

# Youth Leaders Empowerment

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS  
“APEL DIALOGUE”



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# Introduction

This policy recommendation document helps policymakers to enhance the dialogue with youth leaders. We focus on different levels of policymaking: organizational, local, regional and national. It has been created as part of the APEL project, an Erasmus+ funded project to equip youth workers with necessary methodologies and resources to empower youth leaders, so that they can be more effective in encouraging participation of young people in the policymaking process.

We would like to raise awareness to the importance of ensuring youth perspective from the very beginning in the policymaking process. We think it is important to already start involving the youth perspective when planning important policies. Besides that, we would like to contribute to the improvement of understanding how to engage young people in a sustained manner.

This document is meant to provide new type of evidence (from grassroots perspective) to a systemic issue related to ensuring active youth participation in the policymaking processes. It will give policymakers concrete ideas of how to close the gap between youth and policymakers.

## 1.1. What is the APEL project about?

We see a stable trend that even in countries with long-term tradition of youth participation in shaping important policy initiatives, eventually final decisions are taken by the “power holders”, which in most cases are adults. This is a cross-sectoral challenge with a lot of underlining factors, requiring systemic actions. Being realistic that all these factors could not be addressed with one project, we focused our efforts on a specific element of this challenge, being the role of youth leadership in encouraging ongoing active youth participation.

The four partners represent different regions in Europe: Central (Slovenia and Austria), Eastern (Bulgaria), and Western (Netherlands). Our project mission is in line with the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, emphasizing the need to improve the quality of youth work. EU member states are encouraged to focus on promoting dialogue and participatory mechanisms at all levels of decision-making.

Our overall aim is to equip youth workers with necessary methodology and resources to empower youth leaders, so they can be more effective in encouraging participation of young people in the policymaking process on local, national, and eventually EU level. By empowering youth leaders, we will support the policy dialogue in a bottom-up manner. In other words, and in a more metaphorical sense we will enable young people to be the first to “reach out” for policy relevant dialogue.

For this purpose, we have created two project results: coaching card deck and a training manual for youth workers. These innovative tools can support youth workers in delivering empowerment training to youth leaders, thus enhancing their leadership skills in representing youth’s voice and empowering the youth perspective in dialogue with policymakers. The applications offer a flexible use for various types of training and coaching possibilities, hence providing benefit to youth empowerment work.

The coaching card deck called “YOCO cards” have been created by merging expertise and instruments in the field of coaching. The “YOCO cards” have a strong focus on leadership, while similar proven products focus mostly on professional and personal development. The wide range of application of the cards enables youth workers to use them in the different stages of leadership empowerment trainings and add another innovative element to this product. Youth workers can use these cards to assist youth leaders in developing their leadership skills, pro-actively engage in policymaking processes, and to prepare their interaction with policy makers.

In the accompanying manual we have synthesized the current expertise in the field of youth work on the partner organizational, partner countries’ and EU levels. We have added some innovative elements based on the narrative approach and systemic constellation work. Using this manual and the coaching card deck, youth workers can work with youth leaders on developing their leadership skills and make them more pro-active when it comes to participation in policymaking.

The long-term impact of the APEL project will be enlarging the capacity of youth communities to pro-actively participate in policymaking processes. Increased participation of young people in policymaking dialogues will lead to adopting policy decisions that are closer to the needs of communities, hence leading to positive and sustainable results.



## 1.2. How did we come up with the recommendations for policymakers?

Both the manual and “YOCO cards” were sampled and revised in each partner country, conducting feedback groups and piloting activities with experts in the field of youth work. The experts participating were youth workers, youth trainers, job coaches, social workers and career counsellors who have their focus on work with young people and the topics relevant to leadership as a common denominator. Furthermore, young learners were engaged in individual and group sessions during piloting activities.

They provided us with a lot of feedback on the specific products, but also more general feedback on how to create dialogues between youth and policymakers. The data collected has been mapped with good practices on a European scale.

### **The key questions tackled for our recommendations have been:**

- How to motivate policymakers to engage youth leaders on an ongoing basis?
- How to create mechanisms and context for a productive dialogue between youth and policymakers?
- How to promote active youth participation?
- How to create more opportunities for professionalizing youth leadership?

In the appendices, you will find the best practices and recommendations from the different partner countries. In the final chapter you will find the summary of the recommendations.

## 1.3. Spreading the news

The policy recommendation can be transferred to other countries, where there is a similar need. Our preliminary research already confirmed that the issues we address is of pan-European relevance, which emphasizes the need for these recommendations to be adopted by relevant policymakers across Europe.

The policy recommendations are available in English and in all partners’ languages (Slovenian, Bulgarian, Dutch, German) and have been used in the final months of the project to ensure decision makers support for sustaining our project’s approach towards ensuring active youth participation.

# 2

## Summary of the recommendations

We make the following recommendations based on the input we got from different stakeholders that we have met and talked during the projects lifetime and the best practices we have collected and are also part of this document.

### 2.1. Train youth leaders

For the successful implementation in youth work strategies, the empowerment of youth workers means a significant contribution. It will enable them to encourage youth leaders not only to take part in scheduled activities within the described framework, but also to take a more active role and create their own pathways in a bottom-up, rather than top-down, manner. Starting initiatives or projects from their own perspectives and becoming the voice of young people in their communities, they will be able to start the dialogue with policy makers in a pro-active way.

To foster the participation of youth with diverse backgrounds, it seems essential for youth workers to address potential youth leaders of all parts of the communities and provide them with the leadership skills needed to support young people's participation in policymaking processes. The challenge for initiators of participation processes is therefore to reach young people with very different social orientations, to meet diverse needs and to pay close attention to the fact that really everyone can participate. Beginning on a local level, these processes can reach national or EU-wide levels in terms of sustainability.

### 2.2. Train policymakers

It seems that policymakers are still focused on old-school ways of involving youth in the policymaking process. They use traditional ways of communicating

and dialogue. This requires the youngsters to make a huge effort to adapt to this policymaker way of working. Instead of inviting youth into “their world” and requiring young people to adapt, policymakers should enter the world of the youth and adapt to their way of thinking, working, and communicating.

Young people, for example, often do not recognize the topics they are interested in as policy. In other words, it is crucial to communicate with young people comprehensively and focus on relevant issues. For example, if you say to them go to vote, it does not work. However, if you engage them with a discussion on topics they are interested in, at the end they provide useful solutions and ideas for policy in a pro-active way, expressing their needs and concerns.

Therefore, we recommend that policymakers be trained by youth workers in thinking from a youth perspective and using young people’s way of doing things. Youth workers are very familiar with the way youngsters think, act, and communicate. They can help policymakers to step into the shoes of the youngsters.

**Examples of “stepping into the world of the youth”:**

- Go to a festival in a shirt and shorts, go to a pub, go to places where young people are and connect
- Participate in youth events
- Study-visits of different departments to youth organizations to get an idea of the scope of the work
- Use a YouTube channel to communicate
- Ask young people to manage the social media channels of a policymaking organization
- Hold quarterly picnics in the park with policy makers, youth leaders and youth organisations

## **2.3. Facilitate interactive meetings**

Meetings are a great way of including youth in the policymaking process. Again, design meetings in such a way that they attract young people by creating the meetings from their perspective. We also recommend using dynamic, collaborative, and creative approaches like, for example, World Café and Design Thinking. We also recommend actively working on different layers during the meetings. Besides the conscious surface current, we recommend including the often hidden and neglected undercurrent. By using methods like the narrative approach, meditation, or systemic constellations during a meeting, the subconscious information and relationships will become visible and can be used in the process. This really adds value to the results of the meeting.

#### **Examples of meetings from the good practices:**

- Quarterly meetings with different departments from the municipality, where the youth could express their wishes and views. Through these meetings, young people and the Municipalities could gain a new permanent channel for dialogue.
- Pizza participation sessions to meet each other. No agenda! Maybe a theme, but preferably open World Café setup to see with an open mind, what questions, issues, and problems are at stake both for youth leaders and policy makers

## **2.4. Create simple legal and organizational infrastructure**

In many countries it is very difficult to understand the legal and organizational infrastructure. For youth leaders to be able to participate in the decision-making process, they will have to understand this infrastructure and know when to do what, where, and with whom.

We therefore recommend simplifying these infrastructures and create direct and clear communication channels. This might take some time and effort, but we really think that this is currently a large obstacle for youth leaders to get involved in the policymaking process.

On the short term, we advise to create smaller projects with less stakeholders. Make it easier for youth leaders to apply for a project and realize their ideas. Make sure that the communication lines with the (local) politics are short and the paperwork is limited to the bear minimum.

#### **Two examples of youth policy infrastructures come from Austria and the Netherlands:**

- In Austria, Youth Policy is a cross-cutting issue that cuts across all ministries. Therefore, youth-relevant agendas can be found in all ministries. One concern of the Austrian Youth Strategy, which is coordinated by the Federal Chancellery, is to strengthen the networking of this work.
- Youth parties that are connected with the national political mother parties. This way, the youth can easily connect to and learn from the political strategy of the mother party. At the same time the youth party acts as an inspiration and thinking partner on political youth issues.

## 2.5. Provide resources on EU level

Another strong recommendation for ensuring effective dialogue is through creation of a Pan-European online database of resources, accessible for young people, youth workers and policymakers. The resources will focus on how to reach each other.

Related to this we recommend creating an online community for both youth leaders and policy makers from all over Europe where they can meet to share their best practices, problems, questions, and ideas. “From I-lands to We-lands”



# 3

## The road ahead

The road ahead is designed to show the direction for a successful and sustainable implementation of the project results and findings achieved by the combined efforts of the APEL project partners into youth work strategies, related to different contexts in partner countries. It aims at the empowerment of youth workers, in terms of providing a significant contribution for national and EU youth work strategies.

The innovative coaching cards and training manual developed in the APEL project will enable youth workers to encourage youth leaders not only to participate in scheduled activities within the respective frameworks, but also to take a more active role and create their own pathways in a bottom-up, rather than top-down, manner. Starting initiatives or projects from their own perspectives and becoming the voice of young people in their communities, they will be able to initiate the dialogue with policy makers in a pro-active way.

While there are several good examples of improving youth engagement with policy dialogue on the different levels, some areas need improvement, such as good practices examples that can be implemented in daily practice.

To foster the participation of youth with diverse backgrounds, it seems essential for youth workers to address potential youth leaders of all parts of the communities and provide them with the leadership skills needed to support young people's participation in policymaking processes. The challenge for initiators of participation processes is therefore to reach young people with very different social orientations, to meet diverse needs and to pay close attention to the fact that really everyone can participate. Beginning on a local level, these processes can reach national or EU-wide levels in terms of sustainability.

An ongoing process of exchange between youth workers, policy makers and young leaders can be supported by raising awareness among young people that they can contribute to all topics they are concerned about.

Independently, apart from political positions or institutional frameworks. Collaborative action, planning and co-decision-making on issues that are close to the hearts of the participants is different from transferring “adult politics” to young people. Nevertheless, effective youth policy is also needed as a cross-cutting issue - political structures for and with young people. Finally, it is about having a say and co-decision-making in all areas of life and in all decisions that affect young people. This affects the levels of institutions, municipalities, youth centres and the labour market as a part of young people’s life.

A strong recommendation for a further step to the successful implementation of active youth participation in policy making processes is to establish a network of policy makers, youth workers and youth leaders (in an informal way) for exchanging ideas, good practices, projects and initiatives, as well as methodologies and resources for empowerment of youth leaders on national and EU level.

The above recommendations are in alignment with the vision of European Youth Forum, synthesized in a policy document called “Quality Youth Participation and Representation in Institutions (EYF, 2020)<sup>1</sup>. In APEL’s project partners interaction with youth workers in a broader sense and youth leaders, we can confirm the relevance of the following recommendations made by EYF that will enhance dialogue between policy-makers and youth on national levels. To consolidate these recommendations, concrete steps should be taken as follows:

- Promote quality citizenship as part of non-formal or informal education to enable young people to become active members of their society.
- Establish new and improving existing quality youth participation and representation mechanisms. This means creating an opportunity for a partnership between policy makers, young people and youth organisations to shape together decisions that impact young people’s lives. It is important to take this opportunity to also ensure stability and resilience of our democracies as participation of all groups of society in decision-making processes is a prerequisite for it<sup>2</sup>.
- Provide and allocate political and financial support, i.e. sufficient budget, for the engagement of youth organisations in youth participation and representation mechanisms in all stages (development, implementation, follow-up and feedback), but at the same time respect their autonomy and independence. As an example, participatory budgets within local municipalities, especially for youth initiatives (for youth and youth leaders) will foster the engagement and autonomy of youth organisations.

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1 <https://www.youthforum.org/policy-paper-quality-youth-participation-and-representation-institutions>

2 <https://www.youthforum.org/policy-paper-quality-youth-participation-and-representation-institutions>

- Review and remove of any legal or administrative barriers to youth participation, such as social, economic and institutional barriers, conflicts with the organisational culture (e.g. a very formal setting not appropriate for young people) and procedures (e.g. the final steps of policy design and planning may be behind closed doors)<sup>3</sup>.
- Ensure quality youth participation and representation mechanisms that provide a feedback loop between youth representatives and those that they are representing as a part of the follow-up process.
- Make sure that youth participation and representation mechanisms are a part of long-term institutional strategies, work plans and programmes with set goals and sub goals formulated, checked and updated, if necessary.
- Proactively reach out to youth organisations and advertise clearly in youth spaces about all participation opportunities, with clear and inclusive language that is accessible and relevant to target groups.
- Guarantee open, transparent, and comprehensive feedback to all young people involved in the respective participation and representation mechanisms in case that the expected results could not be achieved.
- Ensure that young people can have a say in all topics that affect them and are able to do that independently from an institutional (governmental) position. Create space for an exchange involving institutions, youth organisations, young people and other relevant stakeholders.



For policy makers, the red thread of all the stories and best practices about empowering the dialogue with youth leaders is to make a real connection to their world. Instead of inviting young people to theirs, policy makers can visit places where young people spend their time and make contact in an informal way, with short lines between the youth leaders and formal organisations.

The long-term impact will be creating capacity of youth communities of pro-active participation in policy-making processes. Increased participation of young people in policy-making dialogues will lead to adopting policy decisions that are closer to the needs of communities, hence leading to positive and sustainable results.



### 3.1. APPENDIX 1:

## Good practices from the partner countries

### 3.1.1. Good practices from Austria in youth dialogues on national level

#### THE 7. AUSTRIAN FORUM YOUTH STRATEGY 2017

##### WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

<https://www.frauen-familien-jugend.bka.gv.at/jugend/jugendstrategie/kompetenzzentrum-jugend/forum-jugendstrategie/forum-jugendstrategie-20171215.html>

##### AIM

The Austrian Youth Strategy is an ongoing process to strengthen and further develop youth policy: One of its key features is the active involvement of young people and experts at all levels.

##### GOALS

Being part of the Austrian Youth Strategy, the aims of the regular forums is to inform stakeholders about youth policy activities and measures on a broad and cross-cutting basis and to be discuss technical issues. Due to the Corona pandemic, the forum had to take a break. It is planned to continue in 2021/2022.

## THE 7. AUSTRIAN FORUM YOUTH STRATEGY 2017

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### PROGRESSION

The theme of the 7th forum was how inspiring participation processes with young people can be designed in concrete terms. The Forum took place in one day, including 15 thematic stations to inform participants about the wide range of participation opportunities.

### TARGET GROUP

All persons interested in youth politics.

### GROUP SIZE

Large and smaller groups.

### IMPLEMENTATION

The forum was held in 15 thematic stations, each station designed to last around 40 minutes, so there was the possibility to be present at up to 3 stations during the forum:

1. Federal Youth Council
2. Youth in Europe - What's next? Structured dialogue
3. opportunities for young people to participate, differentiated by areas of life
4. formal Europe meets non-formal Europe - networking between schools and youth work
5. Climate protection - let's get involved! Role play climate protection. Simplified simulation of a UN climate conference.
6. Polarstern - Discover and Grow. A social start-up introduces itself
7. Youth Environmental Platform JUMP
8. Vienna Youth Health Conference
9. Youth participation is important. Jo eh. Tools for motivating decision-makers
10. Young and committed: Youth with impact. On the range of participation projects with young people
11. aha plus - recognition system for committed young people
12. Aha youth team introduces itself!
13. Structured dialogue reloaded
14. youth delegates - federal youth representation (BJV)
15. Get active - young people talk, help shape!

## THE 7. AUSTRIAN FORUM YOUTH STRATEGY 2017

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### EVALUATION

In the final round the day was reflected in small groups. Afterwards, there was the possibility to share essential findings and reflections in the plenary.

### OUTPUTS

The forum conveyed how inspiring participation processes with young people can be designed concretely, giving an impression of the variety of existing participation possibilities.

References:

[https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/dam/jcr:f3cd4e6b-7657-48d9-aa2d-106eae14a312/Dokumentation\\_7\\_Forum\\_Jugendstrategie\\_2017.pdf](https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/dam/jcr:f3cd4e6b-7657-48d9-aa2d-106eae14a312/Dokumentation_7_Forum_Jugendstrategie_2017.pdf)

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### PICTURES



# THE 7. AUSTRIAN FORUM YOUTH STRATEGY 2017

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# THE AUSTRIAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT

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## WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

<https://www.parlament.gv.at/SERV/KJ/JP/WJP/index.shtml>

<https://www.reininsparlament.at>

## AIM

Young people are regularly given the opportunity to participate in the Youth Parliament, to look behind the scenes of parliamentary work and be a parliamentarian for a day. This is a way for young people to gain a better understanding of politics and how to express their opinions.

## GOALS

Experiencing politics actively is especially important for young people, and the Youth Parliament is intended to contribute to this. Experiencing how politics works and taking on the role of a politician themselves should encourage young people to take an active part in everyday politics later on.

## METHODS

- Active listening
- Presentation
- Structural dialogue

## PROGRESSION

The Youth Parliament lasts a total of two days. Each youth parliament is given a topic for the day, which the participants work on in clubs during the event. In club and committee meetings, young people discuss what they stand for, what opinions they hold or on which issues there can be compromises with other clubs. Furthermore, speeches for the plenary are to be prepared and a possible approach to the discussion with the other clubs are to be discussed.

The highlight is the plenary debate, where the young people make their speeches and discuss the bill. Whether the bill is accepted or rejected is decided in the final vote.

# THE AUSTRIAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT

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## TARGET GROUP

Students and apprentices from Austria

## GROUP SIZE

30+ participants

## IMPLEMENTATION

Participation in the youth parliament as well as overnight accommodation in a youth hostel, meals, travel to and from the event are free of charge for schools and companies. Teachers and students/apprentices can download preparation materials in advance from the website.

Day 1

On this day, participants get to know the parliament building and the most important people who will accompany them the next day. They will have preparatory sessions to form clubs and prepare for the topic with experts.

Day 2

During this day, there will be discussions and debates, participants will deal with the topic of the youth parliament, meet parliamentarians, have club and committee meetings and take part in a plenary session where they will participate in the voting.

## EVALUATION

There is no formal evaluation of the activity; after the youth parliament, the results will be published on the website under "What's happened so far?"

## OUTPUTS

Whether it's campaigning for their own position in the club, seeking compromises, preparing speeches and finally voting on a bill - at committee and plenary sessions, young members of the Youth Parliament have the opportunity to experience in person what it means to be a politician and to witness for themselves how political decisions are reached.

References:

[https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/dam/jcr:f3cd4e6b-7657-48d9-aa2d-106eae14a312/Dokumentation\\_7\\_Forum\\_Jugendstrategie\\_2017.pdf](https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/dam/jcr:f3cd4e6b-7657-48d9-aa2d-106eae14a312/Dokumentation_7_Forum_Jugendstrategie_2017.pdf)

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# THE AUSTRIAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT

## PICTURES





# THE AUSTRIAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT

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## PICTURES



The agendas for general affairs and the coordination of youth policy lie with the Federal Chancellery. According to the Federal Youth Promotion Act (Bundesgesetz über die Förderung der außerschulischen Jugenderziehung und Jugendarbeit, B-JFG)<sup>4</sup>, the work of youth organisations and associations operating nationwide is promoted by the Federal Chancellery.

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4 <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20001058>

The Austrian Youth Strategy is an ongoing process to strengthen and further develop youth policy in Austria, also related to the European Youth Strategy<sup>5</sup>. Closely linked to this basic understanding are two essential principles of a successful youth policy: Firstly, the needs and concerns of young people themselves must always be included. The aim is not a “policy for” but a “policy with” young people. Secondly, youth policy cannot be concentrated in one department alone. Rather, youth is important and must be taken into account in all policy areas.

The aim is to bundle and systematise measures for young people and to optimise their effectiveness. The Youth Strategy also aims to identify new fields of cooperation and further need for action and to underpin these with concrete measures. Its objective is to protect children and young people and to promote their development as independent personalities in order to lead an independent and responsible life and to use their productive and creative potential for community and social engagement

The Government Programme 2020-2024 provides that the Austrian Youth Strategy will be continued accordingly, that the Austrian Youth Goals<sup>6</sup> will be backed up with measures and that the European Youth Goals<sup>7</sup> will also be included, based on EU Youth Strategy.

Youth policy is a cross-cutting issue that cuts across all ministries. Therefore, youth-relevant agendas can be found in all ministries. One concern of the Austrian Youth Strategy, which is coordinated by the Federal Chancellery, is to strengthen the networking of this work.

At the national level, the Federal Youth Council acts as a legally anchored representative of the interests of all children and young people. Its tasks are regulated by the Federal Youth Representation Act, the implementation of which is the responsibility of the Federal Chancellery.

The concrete implementation of youth policy takes place specifically at the different levels of politics: internationally, at the federal level and in the provinces, regions and municipalities. Apart from institutional levels, there are NGOs and private organisations on national, regional and communal levels where young people can participate in different fields and engage themselves in projects or initiatives.

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5 <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14080-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

6 <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/austria/13-national-youth-strategy>

7 [https://europa.eu/youth/strategy/european-youth-goals\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/strategy/european-youth-goals_en)

## 3.1.2. Good practices from Bulgaria in youth dialogues on national level

### DEVELOPING A NATIONAL CHILDREN'S STRATEGY

#### WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

Not applicable

#### AIM

To exchange views about the future priority areas of the future National Children's strategy in Bulgaria and map domains of importance for young people on national level.

#### GOALS

Young persons were enabled to present their views. Stakeholders could adapt their policy visions based on this exchange.

#### METHODS

- Design thinking for preparation of young persons' presentations
- Presentations in plenary
- Discussion between presenters and audience

#### PROGRESSION

The dialogue took place in one day, with two distinctive phases:

- Preparatory phase, including design thinking workshop with members of the national children's council
- Main phase, including presentations of youth vision on the future strategy in front of plenary representing all other stakeholders and Q&A sessions

#### TARGET GROUP

All stakeholders in the field of children's policy, including members of the national children's council.

## DEVELOPING A NATIONAL CHILDREN'S STRATEGY

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### GROUP SIZE

In the preparatory phase, medium sized group (homogenous, young people), with around 30 participants. In the main (plenary) phase, more than 100 participants.

### IMPLEMENTATION

The total duration for this activity was one day, split in two consecutive days in two halves. During the first day, young persons were invited to a design thinking workshop. The aim of this activity was to allow them time to formulate their vision in a relaxed and creative manner about the priority areas of the future national children's strategy. The workshop took 2-3 hours and was facilitated by an external youth worker. The result of the workshops were team presentations to be delivered in plenary.

During the second day presentations were delivered in front of diverse stakeholders. Following each presentation, there was adequate time allocated for questions and answers sessions. Furthermore, young persons stayed during the whole event and interacted with stakeholders in-between the different sessions.

### EVALUATION

There was no formal evaluation of this activity. The main indicator for the success of the dialogue was the extent to which young people's opinions reached stakeholders and were taken on board in drafting the national strategy. The presentations delivered in the main phase drew interest of stakeholders. There was a very active exchange of opinions from both sides, which is a positive indicator of the added value from such activities.

### DIALOGUE OUTPUTS

The main output from the dialogue is that young persons' opinions were taken on board and embedded in the draft project of the strategy, published in the end of December 2018. Link to the project (BG language version): <https://www.strategy.bg/PublicConsultations/View.aspx?Id=4012>

# DEVELOPING A NATIONAL CHILDREN'S STRATEGY

## PICTURES



## **BUILDING VISION FOR DEVELOPMENT – FORUM YOUTH 2.0.**

### **WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS**

<https://nmf.bg/2018/12/05/youth-vision-for-bulgaria>

### **AIM**

To exchange views in a positive environment between policymakers and young persons on the future of youth policies in Bulgaria.

### **GOALS**

Young persons were empowered to engage with influential policymakers and stakeholders and present freely their opinion on key policy areas.

### **METHODS**

2-day conference, which combined World café activities with presentations and intensive discussions.

### **PROGRESSION**

The dialogue took place in two days:

- 1st day focused on past developments, current reality and desired future.
- 2nd day emphasized on reaching agreement on key goals up to 2025.

### **TARGET GROUP**

Young people and policymakers

### **GROUP SIZE**

30+ participants



## BUILDING VISION FOR DEVELOPMENT – FORUM YOUTH 2.0.

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### IMPLEMENTATION

As mentioned above participants were engaged in World Café type of activities. In mixed groups (young persons and policymakers) they had the opportunity to talk about different important topics. Facilitators played an important role to summarize findings and ensure the flow of the process.

### EVALUATION

There was no formal evaluation of this activity. The activity was successful, since at the end of the second day, all participants reached agreement on common policy goals to be pursued.

### DIALOGUE OUTPUTS

Participants reached consensus on 4 main goals to be achieved by 2025 in the field of youth policy:

- quality and innovative education and lifelong learning;
- social inclusion and active civil society;
- creating conditions for ecological and healthy lifestyle;
- youth empowerment, inclusion and participation.

### PICTURES







### 3.1.3. Good practices from Netherlands in youth dialogues on national level

## JONGE DEMOCRATEN

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### WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

[www.jongedemocraten.nl](http://www.jongedemocraten.nl)



### AIM

The aim of this initiative is to give a voice to the young people in the Dutch politics. The mother political party wants to hear the insights and ideas of the youngsters. Besides that this initiative offers personal development and fun to its members.

### GOALS

They have influenced the debate on the new pension system in the Netherlands.  
They have organized actions to create awareness about legalization  
Media have picked up their ideas and standpoints  
They give speeches at the national congress of the mother party.  
Most of all they have created a sustainable and structured dialogue between youngsters and politicians that has lasted for more than 35 years now.

### METHODS

They have weekly activities for the members. They organize workgroups around specific topics which report to the national politics. They have Whatsapp groups concerning topics. A representative of the youngsters is present at the weekly meetings of the mother party. They give speeches at the national congress of the mother party.

### PROGRESSION

The organization was founded 35 years ago. They have slowly developed into a large organization that is embedded in the national politics.

# JONGE DEMOCRATEN

## TARGET GROUP

The target group are young liberals between 12 and 30 years.

## GROUP SIZE

It is a very large group with 4,500 members of which 400 are active members. They have 10 local chapters which have their own board and activities.

## IMPLEMENTATION

This form of dialogue has been institutionalized in the Dutch politics. Almost every political party has a youth counterpart. Not as part of their own organization, but as a separate body. They are funded by the Dutch tax money based on the number of seats in the Parliament. The board members of the Youth Party get a monthly allowance in order to be able to study and do the work for the organization as well.

The youth organization has many connections with the youth organizations related to the other political parties. They write manifests together, coordinate actions and how to approach certain topics. They are also connected with the European Liberal Youth (Lymee) which represents all European liberal youth organizations and with IFLRY, the international organization that represents global liberal youth organizations.

## EVALUATION

3x a year they organize a congress in which the actions and results of the organization are measured and the board is evaluated. New board members are chosen and political proposals are done. 2x a year they organize a weekend to make sure the organization is running smoothly. The subsidies is based on the number of seats of their mother party, so this is not depending on the results they reach.

## DIALOGUE OUTPUTS

Press announcements: <https://jongedemocraten.nl/media/persberichten/>

Political papers: <https://jongedemocraten.nl/politieke-opinie/>

Newsletters: <https://jongedemocraten.nl/nieuwsbrief/list/>

Blog articles: <https://jongedemocraten.nl/weblog/>

Political stand points: <https://jongedemocraten.nl/standpunten/>

# JONGE DEMOCRATEN

## PICTURES



# IMPACTER ZWOLLE

## WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

<https://impacterzwolle.nl/>

Instagram: IMPACTER(@impacterzwolle)



## AIM

Self-development and equivalence between both youth and organizations. Impacter helps youth to find their passion and talents and connect them to a local organization. By coaching the youth and the organization, Impacter helps to make the voice of the youngster heard within the organization.

## GOALS

The dialogue between youngster, coach and policy maker of whatever organization aims for the result that the youngster can either work as a volunteer in the organization in order to see if their discovered talents fit the job and to see if the job fits them. Or the organization supports the youngster to realize their idea/ dream. This can be anything from realizing a skateboard track in the park, to organizing from scratch a festival.

## METHODS

Impacter has several coaches who support the youngsters to discover what they want to do and how they can achieve their goals in live. Based on their conversations with the youngsters the coaches' search in their network for a match in organizations, where the youngster can work on his idea or dream, or where he or she can see if his talents are fully used there.

## PROGRESSION

Impacter started in Zwolle and has now been rolled out to more than 8 municipalities in the North of the Netherlands.

Because of the COVID crisis, ImpacterLAB has been developed which is focused on groups instead of individuals.

# IMPACTER ZWOLLE

## TARGET GROUP

Every youngster who has a great idea, but doesn't know where to start, or who wants to learn something, discover anything or who wants to do something for somebody else can contact Impacter. So, it can be either very ambitious youth who know very well what they want to achieve and who need a diving board to achieve it. Or it can be the drop out who doesn't know what his or her talents or dreams are exactly, but who wants to discover what he or she can do.

## GROUP SIZE

Most of the time the dialogues are one on one, but occasionally there is a small group of youngsters who want to work on their idea together.

## IMPLEMENTATION



1. Getting to know each other. The youngster identifies his ambitions and talents. During this first phase the youngster is already involved in the community to share his ideas and to help each other.
2. Brainstorming. Thinking out of the box. What if everything would be possible?
3. Looking for a match. The coach, youngster and the organizations involved are looking for the best match for this youngster.



## IMPACTER ZWOLLE

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### IMPLEMENTATION

4. Match! The youngster is connected with an organization to realize his ambition.
5. Have impact. The youngster, together with the policy makers of the organization, will work on his plan. The Impacter coach will assist whenever needed.
6. Finish. At the end of the project the youngster will get a certificate and moves on. The youngster and the policymakers in the organization will stay connected.

### EVALUATION

This dialogue form to empower youth participation is a real success story in the northern part of the Netherlands. Since the start the formula of ImpacterZwolle has been copied to more than 8 municipalities in the North of the Netherlands. It is part of a larger national project and is evaluated from that perspective as well. The results are better than they expected.

### DIALOGUE OUTPUTS

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### PICTURES



### 3.1.4. Good practices from Slovenia in youth dialogues on national level

#### **ACTIVITIES FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE LOCAL PROGRAM FOR THE YOUTH IN THE MUNICIPALITY CELJE 2021 – 2026**

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##### **WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS**

<https://moc.celje.si/novice-in-obvestila/6795-v-pripravi-nov-lokalni-program-za-mlade-v-moc>

[https://www.mccelje.si/dogaja\\_2/Javno\\_posvetovanje\\_za\\_pripravo\\_novega\\_lokalnega\\_programa\\_za\\_mlade\\_v\\_MOC\\_2.srecanje/](https://www.mccelje.si/dogaja_2/Javno_posvetovanje_za_pripravo_novega_lokalnega_programa_za_mlade_v_MOC_2.srecanje/)

##### **AIM**

The main purpose was to prepare specific measures in the field of youth in the Municipality of Celje by carrying out quantitative (questionnaire for youth and youth workers) and qualitative (public consultation) activities.

##### **GOALS**

The main goal of the preparation of the Local program for the youth was to identify the needs of youth and youth worker in the local environment and to address those needs by forming specific measures.

##### **METHODS**

Quantitative activities:

- preparation of the questionnaire for youth and youth workers
- data collection
- statistical data analyzations

Qualitative activities:

- weekend meeting with youth and youth workers
- presentation of statistical data analyzation
- two public consultations

Specific methods: individual and group conversations, questionnaire, presentations, discussion, group work and brainstorming.

## **ACTIVITIES FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE LOCAL PROGRAM FOR THE YOUTH IN THE MUNICIPALITY CELJE 2021 – 2026**

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### **PROGRESSION**

Weekend meeting with youth and youth workers to determine the needs of young people and youth workers in the local environment.

Based on the identified needs we prepared a questionnaire for young people and for youth workers.

Conducting surveys and data collection.

Statistical data analyses and preparation of findings.

Public presentation of the findings.

Conducting two public consultations with youth, youth workers and local decision-makers.

Preparation of specific measures in the field of youth and preparation of a final document.

Public publication of the final document and public consultation for the purposes of the possible corrections.

Approval of the Local program in the field of youth by the city council of the Municipality of Celje.

### **TARGET GROUP**

Youth, youth workers and local decision makers.

### **GROUP SIZE**

Big group

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

In order to prepare a new local program, in 2019 we held the weekend meeting with youth and youth workers. The purpose of the weekend meeting was to review the old local program and find out what needs young and youth workers have in the local environment. The identified needs were the starting point for the preparation of a questionnaire for young people and youth workers. We prepared a questionnaire to find out what young people and youth workers want in the field of youth in the local environment in the future. When the survey questionnaire was ready, we published it publicly and collected data. After the data collection was completed, we started with the statistical analysis and preparation of the main findings, which were also publicly presented. After that, we conducted two public consultations with youth, youth workers and local decision-makers.



## ACTIVITIES FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE LOCAL PROGRAM FOR THE YOUTH IN THE MUNICIPALITY CELJE 2021 – 2026

### IMPLEMENTATION

With the conclusions of the analysis and the findings of two public consultations, we began to prepare specific measures in the field of youth and the final document. After that, we published the completed document and made an open call to youth and youth workers to let us know if they want to correct or add something. After that, we implement all the corrections in the final document. The final document was then presented to the City Council where it was also approved.

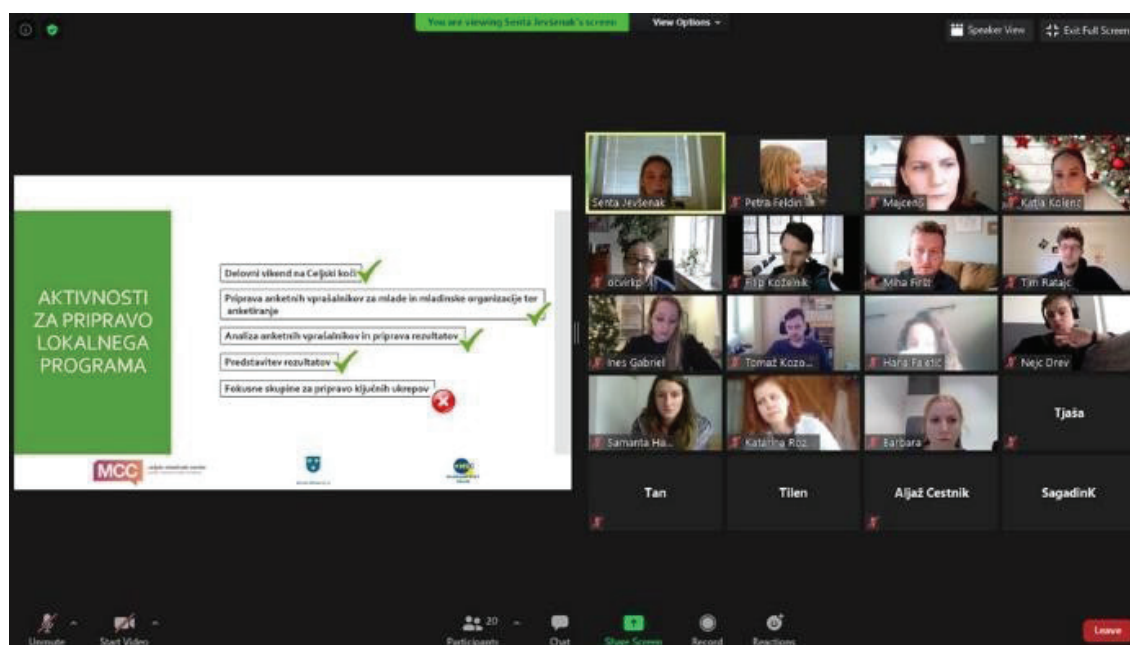
### EVALUATION

There was no specific evaluation.

### DIALOGUE OUTPUTS

The main output is the document THE LOCAL PROGRAM FOR THE YOUTH IN THE MUNICIPALITY CELJE 2021 – 2026. The document is not yet published. Once published, it will be available here: <https://moc.celje.si/>

### PICTURES





## **STRUCTURAL DIALOGUE: “TURN THE WHEEL IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION”**

### **WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS**

<https://www.vozim.si/sl/zasukaj-volan-v-pravo-smer>

### **AIM**

Turn the wheel in the right direction is a project whose purpose was to enable the active participation and empowerment of young people and youth workers to co-create traffic safety among young people in their local environment.

### **GOALS**

To formulate concrete proposals and solutions to improve traffic safety among young people through a structured dialogue between local decision-makers, young people and youth workers.

### **METHODS**

- Group work
- Problem analysis
- Problem solving
- Presentation
- Structural dialogue

### **PROGRESSION**

Three meetings took place as part of the project.

In three meetings, young people and youth workers learned to identify and define needs in their local environment, highlight problems and explore examples of good practice, and present possible solutions to the problem. They also learned about the importance of active participation and democratic processes at the local level. They learned how to present measures to decision makers and argue them in a group. They will also become acquainted with the importance of non-formal education and acquire new competencies and knowledge that will be useful for their future employment. By getting to know and cooperating with disabled people - injured in traffic accidents, the project broke the stereotype of disability.

## STRUCTURAL DIALOGUE: “TURN THE WHEEL IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION”

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### TARGET GROUP

Young people, youth workers and local decision makers

### GROUP SIZE

30 people

### IMPLEMENTATION

At the first meeting, young people learned about traffic safety issues and analysed the challenges of the city center. They identify and define needs in our local environment and listened to the personal stories of people injured in traffic accidents in which alcohol was also present. They moved from the lecture hall to the field, where they recorded the problems by observation. The practically oriented workshop ended with a fun test of the rollover simulator, with the help of which the participants learned about the difficulty of getting out of the vehicle in the event of an overturned vehicle.

At the second meeting, participants thought solutions to the problems raised by fieldwork in the first meeting and explored examples of good practice, based on which they later formulated concrete measures and presented them to local policy makers. The second meeting was therefore aimed at finding measures and solutions, which the participants developed with the help of good practices at home and abroad. Young people were thus made aware of the dangers in traffic and activated for concrete changes in their surroundings.

The purpose of the third and at the same time last meeting was to present the perceived problems and problems of traffic safety in the local environment and possible solutions and measures to local decision makers.

### EVALUATION

At the end of each event, there was an evaluation of what the young people had learned, what they could have improved and how they felt about each event.

## STRUCTURAL DIALOGUE: “TURN THE WHEEL IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION”

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### DIALOGUE OUTPUTS

Young people and decision-makers together set priorities or the most urgent measures needed to increase traffic safety in the local community. Furthermore, they prepared recommendations, which contain a summary of perceived problems and proposed solutions and measures that should serve the Municipality of Celje as recommendations in the field of increasing road safety. The recommendations are available here: [https://www.mc-celje.si/f/docs/MCC\\_PUBLIKACIJE/Zavod\\_VOZIM\\_Priporocila\\_novo\\_tisk\\_3\\_16.03.pdf](https://www.mc-celje.si/f/docs/MCC_PUBLIKACIJE/Zavod_VOZIM_Priporocila_novo_tisk_3_16.03.pdf)

### PICTURES



The national and international cooperation level, the main actor in Slovenia on youth issues is the Mladinski svet Slovenije (MSS), which is an umbrella association of youth organizations working at national level, bringing together organizations with different interests, views, or political orientations. The MSS is also the national representative of young people at European level - it has been a member of the European Youth Forum since its foundation in 1996. The MSS aims to bring together and represent all youth organizations and to work effectively with youth structures at local, regional, national and international level. In cooperation with its member organizations, it pursues its mission and develops the youth sector. The core purpose of the MSS is to advocate for young people and promote their participation in shaping policies that have a significant impact on their lives and work.

It's worth mentioning that in the framework of Slovenia's Presidency of the EU Council, over the period from 1.7.2021 to 1.1.2022 the Slovenian Youth Office, in cooperation with the Slovenian Youth Council, the MaMa Youth Network and the MOVIT Institute, the national agency for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, will implement a number of activities that will bring positive changes in the field of youth participation. The Presidency will focus on civic spaces for young people. Slovenia is the first country to actively address this topic, putting it on the agenda of a document that not only defines them but also makes recommendations to ensure safe, open, and inclusive civic spaces for all young people.

Turning to the local level, in the Municipality of Celje (MOC) the Local program in the field of youth is the main document that defines the municipality's priorities and actions for the implementation of the public interest in the youth sector at the local community level. The program is adopted for a period of six years and covers in particular: the starting points and orientations for the development of the youth sector, the content and scope of financing of the youth sector from the municipal budget, the development of the youth sector, the indicative criteria and objectives, and the procedures for reporting and evaluation of the implementation. In order to prepare the new program, representatives of the Celje Youth Center, the Celje Youth Council and the MOC carried out several activities between December 2019 and March 2021, which are reflected in the new Local program in the field of youth "Youth is Celje" 2021 - 2026. One of those worth exposing is the survey of young people and youth organizations of Celje in 2020, since it provided a comprehensive overview of the situation of youth in the local community and identified the starting points for action. It is also worth noting that the Local program in the field of youth is highlighted as an example of good practice for other municipalities in Slovenia.



## 3.2. APPENDIX 2:

# Policy recommendations from the partner countries

### 3.2.1. Policy recommendation from Austria

The Austrian Youth Strategy is an ongoing process to strengthen and further develop youth policy in Austria, also related to the European Youth Strategy.

For the successful implementation in youth work strategies, the empowerment of youth workers means a significant contribution. It will enable them to encourage youth leaders not only to take part in scheduled activities within the described framework, but also to take a more active role and create their own pathways in a bottom-up, rather than top-down, manner. Starting initiatives or projects from their own perspectives and becoming the voice of young people in their communities, they will be able to start the dialogue with policy makers in a pro-active way.

To foster the participation of youth with diverse backgrounds, it seems essential for youth workers to address potential youth leaders of all parts of the communities and provide them with the leadership skills needed to support young people's participation in policymaking processes. The challenge for initiators of participation processes is therefore to reach young people with very different social orientations, to meet diverse needs and to pay close attention to the fact that really everyone can participate. Beginning on a local level, these processes can reach national or EU-wide levels in terms of sustainability.

An ongoing process of exchange between youth workers, policy makers and young leaders can be supported by raising awareness among young people that they can contribute to all topics they are concerned about independently, apart from political positions or institutional frameworks. Collaborative action, planning and co-decision-making on issues that are close to the hearts of the participants is different from transferring "adult politics" to young people. Nevertheless,



effective youth policy is also needed as a cross-cutting issue - political structures for and with young people. Finally, it is about having a say and co-decision-making in all areas of life and in all decisions that affect young people. This affects the levels of institutions, municipalities, youth centres and the labour market as a part of young people's life.

To establish a network for policy makers, youth workers and youth leaders (in an informal way) for exchanging ideas, good practices, projects, and initiatives, as well as methodologies and resources for empowerment of youth leaders on national and EU level, is a recommendation for a further step to the successful implementation of active youth participation in policy making processes.

### **3.2.2. Policy recommendation from Bulgaria**

While there are several good examples, as above highlighted practices, of improving youth engagement with policy dialogue on national level, there are still areas to be addressed for good practice to turn into a daily reality.

In the focus groups carried out within APEL project, it became evident not only for Bulgarian, but also for other partners' contexts (Austria, Slovenia, Netherlands) that policy-makers need to be encouraged to further close the distance between them and young people. Youth workers can provide tailored training opportunities for policy-makers in the area of effective communication with young audiences.

Another strong recommendation for ensuring effective dialogue is through creation of a Pan-European online database of resources, accessible for young people, youth workers and policymakers. The resources will focus on how to reach each other.

### 3.2.3. Policy recommendation from Netherlands

- The red thread of all the stories and best practices about empowering the dialogue between policy makers and youth leaders is “make a real connection with the youngster”. As a policy maker go to their world, instead of inviting them into your world. Go to a festival in a shirt and shorts, go to a pub, go to places where young people are and make contact.
- Not another methodology, but a catalogue with successful projects and initiatives of all over Europe that can inspire either policy makers or youth leaders. A YouTube channel, or a social media account with short movies about successful projects together with a short explanation on how they did those projects.
- Create an online community for both youth leaders and policy makers from all over Europe where they can meet to share their best practices, problems, questions, ideas, etc. “From I-lands to We-lands”
- Create political youth parties that are connected with the national political mother parties. This way, the youth can easily connect to and learn from the political strategy of the mother party. At the same time the youth party acts as an inspiration and thinking partner on political youth issues.
- Create a clear and simple infrastructure for youth related organizations. Create more, but smaller projects with less stakeholders. Make it easier for youth leaders to apply for a project and realize their ideas. Make sure that the communication lines with the (local) politics are short and the paperwork is limited to the bear minimum.
- Organize pizza participation sessions to meet each other. No agenda! Maybe a theme, but preferably open World Café setup to see with an open mind, what questions, issues, and problems are at stake for both youth leaders and policy makers.

### 3.2.4. Policy Recommendation from Slovenia

- Based on the good practice in Slovenia, activities for the preparation of the local program for the youth in the Municipality Celje 2021 – 2026, municipalities and local organisations should involve young people in their preparation phase of the municipality local program. Recommendation is that the youth is actively involved in the preparation of the youth strategy in local communities from the start, to use the bottom-up approach by having deliberations with the youth and the youth organizations.
- Great way to encourage young people to become more involved in their local society are informal participation of the policy makers of Celje at different youth events.
- Another way to improve cooperation between young people and decision-makers could be quarterly meetings between young people and representatives of different departments of the Municipalities, where the youth could express their wishes and views. Through these meetings, young people and the Municipalities could gain a new permanent channel for dialogue.
- 'Become Mayor for the Day' can be one of the ways to involve young people in want to participate in different local events and policy.
- Editing the social media of the city municipality - changing different young people in this position.
- Having study visits from of different departments of the municipalities in youth organizations to have a complete view of the scope of work.



# 4

## Recourses and further reading

- European Youth Forum (2020), Policy Paper on Quality Youth Participation and Representation in Institutions. Accessible at: <https://www.youthforum.org/policy-paper-quality-youth-participation-and-representation-institutions>
- Austrian Youth Strategy - <https://www.frauen-familien-jugend.bka.gv.at/jugend/jugendstrategie/kompetenzzentrum-jugend/forum-jugendstrategie/forum-jugendstrategie-20171215.html>
- OECD Development Centre (2017), Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being. Accessible at: [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/evidence-based-policy-making-for-youth-well-being\\_9789264283923-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/evidence-based-policy-making-for-youth-well-being_9789264283923-en)

## 4.1. Further reading

- Bundeskanzleramt - Allgemeines zu Jugendpolitik, Accessible at: <https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/agenda/jugend/jugendpolitik/allgemeineszujugendpolitik-.html>
- European Youth Forum. (2014). Everything You Always Wanted To Know about National Youth Councils but Were Afraid To Ask. Youth Work Development working group. European Youth Forum. Brussels.
- Jugend für Europa. Deutsche Agentur für das EU- Programm JUGEND IN AKTION (2010), Partizipation junger Menschen , Nationale Perspektiven und europäischer Kontext. Accessible here: <https://www.jugendpolitikineuropa.de/downloads/4-20-2755/special-b-6-2011-publ.pdf>
- Kolev, A. and Giorgi, S. (2011). Social Inclusion and Youth in European Neighbouring Countries: A Review of National Challenges, Public Responses and Youth Programming in EC Development Cooperation. European Commission, Brussels.
- Resolution about the national program for youth 2013–2022 (2013), Urad za mladino Republike Slovenije. Accessible here: <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=RESO93>
- UN DESA (2003). “Chapter 10: Youth participation in decision making”, in World Youth Report. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York







