**

EUCivic. Empowering European Citizens Through European Civic Education. Erasmus Plus, Jean Monnet Project. 21

MorEU. More EU to Overcome the Crisis. Erasmus Plus Jean Monnet Network 23

AwarEU. European Awareness. Erasmus Plus, Key Action 3. 24

YOUTH PROJECTS **26**

Youth Policy Labs 26

Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs (WBYPL) 27

Youth Policy Labs under the EU4Youth programme 30

Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 32

Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030 33

OTHER PROJECTS **35**

Our Rule of Law project (University of Groningen) – Our Democracy Report 2025 35

ANNEX 2 – DATABASE PROGETTI **37**

Glossary

Key concepts	**Knowledge**
CATCH-EyoU (good citizenship; active European citizenship; democracy; engagement) **Youth Decide 2024** (varieties of democracy) **Sincrony** (non-conventional participation) **EUCivic** (European citizenship education) **EU Youth Strategy** (participation paradox) **Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030** (Core values of the Council of Europe) **Youth Decide 2040** (foundations of democracy; models of democracy)	**RECONNECT** (institutions, rule of law, democracy) **Youth Decide 2024** (different form of democracy; democratic innovation) **Sincrony** (participatory process in EU) **Youth Policy Labs** (youth unemployment, employability) **Youth Decide 2040** (democratic crises; democratic challenges; democratic innovation)
Tools	**Practices**
Critical Change Labs (democratic health questionnaire) **CATCH-EyoU** (youth survey) **Youth Policy Labs** (co-creation; cooperative, innovative, out-of-the-box thinking) **Larpocracy** (Deliberative Civic Values Index)	**Youth Policy Labs** (policy labs) **EUCivic, MorEU, EUware** (Europe Awareness Days; Art in education; multi-lingual contents) **RECONNECT** (MOOC on EU) **Larpocracy** (role playing)

Introduction

This report is the outcome of a joined, *human* effort at mapping important existing European research projects on democracy, engagement, civic participation, and citizenship. The research team, composed of Paul Blokker, Sara Cocchi, and Tommaso Visone, investigated – covering a timeframe of roughly the last 15 years – a range of research projects, events, and cultural activities, and their results and outputs, in order to identify concepts, approaches, ideas, practices, but also challenges, limitations, and obstacles, that may be of use and inspiration for Erasmus+ activities and projects that seek to somehow approach the themes of democracy, engagement, and (European) citizenship. In our mapping, we focused on projects in the *Erasmus+* programme itself (including activities of National Agencies), in the broader Research Framework *Horizon Europe* (including ERC, Marie Curie Actions, Horizon projects), research by the European Commission's *Joint Research Centre* (in particular its Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy), and in the context of other European programmes, such as those of the *Council of Europe* (notably its work on youth participation), the *European Parliament* (European Parliamentary Research Service), CERV projects funded by the European Commission, analyses of civil society organisations and platforms, such as Partecipedia and Democracy R&D, and the projects of Erasmus-related organisations such as the Erasmus Student Network.

The mapping presented in the report is surely not exhaustive and is based on a rather narrow selection. Hence, many useful, relevant projects might not have been included in the final discussion. Nevertheless, we do think that the report provides a significant snapshot of some of the more inspiring, creative, and potentially innovative endeavours out there. In addressing matters of democratic participation, civic and political engagement, and learning and practicing citizenship, we believe it is of utmost importance to leave ample room for creativity, imagination, and finding new ways of protecting democracy, rights, and equality in our societies. The report is hence intended as a stimulation of our senses and our imagination and tries to be an inspiration for all those involved in Erasmus+ to take up the democratic challenge, and reinvent democracy and engagement in the different efforts and projects we participate in.

In the report, we try to make visible what is already there, what has already been tried in the various projects we discuss, and what is particularly relevant for Erasmus+. In this, we also try to indicate gaps and potential room for improvement within the Erasmus+ programme and the way we currently engage with the themes of democratic participation, engagement, and European citizenship. Hence, for every project discussed, at the end we provided a succinct indication of what we believe we could possibly learn and adopt in our own current or future projects, enriching our existing endeavours, not least helping to rethink democracy and engagement, also in the light of young people's perspectives and needs.

Horizon projects

The Critical Change Labs for Building Democratic Cultures through Creative and Narrative Practice - Critical ChangeLab (Horizon Europe; grant agreement number 101094217)

2023-26

https://criticalchangelab.eu/en/library/

The project is led by the University of Oulu in Finland and embraces a transdisciplinary approach that brings together expertise from nine other partner institutions across Europe.

The Critical ChangeLab project 'aims to build a resilient European democracy by reinvigorating the relationship between youth and democracy through civic interventions in which young people envision alternative futures for (shared) European democracy, and act on that'. 'The overall goal of Critical ChangeLab is to strengthen democracy in Europe by creating and implementing a flexible model of democratic pedagogy using a bottom-up approach that empowers young people to 'own' everyday democracy and engage in direct action towards justice-oriented transformations'.

Democratic pedagogy

The Critical ChangeLab projects is of evident relevance for PEACE+ and the increased attention to democratic engagement and participation in the Erasmus programme and the strengthening of European Citizenship Education. One of the core objectives of the project is to strengthening European democracy by exploring and creating a 'flexible model of democratic pedagogy' that is 'using a bottom-up approach that empowers young people to "own" everyday democracy and engage in direct action towards justice-oriented transformations' (Policy Brief 1: 1). Insights in part come from more than 1200 heads of European educational institutions or those in charge of educational programmes. The Critical ChangeLab developed a Democratic Health Questionnaire that is proposed as a self-assessment tool for educators and institutions in order to evaluate how much democracy plays a role - in the form of democratic practices - within the educational institutions themselves.

The Democratic Health Questionnaire focuses on participation; accountability and transparency; equality, diversity, and inclusion, and eco-social responsibility. These form indicators of the levels of democracy within the educational institutions with regard to the development and implementation of educational programmes (Democratic Health Questionnaire D1.1). Questions refer inter alia to the extent of staff involvement in the development and implementation of educational programmes, as well as that of stakeholders, groups in the community, and students. It also relates to the needs of diverse groups in schools and the wider community, sustainability and environmental matters and to forms of participation in curriculum development and teaching.

Democratic health

Critical ChangeLab maps democratic practices and values in educational institutions. In addition, it focuses on youth perceptions of everyday democracy. In a comparative analysis, young people in a variety of challenging contexts are asked about their views of democracy, including young female teenagers enrolled in STEM studies, young people living in border regions, or in the suburbs of a large city, migrant and refugee youth, youth in rural settings, LGBTQI+ youth, or your in crime prevention projects (D1.3). The analysis indicates various highly useful insights with regard to young people's perceptions of democracy. For instance, STEM students seem to have very little to say about democracy and participation, as if it is hardly part of their imagination. In other cases, young people did have some experience with civic engagement.

Some young people indicated that they felt not being listened to by political institutions. In others, (disadvantaged) young people did not know what democracy was, did not see any relevance for their daily lives, expressed strong distrust towards political institutions, and repeated anti-migration slogans. Other young people (LGBTQI+) indicated they feel discriminated against. Some conflated democracy with formal politics, and indicating a lack of trust in institutions, but also recognized democratic practices in everyday life (D1.3).

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- A version of the *Democratic Health Questionnaire* might be adopted and disseminated in order to evaluate democratic participation amongst (a sample of) institutions that partake in Erasmus+/PEACE+. It would help stimulating reflection on the democratic practices in education as such, which may inform broader reflections on the role of engagement and participation in society;

- PEACE+ might develop its *own questionnaire* in relation to European Citizenship Education. This "European Democracy Health Questionnaire" could develop a series of questions for educational institutions (staff, students, others) in terms of specific dimensions of European democracy (history, institutions, rights, norms, practices) and the extent to which such dimensions are present in and actively discussed in their educational programmes and in what form.

- The PEACE+ training modules could include a module on "*everyday democracy*" as part of European civic education. This module could be used as a show-case for events, ambassadors, and training sessions, as its main purpose is to show how democracy and participation are relevant in ordinary, everyday situations (at home, at school, in the office, and so on). It is also key in the development of a democratic culture, in which people in all kinds of situation attempt to address problems together.

- In the youth survey under development in PEACE+, the analysis of *youth perceptions of democracy* may serve as useful input for the formulation of questions on the health of democracy, also helping to develop dimensions that speak to marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

YouthDecide 2040: Visions of Democracy with and for Future Generations Horizon Europe; grant agreement number 101177438)

2025-27

https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101177438

https://youthdecide2040.eu/home https://youthdecide2040.eu/home

The project YouthDecide 2040 is coordinated by the Austrian Institute of Technology. Its main objective is to produce new insights into how people of different generations may have different expectations towards democracy. An important part of the project is looking into the future and generate foresight and scenarios of future European democracy.

Families of democracy

The project develops a highly important observation: democracy comes in different types and can be grouped into different "families" (D1.3), which can all be somehow related to forms of democratic innovation and hence can be the basis of re-imagining European democracy in the future. YouthDecide 2040 discusses Electoral democracy, Deliberative democracy, Digital democracy, Direct democracy, and Activism.

Electoral democracy is grounded in the institutions of elections, voting, and political parties. Discussions of innovations are related to lowering the voting age (to 16 years of age), the reform and democratization of political parties, as well as the introduction of digital tools and new types of participation (such as with participatory budgeting).

Deliberative democracy emphasises the role of deliberation, in particular by citizens, and is currently a popular instrument used by governments, civil society, and others, in particular in the form of mini-publics and deliberative assemblies. In its most extreme version, deliberative democracy may be proposed as an alternative to electoral democracy, but most of the times it is proposed as an integration or additional form, to work together with existing democratic institutions.

Digital democracy is not a democratic model in its own right, but is related to the rapid advance in digital technologies. Core examples are online participation platforms, e-voting, and the usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI). It is important to be aware of that increased usage of AI may lead to reduced forms of democratic engagement. A core question is hence, how to digitalise democracy without reducing citizen empowerment.

Direct democracy is based on the idea of direct participation and influence of citizens on democratic processes, such as in referendums or citizens' initiatives. Direct democratic processes may be started up by different actors, depending also on institutional contexts. In some cases, direct democracy only has a consultative-advisory function, in others it leads to binding outcomes. Be that as it may, even in case of consultative input, the effects on democratic politics may be important (think of Brexit).

Activism is a democratic activity rather than model and is grounded in democratic forms of bottom-up mobilisation, social movements, and grassroots activism. Activism may be an important form of democratic renewal and may importantly help to empower citizens. Activism may be the source of important democratic imagination and creativity, as well as constitute a significant external monitor of formal political processes (e.g. monitoring corruption).

Youth Decide 2040 has further developed 'horizon scanning activity to identify contextual factors that may shape the conditions for democracy between 2025 and 2040' in order to 'facilitate the productive imagination of what democracy could become and guard preferred futures against some of the risks and challenges future development might pose' (D1.2). The idea is to develop 'scenarios depicting preferred futures for European Democracy' in a participatory way. Contextual factors include social, technological, economic, environmental, political, legal, and ethical factors. Moreover, it is important to verify whether different generations understand challenges and opportunities in different ways. The research of Youth Decide 2040 (D1.2) identifies various contextual dimensions, such as that of gender and democracy, cultures of democratic debate, intergenerational relations, ageing Europe, science and education, migration, AI, environmental issues and climate change, populism, inequality, mental health. It relates this to various examples/cases of democratic innovation and suggests how these factors may influence democratic futures.

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- PEACE+ may develop more points of attention in relation to *intergenerational differences* and dialogue between generations.

- PEACE+ may help introduce knowledge of *different types* and *families of democracy*, also to help stimulate people to imagine future forms of European democracy.

- PEACE+ may develop educational materials that relate to *future developments, foresight, horizons of change*.

Constructing AcTive CitizensHip with European Youth: Policies, Practices, Challenges and Solutions (CATCH-EyoU)

2015-18

https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/649538

https://web.archive.org/web/20201230140116/https://www.catcheyou.eu/

CATCH-EyoU was coordinated by the University of Bologna. The project focussed on the views of young people on the EU and the participation of young people in constructing the EU. CATCH-EyoU offers many valuable insights for PEACE+.

Survey on youth participation

One useful output of CATCH-EyoU regards the analysis of young people's views of the EU. This may serve as direct input for PEACE+'s own survey with young people, helping also to update the findings of CATCH-EyoU. The survey of the project focussed on civic and political participation of young people, investigating convention and non-conventional forms, forms of volunteering, political action, and illegal activities (Enchikova et al. 2019: 3). The CATCH-EyoU survey provides input and critical insights for a survey on civic and political participation amongst the European youth. The CATCH-EyoU project argues that surveys generally fail to take into account the different meaning that survey questions have for participants from different countries, age group, gender, etc. It finds that there are significant differences between countries in particular. It is further stated that a too detailed set of questions regarding different forms of participation renders surveys biased to the most active respondents (Enchikova et al. 2019).

Some examples of useful questions (CATCH-EyoU D7.2 WP7 Technical report):

- Good citizenship norms. Ten items measured norms of good EU citizenship on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not important at all to 5 = extremely important):

In order to be a good EU citizen, how important would you say it is to…

A_Citizen1… support people who are worse off than yourself

A_Citizen2… vote in European Parliament elections

A_Citizen3… always obey European Union laws and regulations

A_Citizen4… form your own opinions about the European Union independently of others

A_Citizen5… be active in voluntary organizations

A_Citizen6… speak out concerning European Union topics

A_Citizen7… be informed about what is going on in European Union

A_Citizen8… meet the expectations of your community or neighborhood

A_Citizen9… defend your national or religious group against other groups

A_Citizen10…. challenge social injustice

- EU problems. Six items measured participants' perceptions regarding current problems of the EU on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree):

When considering the problem of youth unemployment in member states, the European Union …

A_Unem_res … has the responsibility to influence the situation.

A_Unem_rig… is currently taking the right kinds of action.

When considering the increased number of refugees from conflict-ridden areas, the European Union …

A_Refu_res … has the responsibility to influence the situation.

A_Refu_rig … is currently taking the right kinds of action.

When considering the situation in which member states think about leaving the Union, the European Union …

A_Leav_res… has the responsibility to influence the situation.

A_Leav_rig… is currently taking the right kinds of action.

In your opinion, how important it is to deal with each of these issues?

A_Unem_imp: Youth unemployment in member states

A_Refu_imp: Refugees from conflict-ridden areas

A_Leav_imp: Member states thinking about leaving the European Union

- Vision of EU. Eleven items measured the visions of EU on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = far less to 5 = far more):

From your point of view, what would you like the European Union to be?

A_EUvis1... an economic community

A_EUvis2... a community of shared values

A_EUvis3… a community based on shared culture

A_EUvis4… a community based on shared history

A_EUvis5… a community based on geography

A_EUvis6… a community with shared responsibilities

A_EUvis7… a political community

A_EUvis8… one country

A_EUvis9… a tolerant place

A_EUvis10… a place where you can travel without borders

A_EUvis11... a global superpower

- Democracy. Three items measured participants' beliefs related to democracy, three items measured their belief in authoritarian principles. All were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Results suggest acceptable reliability for the Authoritarianism scale, but a low one for the Democracy scale.

Democracy:

A_Dem1 All people should have a right to express their opinions.

A_Dem4 Media (e.g.; TV, newspaper, websites) should have the right to criticize politicians and the government.

A_Dem5 Democracy is the best system of government that I know.

Authoritarianism:

A_Dem2 Our country needs a strong government that will ensure social order and move us in the right direction.

A_Dem3 Instead of needing 'civil rights and freedoms' our country needs one thing only: law and order.

A_Dem6 Obeying and respecting authority are the most important values that we should teach our children.

- Empowerment. Personal empowerment was measured with two items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Results suggest low reliability for the scale.

A_Empow1 I am able to look for people, institutions and services that can help me to find solutions to my problems.

A_Empow2 I think that in the group/organization/community that I belong to I can find the resources that I need to reach my aims.

What is "good" citizenship?

CATCH-EyoU further developed a critical – quantitative and qualitative - analysis of how active citizenship is empirically addressed in scientific literature. The CATCH-EyoU analysis (reported on in Banaji et al. 2018) is useful because it asks the crucial question: what is "good citizenship?". Keywords (and their relations to other, related words) analysed included: 'active citizenship', 'citizenship', 'civic participation', 'political participation', 'activism', 'young people'/'youth', 'European citizenship', 'youth citizenship', 'European youth'. The analysis stresses that the notion of 'activism' can involve very different meanings and associations, such as more neutral ones around 'citizenship' and 'education', but also more radical ones, related to ideological positions, 'dissidents', 'feminism', 'radicalism' or 'civil disobedience'. In the qualitative analysis, an important tension identified is between 'dutiful' and 'dissident citizenship' (Banaji et al. 2018: 266).

In general, Banaji et al. develop critical points such as the observation that there is a frequent disconnect between discussions of youth and citizenship, on one hand, and that of European citizenship, on the other. Also, there are many discussions on citizenship and democracy, but very frequently, what is exactly understood by democracy, why participation is important, and what citizenship is, remain unquestioned issues. The presumption is that there is a universal consensus on these matters (where the political reality shows there are tensions and great differences in understandings). There is a risk that 'active citizenship' is turned into a status-quo, conformist concept, in which the emphasis is on passive abiding and not critical monitoring of inequalities and political problems. Often, an implicit understanding of representative democracy is put forward, while denouncing the democratic deficit and electoral abstention, without duly questioning why people do not vote and whether there might be something wrong with the (representative-parliamentary) model as such.

What is active European citizenship?

CATCH-EyoU argues that different, more complex conceptualisations of citizenship need to be explored. CATCH-EyoU further concludes that: a) more work needs to be done on theorising and understanding what "European active citizenship" means in practice; b) the need for an elaboration of the differences in imagining citizenship in different contexts; c) the need for an elaboration of the complexities of *youth* European citizenship; d) an emphasis on practice rather than status.

Finally, in the Blue Paper *Challenging theory: an integrated analysis of youth active citizenship*, the authors provide a useful diversification of forms of citizenship: active, standby, unengaged satisfied citizens and active, standby, and unengaged dissatisfied citizens (Cicognani, Banaji, Motti-Stefanidi 2019). These are related to different intensities of political trust and political interest. Young people could be challenged by identifying themselves amongst these types and reflect on why and how they live their citizenship in a specific way.

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- PEACE+ may build on CATCH-EyoU in the development of its *own questionnaire* in relation to European Citizenship Education. Questions on how (young) people understand democracy, participation, and authoritarianism are significant, as well as questions about empowerment, the efficacy of political action, and the main obstacles to engage.

- PEACE+ could develop a nuanced, in-depth *glossary of key notions:* (different understandings of) democracy, participation, engagement, forms of citizenship (monitorial, critical, standby), participation in European politics.

- PEACE+ could develop a *participation narrative* on the range of benefits that come from actively participating in European politics (individual skills, social capital, European network, the common good, solidarity/helping marginalised groups, defending democracy, fighting intolerance, racism, discrimination).

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Article Banaji, et al. (2020). Citizenship's tangled web: Associations, gaps and tensions in formulations of European youth active citizenship across disciplines. In *Youth Citizenship and the European Union* (pp. 8-27). Routledge.

Cicognani, Banaji, Motti-Stefanidi 2019, Blue Paper *Challenging theory: an integrated analysis of youth active citizenship.*

Sincrony - youth engagement (Horizon Europe; grant agreement number 101132459)

2024-27

https://sincronyproject.eu/

The Sincrony project is of great value for PEACE+ as it pays attention to innovative – deliberative and participatory - democratic practices for young people (which can be relevant input for PEACE+ research, surveys, and focus groups, as well as the Citizens' Labs). In its deliverable 3.1, *Assessment of EU-level deliberative and participatory practices through an intersectional lens* (30 September 2024), the project seeks to understand what kind of participation opportunities have been created for young people in Europe, on local, national, and EU levels. The analysis includes informal and formal practices, and different practices and spaces for participation, including youth dialogues, youth engagement in co-creation, urban policy-

making, trainings in participation, and may other activities.[1] Sincrony recognizes that young people are often excluded from political institutions and political participation due to issues of age.

The report identifies different evaluative criteria for assessing to what extent opportunities for participation are created:

- *External inclusion*: how are participants selected for participatory processes? Are intersectional differences duly considered?
- *Internal inclusion*: to what extent is the participatory process inclusive in the way it is implemented? Is sufficient space provided for different groups, for minorities?
- *Intersectional purpose*: does the participatory process allow for duly reflection on existing hegemonies, forms of exclusion and marginalisation? Does it reflect on institutional change?
- *Output*: To what extent is the output produced by the participatory process impactful? To what extent will it lead to meaningful change?

Sincrony's deliverable 3.2, *Assessment of national and local practices* (29 November 2024) is of great value in showing the importance of participation for younger people. Sincrony emphasises that early good experiences with engagement are crucial for young people to engage also later on; to develop positive internal efficacy (confidence in one's own understanding of politics) and external efficacy (confidence that participation will make a difference). A critical insight offered is that various structural barriers prevent achieving a meaningful and equal opportunity and participation for young people. The report further stresses that too often there are forms of "tokenism" or "citizen-washing", where citizen participation does not have any significant impact and/or fails to include those that are marginalised or that have few opportunities to participate. The deliverable (and the Sincrony project more in general) stress the complexity of participation due to the intersectional obstacles for some (that is, the accumulation of various forms of exclusion or discrimination). Sincrony suggests that organisations may use a range of innovative and creative ways to engage young people. This includes classical forms of consensus-seeking and deliberation, including young people in decision-making are of great importance. But more creative ways and deeper democratic imagination may be needed. Citizenship is moving away – in a generational shift - from "dutiful citizenship" to "self-actualizing citizenship". Young people are more engaged in the latter, which includes loose, networked activism reflecting personal values, taste, and life-styles. Such activism focusses on the environment, racism, social justice, and anti-violence. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that "illiberal" forms of participation are also on the rise, e.g. against migrants, European integration, pro-nationalism, traditionalism, etc.

Engagement at early age

Non-formal participation

Sincrony uses a number of criteria to assess whether practices are meaningful for young people:

- *Voice*. The facilitation of practices that allow young people to articulate their views and ideas, and to provide them with active forms of listening;
- *Power.* The extent to which power is actually distributed to young participants, that is young people are "empowered", in course of their participation; *Support*. Participation is supported by training and further help in making participation effective;

[1] Useful participatory processes discussed are: EU Youth Dialogue / EU Youth Conference, Young Citizens' Dialogue (Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy); YouCount (Horizon), Confidence in Tomorrow, CP4 – Europe Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe (CoE), EU Children's Participation Platform (EU), DEEP - Linking Youth Project: E-participation & Active Participation among Young People (Partecipedia), Youth PB Accelerator, YES: Youth Engagement in Society – Training programme (Erasmus+).

- *Deliberation*. The structural inclusion of forms of open, deliberative interaction between participants in processes of participation, in which participants can articulate their ideas, are listened, can listen to other people's views and opinions, and reshape their views accordingly.
- *Recognition.* Young people need to feel valued and respected in providing their contributions.

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- Duly recognizing that today, democracy is under threat and needs reinvigoration and innovation, PEACE+ may build on Sincrony to further develop materials, modules, and trainings in *innovative forms of citizen engagement*, in particular with regard to the European project;

- PEACE+ could develop modules around "*democratic imagination*" where (young) people brainstorm with help of experts and practitioners on how to find new ways of engagement and participation (increasing our understanding of how to link "self-actualising citizenship" with institutional practices).

- Sincrony's *criteria* could be explicitly addressed in PEACE+ training modules, as part of training in participation. This could also explicitly reflect "everyday democratic practices", that is, forms of deliberation and participation in everyday situations, including in the family and in schools.

Reconciling Europe with its Citizens through Democracy and Rule of Law (RECONNECT) (Horizon Europe; Grant agreement ID: 770142)

2018-22

https://reconnect-europe.eu/

Reconnect was a Horizon 2020 project implemented between 2018 and 2022 by 18 partner institutions from 14 EU countries. It was focused on Reconciling Europe with its Citizens through Democracy and the Rule of Law and on strengthening the EU's legitimacy through democracy and the rule of law. RECONNECT also sought to understand and explain EU's current legitimacy crisis by focusing on the mismatches between the Union's democratic and rule of law principles and the practices of institutions, as well as on how these are viewed by EU citizens.

The project was comprised of 16 Work Packages grouped along 5 thematic areas (Context and concepts; Democracy; Rule of Law; Policy case studies; Recommendations).

Although not specifically focused on youth participation, the project had a strong youth-targeted awareness-raising component, with Work Package 16 – led by the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law - specifically addressing Dissemination. WP16 was in charge of developing and implementing the project's Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation (CDE) strategy, so to make research, recommendations and proposed Treaty changes available to relevant institutions and organisations, and to the wider public, including European civil society actors, media, academics and young EU citizens, in a direct and accessible way, and gather their feedback on that. Along this line, WP16 promoted the project's research findings, activities and outputs through online platforms, social media, ad hoc events and workshops to ensure wide visibility and engagement, particularly among young EU citizens.

Young citizens

While the key target groups of this dissemination process mainly included EU and Member State officials, politicians, judges, civil society actors, journalists, academics, and EU and non-EU citizens at large, the Bingham Centre and the University of Leuven also developed ad hoc informational resources for primary and secondary school students on various topics related to the EU, its institutions and the key features of the rule of law. These are all available on the web-hosted RECONNECT Resource centre on democracy and

the rule of law for young people living in the European Union (https://reconnect-europe.eu/youthresourcecentre/).

source: https://reconnect-europe.eu/youthresourcecentre/

Under the "I am a student" section, informational leaflets are made available for online consultation and free download on the following topics:

- What is the EU?
- What are my rights as an EU citizen?
- What are human rights?
- What is the Rule of Law?
- What is democracy?
- What are my rights as a child?
- What is the EU doing about migration?
- What is the EU doing about climate change?
- What is the EU doing to make the internet safer for me?
- What is the EU doing to support education and training?

EU and young people

While these materials are mainly designed for secondary school students aged, a version is also available tailored on the learning approach for primary school students, with slightly modified texts, children friendly graphics and an easy-reading font. These are all collected under the "I am an educator" section of Reconnect Youth Resource Centre, alongside "Guidance for educators" sheets for each of the topics covered by the informational leaflets for students.

These educational materials are intended to function as stand-alone items or as part of broader citizenship education. They are designed to support educators in implementing classroom discussions about the European Union, the rights of EU citizens, and the significance of key concepts such as the Rule of Law, democracy, and human rights. They also address other selected cross-cutting topics that are deemed especially relevant to younger audiences (migration, climate change, social media, etc.). All the information sheets are available independently or collectively. Guidance notes for educators include age-appropriate discussion prompts, suggested videos, and links to additional online resources for further reference.

MOOC on European integration

On the other side, RECONNECT researchers also developed an 8–week introductory Massive Open Online Course for university students, professionals, and life-long learners, on democracy and rule of law in Europe, awarding a school-verified certificate. The course offered an introduction to the European Union, exploring its evolution, institutions, and shared values. It then explored the principles of democracy, examining both the current challenges and its practices within the EU and national parliaments. The course also covered the concept underlying the Rule of Law, its integration into the EU legal framework, and the relevant available enforcement tools within member states. In addition, it examined how various EU policy areas intersect with debates around democracy and the Rule of Law.

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- RECONNECT's approach to youth education and awareness raising on democracy and the Rule of Law in the EU can certainly be inspirational for PEACE+, for the type of educational and dissemination materials developed and the various target groups according to their age and level of education. While the purpose remains the same, the means are adapted to the specificities of each age/education institution group, thus potentially covering all the stages of formal education (primary school, secondary school, university, post-university and LLL).

- The idea of developing (within PEACE+ or at a later stage) thematic educational materials aimed at enhancing youth participation of Erasmus students and other selected youth groups alongside matching guidance sheets for educators and/or facilitators of discussion groups could greatly benefit from the experience of Reconnect. The PEACE+ research team could also get in touch with the experts that participated in Reconnect to discuss lessons learned and evaluate specific strategies to implement similar activities in different contexts. At the same time and for the same purposes, it would be interesting to contact the team of experts in charge of the Massive Open Online Course for university students, professionals, and life-long learners.

- Additionally, the guidance sheets could be adapted for implementing discussion sessions within focus group meetings or short training activities in a future phase of Peace+.

- It is also worth mentioning that the topics covered by the educational materials developed under RECONNECT's WP16 do not only cover formal institution or governance-related aspects only (e.g., EU institutions, their internal functioning, etc.), but also touch upon youth-sensitive subjects such as environment, digital communication and migration, that are often deemed very relevant in the public perception of European youth and often represent their main fields of political activism or engagement at large. This approach allows to see the EU, its institutions and the rights connected to EU citizenship as cross-cutting to a whole set of everyday aspects that young people may find more appealing.

Larpocracy: Developing Spaces for Deliberation and Democratic Skills through Role-Playing (Horizon Europe; Grant agreement ID: 101177307)

2025-27

https://www.larpocracy.eu/

The project is led by Upsala University, Sweden, and aims to investigate the potential of democratic innovation by means of 'live-action role playing' (LARP). LARP is proposed as a way of promoting democratic participation, by means of fostering democratic capacities and political engagement, stimulating specific democratic skills and promoting democratic values such as equal participation, listening and taking turns.

The starting point of the project is that online social media are not providing alternative arenas for promoting civic engagement and deliberation among people with diverse opinions. Larpocracy hence sets out to develop alternative forms of civic engagement, focussing on offline, online, and hybrid or mixed forms. LARP is one form that focusses on role playing as an alternative way of engaging people. Civic engagement is stimulated in physical as well as online spaces. Larpocracy also seeks to imagine forms of social media and other spaces that are more conducive to political expression.

One focus of attention is lifting the barriers to participation by means of using techniques of role playing, with the help of artists. A project focussed on LARP in the context of the COP30 event in November 2025 in Belém, Brazil, engaged in the careful designing of 'accessible entry points', invitations to participate, by using immersive theatre and participatory performance. The project recognizes that 'participation in cultural activities and political processes is not equally accessible for all people. Myriad forms of privilege and disadvantage make it more, or less, feasible for individuals and social groups to take part in forms of

decision-making that affect their lives' (Lopes Ramos: 8). Forms of stimulating engagement include 'moving together' activities, 'game design' and 'live action role-play', 'binaural dinner dates', 'clowning' and many more (Lopes Ramos 2026: 8). The idea is that role playing has 'deeply pedagogical' dimensions (Haarman 2025), and may include civic exercises that help to 'cultivate empathy, builds communities of inquiry, and prepare students for the complexities of the world' (Haarman 2025: 1). Role playing games can be used in a variety of contexts such as classrooms, museums, and international events, and can be utilized to explore various topics, for instance, historical consciousness, social justice, and the negotiation of trauma' (Haarman 2025: 1). What makes the Larpocracy project particularly useful for PEACE+ is the suggestion of close connection between the idea of role playing and the ordinary role of the teacher (at various levels of education). If in role playing there is a 'game master' who acts as a facilitator and participant, a teacher – rather than engaging in top-down, hierarchical forms of teaching - equally has a role of 'co-creator', someone who helps starting up and designing the learning process but equally fosters opportunities for learning and engagement (Haarman 2025). Both role playing and teaching are centrally focussed on the 'players' or 'students', who are not so much merely receivers of knowledge, but actively co-create the learning process (Haarman 2025).

Game master - Teacher

Larpocracy has further developed a 'Deliberative Civic Values Index' and 'Observational Checklist'. The Index is centred around four factors: reasoning, listening, reflecting, and also a non-deliberative rhetorical value:

> *Reasoning* refers to participants' willingness to state, explain, and justify their views. *Listening* means paying equal attentive attention to all other participants. *Reflecting* involves the readiness to rethink initial views and ideas in continuous deliberation. And *non-deliberate rhetorical value* refers to framing the conversation as an attempt to argue convincingly for one's own opinion and to win the debate (Feng 2025: 2).

Deliberative Civic Values Index

The Index identifies various 'indicators' related to the specific roles of speaker and listener. For instance, the speaker engages – among others - in facilitation ('Process-oriented utterances that regulate or coordinate the flow of discussion') and sourcing elaboration (Defined as the utterance when the speaker uses interpersonal or external reference to support an argument). The index can be used both for analytical purposes, but also as the bases of guidelines for the roles of participants in deliberative settings.

Table 1 – Observation indicators

Role	Indicator	Code	Definition
Speaker	Social talk	SOCL	Utterances that express thoughts not directly related to the topic of deliberation, serving primarily social or relational purpose.
	Facilitation	FAC	Process-oriented utterances that regulate or coordinate the flow of discussion.
	Opinion	OPI	Opinion is utterance that presents a clear claim or idea.
	Sourcing Elaboration	SEL	Defined as the utterance when the speaker uses interpersonal or external reference to support an argument.
	Genuine Question	GQ	Utterance when the speaker seeks information from others.

Role	Indicator	Code	Definition
	Logical Elaboration	LEL	Defined as utterance where the speaker expands an argument based on logical, hypothetical reasoning, or value justification.
	Topic Continuity	TPC	Coded when the speaker maintains topic continuity
	Competition Behaviour	CB	When the participant displays behaviour that is oriented toward winning the discussion:
	Clarification	CLAR	Clarification is utterance when the speaker tries to clarify the expression of their prior expression or opinion.
	Hard Power Behaviour	HB	When the participants display hard power behaviour, such as threating and demanding.
Listener	Nodding	NOD	When the listener responds to the speaker with head movement
	Verbal Response	VEB	When the listener produces short verbal phrases to the speaker.
	Notes taking	NT	When the listener writes or types notes related to the discussion. Can happen in both impersonal and online conditions.
	Interruption	INT	When the listener interrupts another speaker's speaking turn, as a way to draw attention away from the current speaker.
	Emotional Expression	EME	When the listener reacts to the speaker through facial expression.
	Gaze	GAZ	When the listener maintains gaze toward the speaker (>2s).
	Motor Mimicry	MM	When the listener mirrors or synchronizes with the speaker's expressions, gestures, or movements.

Source: Feng 2025: 6.7.

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RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- The inclusive participation of different groups (that may normally not be inclined to politically participate) needs accessible, structured environments that stimulate mutual trust, and help develop democratic skills such as listening, compromise, and mutual attunement.

- Role playing games can be used in a variety of contexts such as classrooms, as well as international Erasmus events, and can be utilized to explore various topics, for instance, European values, historical consciousness, social justice, forms of inclusion and mutual respect, and the negotiation of trauma'.

- There is a close connection between the idea of role playing (and the facilitating role of the 'game master') and the ordinary role of the teacher (at various levels of education). If in role playing the 'game master' acts as a facilitator and participant, a teacher equally has the role of a 'co-creator', someone who helps designing but equally fosters opportunities for learning and engagement

YouthDecide 2040: Visions of Democracy with and for Future Generations (Horizon Europe; Grant agreement ID: 101177438)

2025-27

https://youthdecide2040.eu/home

Imagination and re-imagining the future of democracy

The project Youth Decide 2040 has its main objective the outlining of democracy narratives for the EU, co-created with European youth. Youth Decide 2040 attempts to achieve this through evidence-based historical and contemporary knowledge, the use of strategic foresight, and of robust forms of deliberation. A significant emphasis is on the role of imagination and re-imagining the future of democracy.

Youth Decide 2040 provides an important basis for discussions on democracy by providing a broad overview of the foundations of democracy as well as complexities of, and challenges to democratic politics. The project discusses both institutional dimensions, such as in relation to political competition, institutional safeguards, and the role of bureaucracy, and inspirational dimensions, that is, the profound ideas that shape democracy as well as dimensions of political culture (not least in relation to participation) (D1.1 2025).

Youth Decide 2040 also sets the context of imagining the future of European democracy by discussing the main challenges, or the current 'crisis of democracy'. Crises have to do with the breakdown of traditional parties and party systems, the rise of populist, radical-right and anti-system parties, and the declining support of the citizens for democracy. The project also discusses the complexities that arise when authoritarian or populist regimes (re-)attempt to construct democracy.

Different models of democracy

Democratic renewal and democratic innovations are widely examined in the project, starting from the important observation that democracy does not mean one thing. Any imagination of the future of European democracy does hence do well to start from the recognition that there are different democratic models. These include electoral democracy, deliberative democracy, direct democracy, as well as the dimensions of digital democracy and activism in democracy (D1.3 2025).

Innovations may be important to re-boost existing democratic systems, and also to make democracy more attractive for young people, for instance, by lowering the voting age. Other democratic innovations include the renewal of political parties by allowing for more forms of bottom-up participation. A third important innovation is that of deliberative assemblies or 'mini-publics'. In all cases, there is a risk that innovation only leads to 'tokenism' or 'citizen washing', meaning that new participatory tools do not really lead to more citizen influence on politics. Imagining the future of European democracy should hence also carefully reflect how to allow forms of participation for citizens, give them a voice, empower them, and make them feeling engaged (D1.3 2025).

Youth Decide 2040 usefully explore methods of co-creation (D2.2 2025). A healthy context for co-creation needs to consider the role of shared understandings and of fundamental values in collective discussions and forms of co-creation. Important dimensions of deliberation and forms of co-creation include: inclusivity and diversity; iteration and reflexivity; transparency and trust; dialogic engagement; context sensitivity; and shared ownership (D2.2 2025: 7-8).

How to link local, regional, national, and European democratic experiences?

A further important point is that of different levels and scales of democracy. How to link local, regional, national, and European democratic experiences (D1.3 2025)? How could the different levels of engagement and participation be linked, so that European citizens feel valued and empowered on the different levels of European democracy? An imagination on the future of European democracy would clearly need to reflect on this democratic dilemma that has been haunting the European Union for a long time.

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- PEACE+ can build on the diverse models of democracy and the different democratic innovations discussed in Youth Decide 2040. These can be a prominent part of discussion groups in PEACE+ and be considered for inclusion of educational materials, such as the modules. Understanding of diversity and innovation may help to stimulate Erasmus+ participants in developing further civic and democratic knowledge, creative democratic skills, and ideas of forms of engagement and participation.

- The diversity of democracy as well as the diversity of challenges is a significant dimension of

- The dimensions of imagination, creativity, co-creation, scenario-building, and democratic innovation are important dimensions to consider in PEACE+ events and projects on engagement and participation. Thinking together about the future provides a promising form of democracy in practice.

Erasmus+/Jean Monnet projects

EUCivic. Empowering European Citizens Through European Civic Education. Erasmus Plus, Jean Monnet Project.

2014-16

European civic education

The EUCivic project aimed at widening reflection and debate on European democracy and European civic education (ECE). The project aimed at disseminating an ECE proposal that had been developed by Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna of Pisa in the previous years, involving various beneficiaries (students, teachers, researchers and civil society associations) in Tuscany. EUCivic stimulated debate about European democracy and the EU institutions in relation to four forms of European integration (unification in banking, fiscal, economic and political terms). EUCivic exploited and disseminated the deliverables and outcomes of a previous "Learning EU at school" projects developed by Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna di Pisa. These included: multimedia didactic material (slides, outlines, and also short video clips); the ECE Newsletter and other online tools with nationwide diffusion; and the original European communication format the 'European Awareness Days' (EADs)[2] – which was recognized as a best practice by the Managing Partnership in Italy, and by other Institutions that are including EADs in their project. EUCivic realized EADs in Cagliari, Firenze and Verona with the support and partnership of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR).

[222] The European Awareness Days (EADs) is an innovative format focused on European communication and involved a high number of participants (either in person, or via streaming). It is worth noting that the EADs format may be adapted to a public of all ages. Every EAD was characterized by one of two theatrical performances - created and directed by Daniela Martinelli and Francesco Pigozzo for the Gli Spaesati Association and implemented by the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies of Pisa and CESUE (Europa: che Passione! Storia di un amore tormentato (2010) and Come Va il Mondo? (2007)). Their aim was not just to make the communication of European issues more attractive; but to contribute, through an artistic approach, to the paradigm shift brought about by supra-national processes like that occurring at European level. Europa: *Che Passione!* was a musical about the history of European integration from the end of the Second World War to date. *Come Va il Mondo?* was a live performance, which focuses on contemporary paradoxes, and on the key role European unity might play for their overcoming. During the European Awareness Days participants were directly involved in a scientific conference; a structured debate; models of parliamentary assemblies; an institutional roundtable; a debate about European policies and/or about EU institutional development and integration process. The European Awareness Days took place either in the morning – during school time – in the evening or at night, so as to reach different groups of people. Moreover, the EADs fills both training and cultural/entertainment needs. Complementary activities – implemented by the CesUE team – took place before the European Awareness Days, such as training about European Civic Education; roundtables about the future of the Union, gathering civil society representatives; meetings to discuss about European funds with representatives of public administrations and other partners. From 2012 to 2019 the EAD were realized in all the main Italian Cities and in the mayor European capitals (including Paris, Madrid, Berlin, Lisbon, Warsaw, Edinburgh, etc.) and broadcasted on Italian and Spanish public television.

Within EADs in each city the main activities were: 1) a "matinee" centred on the play "Europe, what a passion!" and addressed to engage the students, as protagonists, in a participated debate on EU; 2) an afternoon "deliberative workshop" involving academics, NGOs and civil society, Schools, local authorities - and possibly EU institutions representatives - in a constructive discussion about the democratic transformation of the EU. EUCivic also included 3) a series of three webinars about professional training on the ECE open to all interested teachers; 4) a cycle of four webinars to discuss a new ECE program for the Italian secondary schools.

European awareness days

The activities were enhanced and disseminated through the production of six main deliverables: 1) a specific project web-page on the SSSUP's site; 2) Multimedia recording of the activities published on the project web-page; 3) a TV programme dedicated to the project's activities (on Rai); 4) the production of a document addressed to inform the institution about the "deliberative workshops" results; 5) the publication of a new handbook regarding the European Civic Education; 6) the diffusion of the project contents on SSSUP ECE Newsletter that already has more than two hundred members.

The analysis that was at the back of the project was that Italian media on average supplied poor quality EU-information. EUcivic contributed to answer the widespread need by students and teachers - and operators in the field of culture and civil society - to better understand the EU. Especially teachers, in 2014, didn't have any EU-related contents in their own past education, and required specific information, training and help in developing appropriate teaching materials. EUCivic was part of a wider SSSUP strategy to foster ECE in Italy. At that time, the Scuola Sant'Anna of Pisa's activities in Tuscany created a growing demand for ECE, so also EUCivic included activities in Tuscany, but also targeted other Italian Regions where like-minded local universities and authorities wanted to work in the same direction.

Use of art in education

Impact: the Project had a huge impact, quantitatively speaking. It created a large network between the regions of Tuscany, Sardinia and Veneto, involving several relevant stakeholders and promoting a debate on EU between students (around 1700) in all the venues interested by the EADs. Furthermore, its deliverables (the ECE Handbook, the final report of the Deliberative Workshops and the TV broadcasting on Rai) increased dramatically the number of the involved beneficiaries. For all this reasons, it was recognized by the European Commission as a success story in 2017.

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- The project showed how it is possible to use *music* in order to spread knowledge and interest about EU and also how to involve students in a debate adopting an non-conventional methodology, based on arts (music, the theatrical play, etc.).

- It was an important test case because it had a national focus and was based on a variegated audience. The same approach has been simultaneously – see the MoreEU part below - used to enhance debate at the EU level.

- The project promoted a model of the *deliberative workshops* which represented a practice of deliberative democracy, uniting students, citizens, stakeholders, academic and politicians in a debate on the EU future. The accent on active citizenship was the core effort of this project that, with a low amount of money obtained an extraordinary result.

MorEU. More EU to Overcome the Crisis. Erasmus Plus Jean Monnet Network.

2014-2017

Euro-scepticism

Since 2008 Euroscepticism started rising, using problematic arguments regarding European integration. Academic knowledge on the EU had to be used in the public debate, but universities did not reach out and EU teaching in high schools was limited. MoreEU aimed to fill this gap, targeting the 5 Euro-Plus capitals where the EU and the euro were under Eurosceptic attack. In fact, with this Jean Monnet project, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna of Pisa (Italy) joined Notre Europe from Paris (France), CEU San Pablo from Madrid (Spain), University of Warsaw (Poland) and Nova Law School from Lisbon (Portugal) to create an innovative Network that engaged to face this challenge. The Network's activities revolved around the question "What Europe is needed and how to get it?" articulated into five specific themes:

1. What form of democratic government for the EU? What kind of democracy is best suited for the EU?

2. What forms of differentiated integration? How to federalize the Eurozone while keeping the Single Market and the EU?

3. What kind and form of European solidarity to overcome the crisis?

4. What budget, resources, fiscal and borrowing powers for the EU and/or Eurozone?

5. How to overcome the legitimacy and democratic deficit of the EU?

An underlying concern of the network project was how to reach out to communicate the EU more effectively to confront Euroscepticism. In order to doing that the Network promoted debates with relevant stakeholder on the above-mentioned issues and proposed innovative formats of communication and civic engagement that were tested by SSSUP during its past JM projects such as EUGlobal, EUWay e EUrgencies@Dem. According to the project in each involved capital city – Paris, Madrid, Warsaw and Lisbon - there were the following activities:

- a European Awareness Day (EAD): the innovative communication format experimented by Scuola Sant'Anna in Italy in previous and coeval JM projects, like EUCivic), including a public event involving a vast audience of young people (500), a deliberative workshop with relevant stakeholders (15 organizations);

- a seminar with public officials from relevant administrations to exchange best practices on EU communication

- an academic conference involving scholars from other universities and think tanks too and resulting in open access publications and in Policy Reports;

- a yearly seminar/webinar for high school teachers (30).

The project[3] exploited an artistic and musical format at the European level, which the SSSUP had before - and simultaneously with the EUCivic Jean Monnet Project (Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna of Pisa)- tried only at Italian level.

[3] The MoreEU activities had a considerable impact reaching more than 3000 persons in the Network's countries and beyond. Only the five EADs realized in Florence (which were broadcasted by RAI, the Italian Public Television), Madrid, Warsaw, Lisbon and Strasbourg involved 2600 students. Some of the debates and interventions related to the EADs in these five cities are available here: More Europe - YouTube. The teacher seminars in Italy, Spain, France, Portugal and Poland reached more than 250 teachers while the five conferences held in Florence,

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- The MorEU Network showed at the European level (and translating every content of the project, theatrical play included, in all the national languages of the involved countries), how to utilize music in order to spread knowledge and interest about EU institutions and history.

- It also revealed how to involve students in a EU focused debate, adopting a methodology which is absolutely not conventional and based on arts (music, the theatrical play, etc.).

- It produced an exchange of best practices between European organizations involved in promoting the European Civic Engagement, creating an itinerant format which connected stakeholders, civil society, students, professors and politicians in 5 countries (Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Poland).

- A further element of relevance is the idea of sharing the same citizen-oriented content on several different audiences as it happened with the EADs. They were realized in a theatre, put on Youtube and sometimes broadcasted by public television, having an impact on a huge number of participants and also opening debates in the theatre and online.

AwarEU. European Awareness. Erasmus Plus, Key Action 3.

2017-2019

At the basis of Awareu project was the success of the European Awareness Days, developed by CesUE and Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna as an innovative training and information event for citizens, based on the musical recital "Europe: what a Passion!", which tells the story of European Integration as a tormented love story. The intent was to fully exploit, at the European level, each part of the theatrical play to create an innovative instrument dedicated to European Civic Education and European Active Citizenship.

Multi-lingual contents

In order to do that, AwarEU project could count on a strong and effective network of partners, able to produce contents in several languages. The AwarEU Network included CesUE (SSUP of Pisa), Notre Europe Institute of Paris, Nova Law University of Lisbon, Aston University in Birmingham, The University of Stirling and the CEU San Pablo of Madrid. This KA3 project the European Awareness Days and the Musical all over Europe, representing it in each country through an original version created by its authors. The tour ended in the prestigious Odéon Theater in Paris on 5 February 2018. AwarEU brought the format into five languages and five European capitals, reaching almost 3,000 citizens (including representatives of pro-European associations, local and national authorities) involving them in a broad discussion about past, present and future prospects of the European Union with the experts of the network. Furthermore the Network created a platform in five languages which guests a distance learning environment on the European Union (VLEU - Virtual Learning Environment on the EU) that offers four multimedia courses in all the five languages of the project (Italian, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese): a online course on the history of the EU, totally free, based on videoclips taken from the musical recital and on its communication logic; a short European alphabetization course to help all citizens to understand the fundamental principles of the European Union; a online course for journalists; a online course for teachers.

Madrid, Warsaw, Lisbon and Paris engaged 124 scholars from more than 15 different countries plus other hundreds of attending people (among other scholars, general public and students). The five MoreEU Deliberative Workshops – Florence, Madrid, Warsaw, Lisbon and Strasbourg - involved 210 people while the Stakeholders meetings participants were around 84 people. The Network visibility (with the TV broadcasting and reports) and its dissemination results pushed the number of the Network's indirect beneficiaries around an audience of hundred thousands of people.

This courses united parts of the theatrical play to virtual class and animation in order to create short video lesson to easily follow from home.[4] Today, after the end of the project, la Compagnia gli Spaesati, which owns the platform, added also courses in German, Hungarian and Polish. See https://vleu.awareu.eu/

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- The Network certified the EU success the format experimented in Jean Monnet projects such as EUCivic (done in Italy) and MoreEU (realized in 5 countries), reaching impressive numbers and obtaining also mentions and projections of some public televisions around Europe. It joined the strength of the European Awareness Days format (see here) with a platform and interactive online courses directed to spread the European Civic Education. It certified how it is possible to involve thousands of Europeans in EU formation and debate, introducing new tools (such as the video pills on the VLE) and promoting EU engagement also outside school and university, exploiting venues such as theatres and associations to guest debates and micro debate inspired by single recorded parts of the musicals or of the VLE Pills. All of these constitutes a best practice that is truly relevant for any investigation regarding the promotion of European Civic Engagement.

[4] The project reached a considerable audience. The EADs reached 3000 persons and the VLE platform, which is still in use, almost 10.000 in 5 years. The format of the video-pills revealed as very effective in order to communicate with students, helping professors to build innovative syllabus on the ECE. Plus the project activities stimulated a debate between students and experts that could be considered as relevant as example of European Active Citizenship, with students that dialogued with politicians and academics.

Youth projects

Youth Policy Labs

Overview

Based on the broad mandate expressed in art. 21 TEU, in recent years, the EU has actively contributed to supporting EU Candidate Countries and Eastern Partnership (EaP) Countries in designing, implementing and monitoring their youth policies, in line with the youth policy mainstreaming approach pursued since the EC White Paper on Youth of 2001.

Along this line, the current Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action 2022 – 2027 "Promoting meaningful youth participation and empowerment in EU external action for sustainable development, equality and peace " is the key strategic framework setting out the priorities and main areas of EU external action support in the field of youth policies. It applies to EU candidate as well as to EU Neighbouring countries.

Young people as agents of change

By acknowledging the role of young people as "powerful agents of change" and their role in addressing global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development and in promoting innovation, peace and the full enjoyment of civil, political, socio-economic and cultural rights, the YAP 2022-2027 also recognises the need to promote their engagement and empowerment, which is even more relevant after the Covid-19 pandemic and in light of multiple armed conflicts that currently affecting these countries.

By mirroring the three pillars around which the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 revolves, i.e., "engage", "empower", "connect", the YAP aims at:

o supporting the creation of a safe public environment enabling participation in democratic processes and civil society at large;

o fighting inequalities and provide young people with the skills and resources they need to fulfil their potential;

o fostering opportunities for young people to network and exchange with their peers .

As both EU Candidate and EaP Countries experience low youth participation to discussion fora and decision-making processes (though to various extents), the increased involvement of young people is seen as pivotal not only to foster coherence between actual needs and design and implementation of youth policies, but also to promote accountability on youth issues as well as strengthening good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights, especially in fragile and marginal contexts, thus ultimately leading to more inclusive societies.

Among the various initiatives implemented under the broad scope of EU external action interventions in these countries, that of Youth Policy Labs is deemed to be particularly relevant for its hands-on approach, as well as for its replicability in different contexts and countries, due to its flexibility and adaptability to the specificities of a given country (or community within it).

Youth policy labs

Promoted by the YAP 2022-2027 as an innovative tool for facilitating programming processes in youth affairs-related fields, Youth Policy Labs are designed to increase effective participation of youth and other stakeholders in the re-definition of existing policy challenges and in the participatory design and implementation of innovative policy solutions. In

particular, YPL offer a cross-sectoral dimension between the youth sector and other sectors in matters relevant to young people. YPL practice usually involves three main areas of focus:

- providing new policy solutions through inspiring practical projects;
- building the skills and knowledge of decision-makers and youth representatives on co-policy making;
- inspiring new thinking and innovation in policy through processes of analysis, writing and experimenting.

This chapter provides an overview of two different YPL experiences: one involving EU candidate countries (the Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs) and another implemented in EaP Countries under the EU4Youth regional programme and its Youth Engagement Roadmaps project in particular.

Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs (WBYPL)

The WBYPL are a EU-funded flagship initiative of the Regional Cooperation Council , a South Eastern Europe cooperation framework launched in 2008 at the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) and – as of today – comprised of 46 members, ranging from individual member states to international, regional and supranational institutional actors such as CoE, EU, NATO, EIB, UNDP and WB.

According to the comprehensive methodology developed in 2021 during the first phase of the project, the Youth Policy Lab model aims at bringing youth and policymakers together and engage them in a regular dialogue be based on the following principles similar to the EU Youth Dialogue process conducted at the EU level:

- Information sharing among all relevant actors and stakeholders involved in the process, including participation possibilities;
- Consultations including evidence-based research results;
- Direct dialogue between policymakers and young people;
- Continuous partnership in the governance process at economy and regional level with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders depending on the topic of the cycle;
- Everyone's contribution equally matters - in the process of co-creation such as Youth Lab every actor is equal at the table and so is their contribution.

The policymaking process proposed by the WBYPL experience involves a two-tier approach involving the following:

1) Regional Pool of Experts, including:

- Ministries / Agencies for Youth or other relevant Ministries in charge of youth-related processes and policies, as well as topics identified for each Thematic Policy Lab;
- Youth representatives to be selected through open and transparent process in cooperation with national Youth Councils and Youth Umbrella Organisations;

2) Working Groups at country level, including:

- Members of the Regional Pool of Experts as necessary

- Local and other youth councils
- Youth organisations, as well as organisations working with young vulnerable groups
- Specific theme related organisations relevant for the process
- Youth researchers
- Relevant public administration institutions
- Others

Youth Organisations will play a crucial role in selecting the participants to the Youth Policy Lab Working Group, taking into account multiple criteria of representativeness and sectoral expertise. In line with the principle of co-creation, it is strongly recommended that the WG is co-chaired by representatives of institutions and youth organisations. The relevant governmental bodies involved in the process act as a secretariat of the national Working Group.

Principle of co-creation

Facilitators will guide the process throughout its phases and will ensure equal involvement of all the concerned parties in a safe and non-judgemental environment capable of fostering transparent dialogue among the stakeholders.

Crucial to the attainment of the proposed goal is the principle of co-creation, i.e. «the process of creating new public policies and services with people and not for them. It can also be called joint thinking which leads to improvements of policy development in line with the needs of the citizens as well as creating the sense of ownership which should lead to better implementation at all levels» (p. 21). This implies that equal representation, ownership, responsibility, governance and accountability of all involved stakeholders need to be consistently ensured throughout the process.

The proposed methodology encompasses several steps:

1. Identification and analysis of the problem/issue to be tackled within a given community, and mobilise the community around it. This can be done via consultation processes and mapping of issues in the relevant community through preferred methods and tools. In this process, it is important to consider the 3 P's, i.e., PLACES (a physical understanding of the community and its geography, to help uncover some of its issues, challenges, and different experiences), PEOPLE (taking into account different profiles, categories and interests in the initiative) and POWER (formal of non-formal centres of power who influence decision-making processes in the concerned community).

2. Developing recommendations through the active identification and discussion of suitable policy options within the Working Groups, usually through the sequence: identify and clarify the policy issue; research relevant background and context; identify the alternatives; carry out the required consultations; select the best policy option; prepare a policy recommendation document for approval. Recommendations can range from broad national policy programmes to smaller scale awareness-raising interventions depending from the nature of the issue selected, the relevant community and the scope of the analysis.

3. Developing an action plan (roadmap) that breaks down the desired outcome into practical measurable steps, input, calendar and milestones.

The whole YPL exercise shall be carried out according to an adequate timeframe that encompasses the following sessions (p. 33):

1. Preparatory phase (identification of the issues youth is facing, ensuring there is no overlap with the existing policy frameworks or mechanisms, selection of participants, training on the methodology);

2. Kick-off (definition of possible solutions and action plan);

3. Implementation phase (during which policymakers and youth are working jointly on implementation of jointly identified solutions);

4. Mid-term review of the achievements and adjustment of approach if needed;

5. Final review of the success of solutions deployed to tackle specific issues.

The WBYPL methodology also offers several annexes providing theoretical and practical insight on the main values and principles guiding the implementation of the YPL exercise. The session sheets under Annex 5 are particularly useful as they outline the different sessions for the implementation of the different phases, both in presence and online, thus providing guidance for facilitators and inspiration for those that will need to adapt the sessions to specific contexts, issues or communities.

Since 2020, two cycles of WBYPL have been implemented (2020-2024 and 2025-ongoing), focusing the following topics:

a) Youth unemployment was selected as the focus of the First Regional Thematic Youth Policy Lab after broad consultations. Youth and policymakers across the "Western Balkans 6" were trained on a common methodology and model. A Regional Pool of Experts was created through online training sessions in late 2020. The initiative officially launched with a two-day online Kick-Off event in December 2020. Mixed Working Groups of youth and policymakers were formed from different countries and addressed quality internships and apprenticeships, focusing on NEETs and vulnerable groups. They also worked on education and training aligned with labour market needs. Entrepreneurship incentives and programmes formed the third key thematic area. Eleven regional policy recommendations were jointly developed and adapted nationally. Action plans were presented in 2021, with final results showcased in an ad hoc meeting in Budva in June 2022.

Youth unemployment

b) Mental health was selected as the focus of the Second Youth Policy Lab by the Regional Youth Meeting in June 2021 convening 17 youth leadership representatives from WB6. A Regional Pool of Experts was formed to address youth mental health issues and the experts developed 13 regional recommendations emphasising awareness-raising, support measures, and prevention. The Kick-off Conference in Tirana launched a systematic regional approach to mental health. Progress and developments were presented at the Midterm Conference in Pristina, where Working Group co-chairs showcased advances made at the regional and economy levels. Final tangible results were presented in Belgrade in June 2023.

c) The Green Agenda was selected as the theme of an ad hoc Youth Policy Lab during a three-day Kick-Off Conference in June 2024. The conference focused on Green Agenda advocacy, plastic pollution prevention, and circular economy. Participants jointly developed actionable environmental policy recommendations, which formed the basis for ongoing regional work. A Midterm Review Conference was held in April to assess progress, where Working Groups presented emerging solutions and shared feedback. Final results were presented in Ljubljana in October 2025.

d) The Fourth Youth Policy Lab on Media Literacy and Disinformation kicked-off in November 2025 in Tirana. Regulatory agencies and experts from the Western Balkans six gathered to co-create actionable recommendations in the fields of Media and Information Literacy, Hate Speech, Discrimination and Cyberbullying, and Youth in Media, resulting in 12 recommendations. These will serve as a basis for further work at country level in the coming months.

Youth Policy Labs under the EU4Youth programme

EU4Youth is a flagship regional programme launched in 2017 and led by EC DG NEAR in close cooperation with other DGs and EU agencies such as DG EAC, DG EMPL, EACEA, ETF and the EU Delegations to the concerned countries. Structured around three key pillars (i.e., education and employability, entrepreneurship and employment and engagement and empowerment), EU4Youth aims at increasing the employability and active participation of young people in EaP countries, and to increase investment in young people's skills, entrepreneurship and employability, encouraging their active participation in both democratic life and the labour market. EU4Youth has a specific focus on disadvantaged youth and vulnerable groups, as well as to gender equality and women empowerment.

Employability and active participation

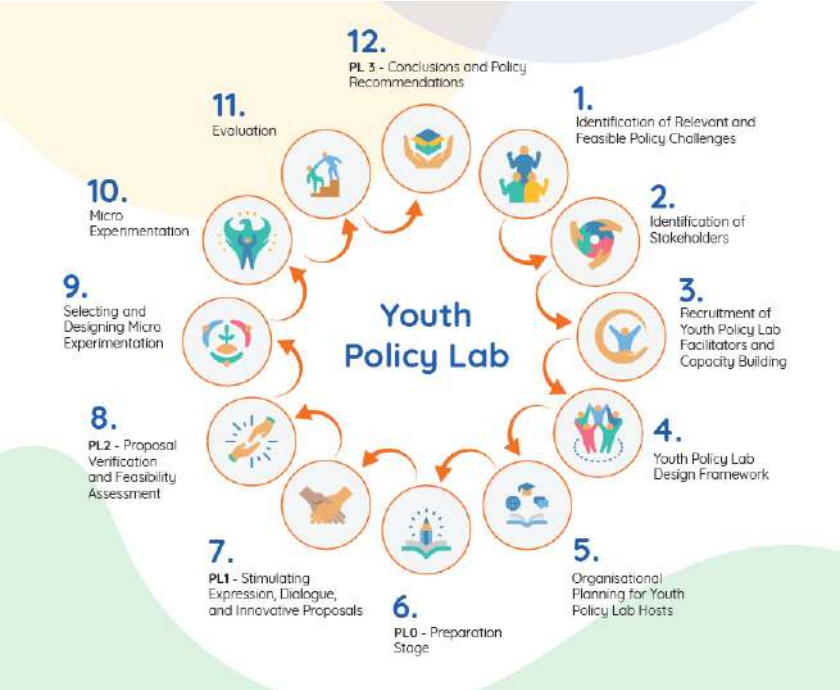
The programme is implemented via small grants (for small projects started between 2017 and 2018 and focused on capacity building for youth organisations and youth workers, including mobility activities and capacity building activities), large grants (for regional projects, mainly in the areas of employability, skills development and youth social entrepreneurship), scholarships and technical assistance.

Youth Policy Labs are among the initiatives implemented in all the countries covered by the EU4Youth programme under the Youth Engagement Roadmaps technical assistance (phase II of the EU4Youth programme) between 2020 and 2021 (18 youth policy labs conducted and finalised), and within the subsequent Youth Engagement and Empowerment project that started in 2023.

The EU4Youth Coordination and Policy Support technical assistance has recently released a Youth Policy Labs methodological toolkit to assist the involved stakeholders in the implementation and replicability of the exercise. The proposed methodology targets three different groups, namely youth organisations, policymakers and local administrators, and facilitators (as the main target of the toolkit).

Youth Policy Labs methodological toolkit

The 12-step approach to the implementation of YPL can be summarised in the diagram below. Stages 1-5 are intended as preliminary phases to the implementation of the YPL, which is in turn comprised of stages 6-12. The main novelty of the second cycle of YPL, as reflected in this methodological toolkit, is the micro-experimentation sub-phase under steps 9-10-11. Micro-experimentation serves as a testing ground for innovative policy solutions and proposals emerging from the YPL process. It allows the YPL participants and stakeholders to test small-scale, real-world applications of the proposed policy solutions, and to evaluate the effectiveness, feasibility, and impact of their ideas before its possible broader implementation. The evaluation of the micro-experimentation phase is crucial to assess the feasibility of the experiment implemented and fine-tune it according to the challenges encountered.



Source: Youth Policy Labs Toolkit, p. 13

The first cycle of Youth Policy Labs produced 15 sets of policy recommendations for national-level change, targeting youth work, digitalisation, career orientation, and employment. Proposals included improved internship frameworks and entrepreneurship support programmes as well as enhanced digital skills education and capacity building for teachers and youth workers. Over 2,500 young people, practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders benefited from the participation in the Youth Policy Labs. They confirmed the positive impact of this experience and reported increased knowledge of national policies and policymaking cycle. Participants improved skills to stimulate participation and turn ideas into solutions, stimulated cross-sector collaboration and encouraged cooperative, innovative, out-of-the-box thinking. While some participants suggested increasing expert and official involvement, most perceived strong policymaker willingness to implement the recommendations.

Cooperative, innovative, out-of-the-box thinking

Between 2023 and 2025, the grants awarded by the Youth Engagement and Empowerment project supported the organisation of Youth Policy Labs in four EaP countries. More than 1,000 participants were involved overall and nearly 600 participants were young women. Over 800 participants came from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2024 alone, 36 youth-related policy discussions were organised, which resulted in the development of 50 youth policy recommendations . Between May and August 2025, a second cycle of the Youth Policy Lab was also held in Georgia. A total of 50 participants took part across three selected locations with participants represented VET institutions, academia, and youth organisations, youth workers, experts, schools, universities, and local businesses. The second cycle focused on designing 5 small-scale initiatives modelling youth participation and best practices, to be implemented between 2025 and 2026 .

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- While the full replicability of the two YPL experiences is not within the scope of PEACE+, there are several methodological aspects that could support the research team in the design of activities to be proposed to the project target groups.

Among these, it is worth mentioning:

- The guidelines on the identification, mapping and analysis of the key issue(s) to be addressed by the youth policy lab exercise, as they provide useful hints on scoping the issue and defining a realistic framework for fruitful discussion

- The outline of activities for the different policy lab sessions provided in Annex 5 of the WBYPL methodology, as it presents a clear, detailed schedule of the key contents and practical activities to be completed in each phase. This could be used as a model for designing and conducting a specific practical discussion session during focus groups or training activities or either full real-life or moot youth policy lab exercise in a future phase of Peace+

- The micro-experimentation sub-phase described in the EY4Youth youth policy labs methodology, as it could be usefully applied in a future policy lab exercise (or similarly constructed activity) actively involving local administration representatives. This could allow space for hands-on cooperation between civil society and local government as cooperative agents of change, and provide them with an opportunity to test the feasibility and sustainability of proposals stemming from discussion

- The focus and practical suggestions on the role of facilitators included in both methodologies, crucial to the successful implementation of youth policy labs and to their replicability in other "non-assisted" contexts (i.e., outside the scope of a research/technical assistance projects).

Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027

The new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, significantly titled Engaging, connecting and empowering young people, follows the 2010-2018 Youth Strategy, and is based (among other things) upon the findings of the 2017 Year of Listening conducted under its implementation period. The 2019-2027 EU Youth Strategy is comprised of triannual work cycles, which include Work Plans and evaluation reports.

Participation paradox

In the first place, the Strategy stresses the role of a renewed EU youth cooperation for overcoming the current *participation paradox.* In fact, while young people show an interest in politics and are socially active, they also tend to turn away from traditional forms of participation. Moreover, youth at risk of social exclusion are underrepresented. Against this backdrop, the Strategy calls for decision-makers at the EU and member state level to make participation a reality for all young people by increasing transparency, accessibility of political communication and youth involvement in decisions through the enhancement of new and already existing channels.

The Strategy seeks to support the achievement of the 11 European Youth Goals identified during the consultation period that led to the drafting of the document (i.e., the 6th EU Youth Policy Dialogue), which are part of the Strategy itself:

1. Connecting EU with Youth
2. Equality of All Genders
3. Inclusive Societies
4. Information & Constructive Dialogue
5. Mental Health & Wellbeing
6. Moving Rural Youth Forward
7. Quality Employment for All
8. Quality Learning

9. Space and Participation for All

10. Sustainable Green Europe

11. Youth Organisations & European Programmes

The Strategy revolves around 3 pillars: ENGAGE, CONNECT and EMPOWER. Although they are obviously interconnected, for the purposes of this research paper it is worth focusing here on the ENGAGE pillar, as centred in fostering youth participation in democratic life. It includes:

- encouraging young people to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change for communities across Europe, inspired by EU values and a European identity;

- helping prevent youth social exclusion; improving the impact of policy decisions on young people through dialogue; addressing their needs across sectors, thus highlighting inextricable connections with the protection and promotion of the rule of law and the democratic processes that are at its very heart.

Youth Policy Dialogue

Among the key instruments to be used to target these objectives, the EU Youth Policy Dialogue plays a key role and therefore needs to be enhanced and enlarged in its outreach, be implemented also through alternative methodologies and forms of participation (including online tools) and be transparent and visible to target underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. The Strategy also commits to fostering EU Youth Policy Labs (https://policy-lab.ec.europa.eu/index_en) as participatory models of policymaking (see below under para. 2).

EU youth cooperation (which has its legal basis in Art. 6 TFEU) will also focus – among other aspects – on stepping up youth participation in democratic life including access to quality information validated by trusted sources, and promoting participation in European and other elections; supporting "learning to participate" and raising interest in participatory actions across Europe and beyond through Erasmus+.

Member States are encouraged to focus on promoting dialogue and participatory mechanisms at all levels of decision-making, e.g. through youth councils, paying special attention to feedback mechanisms and outreach to youth with diverse backgrounds; encouraging social and civic engagement of young people including participation in youth organisations or online activism; helping prepare young people for participation, through youth work, youth parliaments or simulations, actions around civic education and media literacy in synergy with formal education and public authorities; exploring innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation.

Additionally, and with a view to ensure youth policy mainstreaming in its political agenda, it must be noted that, based on the commitments undertaken in the EU Youth Policy Strategy 2019-2027, in 2025 the EU Commission has conducted EU Youth Check on its work programme and on 12 more initiatives, by engaging youth through different platforms and instruments including the EU Youth Policy Dialogue, the EU Youth Stakeholders Group and the EU Youth Conferences This initiative shows interesting similarities with the European Youth Forum (EYF) Youth Test proposed in 2022 by the European Youth Forum promoted by the EU and CoE .

Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030

Core values of the Council of Europe

Compared with the current EU Youth Strategy, the CoE Youth Sector Strategy 2030 is more explicit in highlighting the connection between youth participation and its role in tackling the challenges that the rule of law and democracy are currently facing across Europe. In the Committee of Ministers Resolution CM/Res(2020)2 on the Youth Sector Strategy 2030, the CoE resolves that «the Council of Europe youth sector should aim at enabling young

people across Europe to actively uphold, defend, promote and benefit from the Council of Europe's core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law». Additionally, the accompanying resolution underlines that the current challenges to democracy and the rule of law across Europe, including that of populism and nationalism, affect young people's trust (or lack thereof) in democratic structures and decision-making institutions and contribute to deepen the social exclusion of already marginalised and vulnerable youth groups.

Therefore, the CoE Youth Strategy 2030 states three core missions, namely:

- Access to rights
- Deepening youth knowledge
- Broadening youth participation

The Strategy Resolution lists a set of four strategic thematic priorities:

1. Revitalising pluralistic democracy
2. Access to rights
3. Living together in a peaceful and inclusive society
4. Youth work

With specific reference to the scope of this research paper, it is worth highlighting that Thematic Priority no. 1 is to be achieved – among other actions - by increasing the capacity of youth civil society to advance participatory democracy and democratic citizenship within and beyond their memberships, as well as by improving institutional responses to new developments in democracy (e.g., through digitalisation, internet governance, etc.). In this respect, actions under this priority are expected to have a positive impact on young people's democratic citizenship and active participation and strengthen their contribution to overcoming challenges to democracy.

Other projects

Our Rule of Law project (University of Groningen) – Our Democracy Report 2025

https://www.ourruleoflaw.eu/our-democracy-report-publication

It is surprising that the EU Rule of Law Reports – a Commission tool to monitor the state of the rule of law in the Member States - do not take into account youth nor youth political participation as one of the areas (or at least, perspectives) in which the "health status" of democracy and the rule of law can be assessed. This is particularly striking when considering that Youth is among the main strategic priorities of the EU internal and external action, as the EU Commission has not only adopted a new EU Youth Strategy for the years 2019-2027 in 2018, but also drafted a specific Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU external action 2022 – 2027, both showing a strong focus on the enhancement of youth participation.

Health of democracy and rule of law

The Our Democracy Report published in 2025 by the Our Rule of Law Foundation (a research, education and advocacy project founded in 2021 and based at the University of Groningen) takes inspiration from the EC's rule of law reporting exercise for the year 2024, but expands the scope of this work to six themes identified as particularly *relevant for young people*: Participation in Governance, Justice Systems, Digital Literacy, Equality and Non-Discrimination, Climate Transition and Education and Economic Empowerment. This project was implemented through more than 60 young "Democracy Rapporteurs" from across 17 EU member and candidate countries, who combined quantitative and qualitative data, and a set of country-specific recommendations into a single in-depth analysis of the main features and questions that European youth perceive as particularly pressing in today's European institutional, political and economic context.

The reporting process started with a preliminary online course taught by leading experts on democratic systems, rule of law monitoring, and effective communication. A "bootcamp" was then held at Humboldt University in Berlin, where the Democracy Rapporteurs collaborated in working groups to refine their focus areas. Finally, each national team drafted their country chapters under the guidance of senior experts/mentors ensuring rigorous analysis.

Aside of the sectoral findings under each country chapter, for which we refer to the report in its entirety, in the perspective of this report, it must be stressed that the Our Democracy Report highlights:

- A clear discrepancy between the European Commission's Rule of Law reports and the realities emphasised by young people on the ground during the data collection phase. The EU Rule of Law reports focus on formal institutional aspects like judiciary independence and anti-corruption frameworks, while often overlooking participation and equality issues that youth deem critical
- The absence of a "youth lens" from the Rule of Law reports, in particular when addressing key issues in technical terms without taking into account their impact on younger generations (this is the case of digital exclusion and digital governance, social policy, etc.). A "youth-sensitive" perspective is lacking across the board, which makes the rule of law report less grounded on the actual needs of European youth.
- The need to incorporate more social and participatory metrics into the EU rule of law reporting exercise, so to include young and/or marginalised citizens' point of view and adjust responses accordingly. As the Our Democracy Report puts it, «Reporters suggest that without such an inclusive perspective, the Rule of Law reports risk missing early warning signs of democratic backsliding that matter greatly to Europe's youth (p. 13).

RELEVANCE FOR PEACE+

- The Our Rule of Law project and Our Democracy Report are particularly useful for the contextualisation and design of the survey that PEACE+ will develop in the upcoming implementation phase. The findings of the report highlight the need to tackle institutional and political issues from a youth-sensitive perspective that allows the participants to express their views from a generational standpoint, thus making the data collected more adherent to the real-life perception of the interviewees.

- Moreover, the report makes clear that enhancing youth awareness on formal means of political participation is still crucial to ensure that their demands are taken into account throughout all policymaking processes, as well as in the evaluation of public policies and actions from a youth-sensitive perspective.

- Finally, the report demonstrates that the protection and promotion of the rule of law (as well as its monitoring and evaluation), in its substantive understanding (i.e., in close, mutual connection with democracy and fundamental rights), cannot be viewed as an abstract exercise, but shall be targeted to the needs and specificities of economically, socially, and demographically marginalised groups.

ANNEX 2 – Database projects (selection)

Project name	Funding/ organization	Year	Type
			Dissemination *Education* *Training* *Network* *Research*
Youth Participation Strategy	SALTO		
Sustaining democracy through citizenship education	Demokrative, Bern		
Citizens' assembly and deliberative processes	International Observatory on Participatory Democracy		
Implementation of citizenship education actions in the EU	EPRS	2021	
European citizenship: a horizontal dimension	Notre Europe	2014	
Issue paper on citizenship education	European Education Area Strategic Framework	2023	
Empowering youth for a democratic future	European Youth Parliament	2023	*Network*
DeCiTeL: Democratic Citizenship Teaching and Learning	Dare network	2025	*Training*
Increase Youth Participation. "Rede mit! Politische Teilhabe von Lernenden stärken"	Universitaet Zuerich ipz.uzh.ch	2025	*Research*
Empowered Participation through Ideating Cultural Worlds and Environments (EPIC-WE)	Aarhus University/HORIZON	2024	*Research*
Future builders: equipping young minds for a fairer Europe	JRC	2025	*Training*
Builders of Progress - Europe's NextGen Series	Foundation for European Progressive studies (+ other institutions)		
OUR RULE OF LAW	OUR RULE OF LAW STICHTING University of Groningen	started in 2021	Research/awareness raising/mentorship

Project name	Funding/ organization	Year	Type
Get Political – Igniting Youth Active Participation in Political and Electoral Processes through Political Literacy and Knowledge	European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) – CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV (Citizens' engagement and participation – 2023)	Nov. 2024-Oct. 2026	awareness raising/training/network
JUST EU and ME: Empowering Youth In The EU To Advocate For Their Social Rights	European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) – Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme (2021-2027)	Feb. 2023-Oct. 2024	awareness raising/advocacy/ capacity building
MAYBE: "Moving into Adulthood in uncertain times: Youth Beliefs, future Expectations, and life choices between changing social values and local policy initiatives"	Fondazione Cariplo	2022-in corso	research
EU4YOUTH PROGRAMME (EaP Countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus)	EU	2017-ongoing	Eu External Action/EaP small grants, large grants, scholarships, technical assistance
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ROADMAPS phase II of the EU4YOUTH PROGRAMME (EaP Countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus) YOUTH POLICY LABS (I CYCLE)	EU	2021-2023	Eu External Action/EaP small grants, large grants, scholarships, technical assistance
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ROADMAPS phase II of the EU4YOUTH PROGRAMME (EaP Countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus) YOUTH POLICY LABS (II CYCLE)	EU	2022	Eu External Action/EaP small grants, large grants, scholarships, technical assistance
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT phase IV of the EU4YOUTH PROGRAMME (EaP Countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus) YOUTH POLICY LABS Georgia	EU	2025	Eu External Action/EaP small grants, large grants, scholarships, technical assistance

Project name	Funding/ organization	Year	Type
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT phase IV of the EU4YOUTH PROGRAMME (EaP Countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus) Empowered and Active Youth for a more Democratic Armenia Today and Tomorrow	EU	2025	Eu External Action/EaP small grants, large grants, scholarships, technical assistance
WESTERN BALKANS YOUTH POLICY LABS PROJECT	EU IPA III	2020-2024 (phase I) 2024-ongoing (phase II)	EU IPA III (Instrument of Pre-Accession III) technical assistance/project
EU Youth Wiki – Europe Encyclopaedia of National Youth Policies	EU	2018-ongoing	database/research/ documentation
European Youth Forum	EU Erasmus+ Council of Europe European Youth Foundation	1996-ongoing	platform
EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership	EU-CoE	1998-ongoing	policymaking/training/ research
Building Bridges	CERV - European Commission	2024-2025	awareness raising/ policymaking
CitiDem	CERV - European Commission	2025-2026	awareness raising/ policymaking
Democratic Odyssey	CERV - European Commission	2024-2025	awareness raising/ policymaking
Erasmus+ Youth and active citizenship	Researchyouth.net RAY	2024	*Research*
SHINE - Shaping the future of Europe	ERASMUS+ KA2	Dec. 2024-Nov. 2026	Research/Network/ participatory decision-making
ADD Something Meaningful – strengthening youth engagement through local involvement!	ERASMUS+ KA2	Mar. 2023-Sept. 2025	awareness raising/ policymaking
MAAT - Mobilizing Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities	ERASMUS+ / Agenzia nazionale per i giovani	2023-ongoing	awareness raising/research/ policymaking/training
Erasmus+ Engage, Organize & Unite - International cooperation for development of youth participation in the local community	Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building for youth in ACP countries, Latin America and Asia	2019-2020	training/awareness raising
#YouPart – Engage, Connect, Empower political participation of disadvantaged youth	Erasmus+	Jan. 2022-June 2024	training/ awareness raising/ network/ advocacy

Project name	Funding/ organization	Year	Type
AwarEU - European Awareness	EU	2017-2019	Key Action 3 Initiatives for Policy Innovation of Erasmus Plus
MoreEU-More Europe to Overcome the Crisis	EU	2014-2017	Jean Monnet Network
Eu Civic-Empowering European Citizens Through European Civic Education	EU	2014-2016	Jean Monnet Project
Constructing AcTive CitizensHip with European Youth: Policies, Practices, Challenges and Solutions	HORIZON - Università di Bologna	2018	*Research*
Sincrony - youth engagement	Università di Bologna / Horizon	2024	*Research*
Critical Change Lab	OULUN YLIOPISTO, Finland	2023-26	Arts
PIDOP	HORIZON	2009-12	Research
PARTISPACE	HORIZON	2015-18	Research
Larpocracy: Developing Spaces for Deliberation and Democratic Skills through Role-Playing			
I-CIVIC – Innovating Civic Engagement: Pedagogies for a Resilient Generation	HORIZON - Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)	Nov. 2025-Oct. 2029	Research/Network
#DemocracyinAction - GRASSROOTS CULTURE, ARTS AND CULTURAL SPACES FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND EXPRESSION ONLINE AND OFFLINE IN A RESILIENT EUROPE	HORIZON - Culture, creativity and inclusive society	Feb. 2025-Jan. 2028	Research/Network/ Transdisciplinary
Youth for Europe/YOUROPE -Visionary roadmaps: Crafting an Inclusive and Participatory European Democracy with Youth and Communities	HORIZON - Culture, creativity and inclusive society	Nov. 2024-Oct. 2027	Research/participatory decision-making
ENGAGED - Political and community engagement, trust and identity among European adolescents and emerging adults	HORIZON - Culture, creativity and inclusive society	Feb. 2025-Jan. 2028	Research/Network/ participatory decision-making
EURYKA Reinventing Democracy in Europe: Youth Doing Politics in Times of Increasing Inequalities	HORIZON 2020	2017-2020	research
RECONNECT	HORIZON 2020	2018-2022	research/dissemination/policy formulation