



## **Speak Up and Lead: making space for diversity and participation in political youth organisations**

Report of the study session held by the **European Liberal Youth (LYMEC)** and the **African Caribbean and Pacific Young Professionals Network (ACP YPN)**

in co-operation with the **Youth Department of the Council of Europe**

European Youth Centre Strasbourg  
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This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study session *Speak Up and Lead: making space for diversity and participation in political youth organisations* was organised by the European Liberal Youth (LYMEC) and the African Caribbean and Pacific Young Professionals Network (ACP YPN) in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. The study session took place at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg from the 22nd to the 26th of November 2021.

The main topics of the study session were diversity, inclusion and meaningful participation in political youth organisations. During the study session, we discussed what diversity and inclusion means, how they can be measured and what we can do to strengthen them both within our own organisation and in society as a whole. We also discussed meaningful participation, especially youth participation and minority groups' participation; what are the differences between being excluded, included and empowered, and how should people be included to not be used as a token but really have an impact on decisions being made?

Some of the outtakes from the discussions were that change can be initiated both by leaders and members of an organisation. The leaders have a special responsibility and accountability to take diversity and equal participation into account, especially when it comes to the organisations' activities, policies and structures. The members also have a responsibility to speak up when noticing injustice or inequality in the organisation. True representation in a political organisation requires years of establishing a safe space and proper internal debate. The focus needs to be on the internal wholesomeness and true relationship to diversity in the organisation and not on the image of the political organisation when it comes to e.g. vetting candidates for election - anything else is tokenism.

A special emphasis was put on intercultural learning and non-formal learning. Throughout the activity, the participants learned from each other by sharing their own experiences, ideas, opinions, best practices and challenges. We were delighted to see that the participants created a very safe environment from the get-go, and were able to share their thoughts and experiences freely with each other, which truly enabled them to learn from each other and exchange thoughts, ideas and opinions. The sessions were largely based on discussions and explorations of different topics and themes, with a goal to make the sessions as interactive as possible. The learning methods also included drama exercises, simulations, analysis as well as sessions by external speakers.

The main outcome of the study session will be the Diversity Action Toolkit, an easily-digested booklet for political youth organisations, providing concrete tips on how to strengthen the diversity, inclusion and participation in organisations. The Toolkit will be based on the participants' input and needs discussed during the study session. The work with the toolkit will be carried out during the Spring of 2022 and we envision it to be finalised by the Summer of 2022. Once it is done, we hope to be able to spread it in both digital and printed form.

## INTRODUCTION

This introduction aims to give an overview of what this report contains. The introduction includes information about the organisations carrying out the study session as well as background information about the session itself. It also includes the main aims and objectives of the study session, the profile of the participants, the main topic and contents discussed at the event as well as the link between the theme of the study session and the Council of Europe.

### European Liberal Youth (LYMEC)

The European Liberal Youth (abbreviated as LYMEC) is a pan-European youth organisation established in 1976, seeking to promote liberal values throughout Europe and the EU. It is the official youth organisation of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (the ALDE Party) as well as the Renew Europe group in the European Parliament.

One of the most central values of LYMEC is the respect for equality and human rights. Everyone should have the same opportunities to participate in society and shape their own lives. LYMEC wants to work for an open and inclusive society where people can feel safe to be themselves and develop as individuals no matter gender, age, background, disability, religion, ethnicity or personal attributes. LYMEC stands up against all forms of discrimination, hate crime, racism and exclusion, and envisions an open society where all lives are respected.

LYMEC consists of both member organisations and individual members from over 40 different European countries. The organisation represents 150 000 young liberal-minded Europeans.

### The African Caribbean and Pacific Young Professionals Network (ACP YPN)

Established in 2014, ACP YPN provides a platform for young people to play an active role in policy-making processes at the national, regional and international levels (in line with Article 26, ACP-EU Partnership Agreement). In October 2018, ACP Young Professionals Network launched Black History Month EU to bring Black History Month to Brussels and the EU institutions.

Representing being at the heart of ACP Young Professionals Network, the network works to uplift and support young professionals from ACP and EU backgrounds. We aim to ensure that all young professionals can benefit from equality of opportunity by promoting and facilitating the integration of the perspectives of ACP and EU youth in several key dialogues such as trade, employment and education, agriculture and environment. All our activities and advocacy contributes to ensuring “responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels” in order to provide solutions for youth and institutions in our societies (SDG 16).

ACP YPN landmark activities include the bi-annual Youth Forum at the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly - a permanent Forum for youth to exchange with ACP and EU Members of Parliament; leading the first delegation of ACP youth ambassadors to the European Youth Event and the first ACP youth delegation to the EDD16 and every year thereafter; hosting professionals networking events and training sessions; organising Ambassador Roundtables; launching Black History Month EU - a series of cultural, social, professional, training and networking events with public and private sector stakeholders.



## Background of the Study Session

In 2019, LYMEC adopted its first equality and diversity plan, being the first pan-European political youth organisation to do so. Since then, LYMEC has been putting even more focus on strengthening the equality and diversity within the organisation. In June 2020, LYMEC organised an online activity in co-operation with the Council of Europe, focusing on diversifying youth organisations' communication. (Due to the pandemic a physical study session was not possible to organise, therefore we organised a two day long online activity instead.) We received over 100 registrations for the event as well as a lot of positive feedback around the importance of the topic. Based on the interest in the event as well as the feedback after the event, we knew that the topic was of great importance to our members, and possibly also to other young people in Europe and beyond. Therefore, we wanted to continue from what we had learned and discussed in 2020 and build on that for our 2021 study session.

We teamed up with the African Caribbean and Pacific Young Professionals Network (ACP YPN) and decided to focus this study session on taking concrete steps to strengthen diversity and participation in political youth organisations. We realised from the start that we still have a long way to go when it comes to strengthening diversity and participation both within LYMEC as well as in youth politics overall in Europe. We therefore wish to use opportunities such as this study session to enhance our own and the political youth organisation community's knowledge in the field. At the online activity in 2020, "Hear me out, take me in", we started to develop a Diversity Action Toolkit, an easily-digested toolkit for political youth organisations, giving concrete tips on how to strengthen the diversity and participation in their organisations. The work with the Toolkit continued during the 2021 study session and will be finalised by Summer 2022.

## Aims and objectives

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The main aims of this study session were to:

- deepen participants knowledge about young people's access to rights; with an emphasis on diversity, meaningful participation and inclusion
- enable intercultural learning between participants
- enable meaningful participation for all
- broaden youth participation

The main objectives of this study session were to:

- equip the participants with self-analysis tools
- equip the participants with tools for initiating change in their own organisation
- open up and analyse the social climate and manifested attitudes of the participants' organisations
- transform the social climate and manifested attitudes of the participants' organisations, so as to be more inclusive and sensitive to diversity

## Profile of participants

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The study session was not only meant for members of LYMEC or ACP YPN. However, since we spread the word about the study session mainly through the channels of the organising organisation, we knew that a majority of the participants would most probably be from either LYMEC or ACP YPN. Out of the twenty attending participants, twelve were from LYMEC, five were from ACP YPN and three were from other organisations. The participants came from eleven different countries; Ethiopia, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, United Kingdom, Finland, Spain, Norway, Bulgaria, Latvia and Jamaica.

The desired profile of participants at the event was persons in positions of trust and persons at the helm of political youth organisations or their local affiliations. While the previous LYMEC study session in June 2020 focused on communicating for diversity and thus specifically targeting the communicators or media officers in youth organisations, this event focused more on event or community officers as well as regional officers in youth organisations. Event officers or regional officers in youth organisations are close to new members in organisations, set up events and detect educational needs of the membership.

In their application to the event, the participants stated their motivation for applying, their previous experiences on facilitation for diversity and equality in youth participation as well as their previous experiences dealing with disadvantaged groups and promoting inclusion. We received a total of 35 applications from 16 different countries. When choosing participants, we looked at the applicants' motivation for joining as well as their previous experiences and knowledge of the topic. The study session was never supposed to be only for those who already had a lot of experience in the field, instead we wanted a good mixture of different experiences, to make sure that the participants would also learn from each other.

Out of the 35 applicants, 12 were from ACP YPN. Due to the fact that we could only accept four participants (including team members) from countries that are not part of the Council of Europe, we could however not accept as many participants from ACP YPN as we would have wanted to. Since LYMEC is a European organisation, all LYMEC applicants were from a European country, and thereby from a member country of the Council of Europe. This factor made it more difficult to accept an equal amount of participants from both organisations. However, we were very happy with the final list of participants, as they were all very motivated to take part in the study session and had a lot of different experiences in the field. Having participants from other organisations than LYMEC or ACP YPN was also valuable.

## Main topics and contents

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The main topic of this study session was diversity and participation in political youth organisations. The focus throughout the event laid on diversity, inclusion and meaningful participation. We discussed what diversity and inclusion means, how they can be measured and what we can do to strengthen them. We also talked about meaningful participation, especially youth participation; what are the differences between being excluded, included and empowered, and how should youth really be included to not be used as a token but really have an impact on decisions being made? Furthermore, we discussed self-analysis; how to analyse the structures and attitudes within one's own organisation, and how to change them, both as a leader and as an individual. The participants shared their views on what good leadership is, and we discussed how to be change makers.

Our aim throughout the activity was to get the participants to learn from each other by sharing their own experiences, best practices and challenges. The dynamics in the group were positive from the very first session. As trainers, it was a pleasure to see that the group was so comfortable with each other and truly enjoyed each other's company. This group dynamic enabled the participants to freely share their thoughts, ideas, opinions and experiences, and in that way learn from each other.



## Link between the theme and Council of Europe

The theme of diversity and meaningful participation of youth is closely linked to the work of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe is working on a variety of programmes linked to strengthening diversity and inclusion in Europe and beyond. The Council of Europe also works to strengthen meaningful participation of youth not least by the work being done by its Advisory Council on Youth, who provide opinions and input on the Council of Europe's youth sector activities. The Advisory Council on Youth also has an important role in ensuring that young people are involved in other activities of the Council of Europe.

The Recommendation on young people's access to rights (CM/REC(2016)7) and their implementations as part of the youth policies and youth work promoting young people's access to rights is also an important part of the Council of Europe's work to strengthen meaningful participation of youth. During our study session, we used the Council of Europe's Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People a lot in the planning of our training sessions, both to get ideas and to see which activities we could use for our study session. We ended up using Act it out, Flower power and On the ladder in our programme. We also altered some of the activities to fit with our programme and topics, for example we did our own version of Tale of two cities, focusing especially on meaningful participation for all and taking diversity into consideration when making political decisions.

We also included a specific spot in the programme for the Council of Europe representatives to present the Council of Europe's work in non-discrimination activities and projects, something that a lot of our participants found interesting.





## RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

During our five day long study session, we had time to discuss diversity, inclusion and meaningful participation from a variety of different angles and perspectives. However, as one of our participants mentioned in the evaluation form, “the topic of diversity is large enough to cover a month of content and exercises”. Needless to say, we were not able to cover everything during our study session, even if we tried to cover as much as possible without rushing through sessions or neglecting the important time needed to digest what was discussed.

The main conclusions regarding diversity were that the process to build a system that is diverse (in organisations, politics or in society overall) takes a lot of time, and to build that system we need to reconfigure our mindset as well as our norms and attitudes. Learning about the diversity of cultures is key to understanding diversity, as well as initiating change. The participants were of the unanimous opinion that this should be a mandatory part of the learning schedule, in order to create awareness from an early age. It is also important to have a historical understanding in order to understand and strengthen diversity. Recognising what has happened and the source of injustice and inequality is important in order to understand diversity as a whole. It is also important to speak up when you see injustice or inequality. There has to be a sense of courage to point out injustices and inequalities, and there has to be platforms where these things can be pointed out and different voices can be heard. Other than courage there also needs to be accountability and responsibility. Those who are privileged or in a position of power need to be responsible for strengthening diversity. As one of our participants put it in the evaluation form, “If (youth) political parties do not prioritise diversity and inclusion, then they are destined to fail both in terms of electoral performance and in terms of membership.”

The main conclusions regarding meaningful participation were that a lot of the participants unfortunately had bad experiences of inclusion. Several participants had experienced situations where they had been badly included, or even excluded. Participants had also experienced tokenism. The participants agreed that it is those in positions of power who need to include young people, but young people also need to be active and speak up. However, platforms need to be created to enable young people to speak their mind. In order to create meaningful participation especially in politics and decision making, there is a crucial need for better communication between those in positions of power and the youth.

Some of the participants' learning points from the study session were:

- “the perspectives and experiences from my colleagues”
- “that small things can make a big difference for people. [...] We need to be conscious that everyone is coming from a different background and perspective, and that diversity can lead to better outcomes and a more holistic approach”
- “expanded knowledge on human rights and other cultures”
- “that I need to keep growing and learning. I think that there is a willingness and intention to work on diversity and inclusion and it is great but that we have a long way to go in terms of implementing actions (being the change we want to see). It was an educational experience and has made me reflect on how I want to work in the future and how I analyse situations.”
- “knowledge about how to include, and the importance of diversity”

Many participants mentioned that the absolute best thing about the study session was meeting people from different countries and cultures and learning from their knowledge, experiences and perspectives. Several participants mentioned that they were very comfortable in the group and could therefore share their ideas, opinions and experiences freely, which gave an added value both to themselves and to other participants.

We did not only ask our participants what they learned, but also what they might have missed from the study session. Some participants mentioned that they would have wanted more time to debate different topics, have more time to reflect on who was in the group and what dimensions of diversity were represented in the group. Some of the participants were also missing a more political aspect and more information about how to make diversity and inclusion matter in a political organisation where it has not been on the agenda earlier; “there are people within political organisations who simply do not care about other marginalised groups, and we need to be able to bring them to the table or at least garner tacit support.”



## PROGRAMME OF THE STUDY SESSION

The success of the whole study session can rise and fall with the foundation laid at the very beginning. Therefore, it was important to allocate enough time at the start to create a safe space environment and have a slow but firm introduction to the topic. This was the main objective of the first day of the study session.

The four sessions of the first day were built up with the following flow:

- Session 1: Introduce study session and LYMEC & ACP YPN, collect expectations of participants and break the ice
- Session 2: Introduce the European Youth Centre and create a safe space environment by team building exercises
- Session 3: Develop understanding about the connection between human needs, personal well-being and human rights
- Session 4: Link human rights based approach to youth participation

Straight from the first participatory activity of an ice-breaking game, it became clear that the group was very heterogeneous. The diversity did not only consist of formal aspects like ethnicity, age, gender identity, geographical background etc. but also informal aspects like political affiliation, exposure to discrimination, activism involvement etc. Some of the participants seemed to have a lot of formal knowledge about the topic of inclusion, whereas others were quite new to it. It was natural for those having more knowledge to be more active, and for those who were new to the subject to listen in. Consequently, from the very beginning, the team of trainers was aware of the variety of experiences and knowledge, and paid full attention and effort to ensure that everyone was comfortable in the group and could speak their mind, regardless of their previous experiences.

At the very first session, all participants got to write down their own expectations, goals, fears and possible outcome products. The most common expectations were to learn more about the topic, gain new skills, network and have fun. Since the study session took place in the middle of the pandemic, one specific fear was to get Covid. It was agreed on wearing the mask at all times. This was necessary, but unfortunately it had an impact on group discussions. Due to the mask, emotions and expressions were not as visible. At a later stage of the study session, participants expressed that they sometimes felt insecure because there was no visible reaction to their comments or expressions.

In general, the group was very active, participative and inclusive from the beginning on. All non-formal education methods of the CoE could unfold their intended effects. During the team building exercises, new tools (the apps “Kahoot!” and “GooseChase”) were used, and the participants grew together with the help of competitive and creative games. During the “flower power” drawing, participants were very self-reflective and open. During the “on the ladder” exercise, the link between theory and own experiences was made. The Compass and its well described activities were a great support for the preparation and execution of the first day of the study session.



Hence, the discussions in the second half of the day were very fruitful. When elaborating on human rights, the argument was made that you perceive human rights differently depending on factors like your place of birth and cultural background. If you include global economic factors and aid distribution, human rights seem to even depend very much on class, race and other factors. Although human rights are universal, the problem is that there are many countries that are not taking the responsibility to impose them. Universal human rights were in large part created by European countries. Due to social evolution, they need to be modernised and address other geographical contexts, without ideology. We cannot just speak of it as something beautiful. It needs more actions and we need to have better instructions on who is giving your rights to you, and it needs to be applicable to everyone.

Climate and environment is part of the third generation of human rights and that also needs to be applicable. The participants agreed that if you do not have your human needs met it is almost impossible to reach human rights, but you can also have your human needs met but not have human rights granted.

When talking about the ladder of youth participation, the participants' experiences were rather negative. They had feelings of being badly included and experienced tokenism. The following examples with obstacles and enabling factors were elaborated:

Situation	Obstacles	Enabling factors
Brexit: lowest step on the ladder, young people were manipulated	young people were already disengaged, had not met politicians nor were they represented; lack of inclusion	the will to search for more information, democracy learning, raise awareness about fake news
elections: 10% of candidates in the elections need to be young	difficult to find people who want to stand as candidates, scary to be a candidate	better communication and funding for young candidates
Youth in politics	not being listened to, ignoring the youth	better communication
Unequal participation	misuse of initiative	empowering young people

The sessions on the second day focused on the theme Diversity and Inclusion (D&I), Intersectionality within the political processes and political contexts.

The flow of the sessions were as follows:

- Session 1: An introductory session to challenge the understanding and notion of Diversity and Inclusion.
- Session 2: The focus was to challenge participants' understanding of diversity and inclusion as well as the historical and contemporary contexts by which D&I can be defined. In order to position themselves as allies and change-maker within their organisations.
- Session 3: This session aimed to enhance the understanding of the meaning of intersectionality within the frame of diversity and intersectionality. In addition, this session sought to identify various forms in which intersectionality manifests and how this has an impact in understanding and integrating diversity.
- Session 4: This session aimed to enhance the understanding of how diversity manifests differently within the political processes. It further explored what a political process constitutes and the importance of diversity and inclusion.

The first session started with an open reflection on what diversity defined in various contexts means to each participant. It was clear that diversity has no one constant definition and its definition is dependent on the context in which it is being defined. The participants also explored how to advocate and support diversity within various social settings in our societies, and it was clear that restructuring our mindset is critical. The participants were also of the opinion that enhancing the level of awareness and understanding of various cultures will enhance acceptance and recognition of cultural diversity.

During the second session, the participants took part in an in-depth discussion about inclusion issues within historical and contemporary contexts. The goal was to challenge the participants' understanding of inclusion, enhance the understanding of marginalised people's social burden, and present the concept of justice. The discussion began by introducing the concept of inclusion and its various contextual meanings. Furthermore, the participants were faced with the question about how inclusion can be measured and if it should be measured. The measure of inclusion was explored with the identification of indicators that can measure the success of inclusion.

The question of inclusion vs integration was also explored by participants, with the realisation that integration does not necessarily mean inclusion. This session brought an interesting discussion on marginalisation with the exploration of what determines and categorises marginalisation; what are the positions that the people who need to be included are holding and what kind of decision making do they have access to?

**Session three** aimed to enhance understanding of the meaning of intersectionality within the frame of diversity and intersectionality. The session further sought to identify various forms in which intersectionality manifests and how this has an impact in understanding and integrating diversity. The session involved a lot of group dynamic activity to have a candid discussion on how intersectionality manifests itself within the various contemporary contexts. The participants were asked to think about tools that are effective in addressing intersectionality within the context of diversity and inclusion. The participants also explored the meaning of intersectionality in relation to diversity and inclusion.

During the discussions, the participants emphasized that diversity and inclusion will only be strengthened when people are seen as multifaceted in their social identities; in other words, when intersectionality is taken into account. Intersectionality is also a way of understanding how and why every individual's view of the world is different. Inclusion means everyone all the time - not some people some of the time. The participants all agreed that a holistic approach is needed to tackle systematic inequalities.

**The last session of the day** aimed to enhance the understanding of how diversity manifests differently within the political processes. The participants explored diversity in four frontiers; Governance, Election, Activism and Democracy. Four groups were set up in relation to the four thematic areas and the following were the key insights:

- **Governance diversity** can be enhanced through the creation of an Advisory Council that takes representation of various groups into consideration to advise government leaders on decisions. The participants highlighted that different governmental bodies, such as the police, need to take diversity into special consideration. The police force needs to ensure that more societal groups are included in the police force in order to ensure that people feel safe in their communities.
- **Election diversity** is enhanced and encouraged through the electorate voting where society is sensitised to vote for 50% of women. Thus, 50% of candidates should also be women, which is not the case today.
- **Activism diversity** should be encouraged by tutor programmes for young people to create safe space for people to express themselves. In addition, creation of programmes that target strengthening the capacity of young people running for political office is key.
- **Democracy diversity** can be strengthened by structural programmes that ensure participation schemes for minorities and low voting groups. These programmes could include discussions in schools as well as more financing for youth centres and organisations.

The sessions of the third day focussed on giving the participants concrete experiences of other perspectives and hands-on tools to detect and analyse obstacles to diversity participation in your own person and organisation. The theme of the day was Understanding the “Other”. The programme outline of the day was:

Session 1: Opening the day and setting the scene for drama

Session 2: Diving into Drama: Understanding the “Other”

Session 3: From Self-Analysis to Diversity Facilitation

Session 4: Where do your “Two Feet” take you? Be ready to meet the rapporteurs!

The first session of the day set the mood of the day with a physical ice-breaking exercise intended to create trust and awaken the group for physical action. The symbolic action of passing a message around the group in a circle was intended to be a symbol of how we awaringly or unawaringly can enable and block each other from participation and equal opportunity. Before moving on to the next session, the agreed rules of the study session were repeated with the participants. In the context of a pandemic, the physical action of holding hands felt more impactful than it had been in a regular scenario. Based on previous feedback, the activity gave the participants a concrete opportunity to sense each other and get a mindful start to the day.

In the second session the participants got into the action of acting out a negative scenario in a smaller group, which the rest of the participants got the opportunity to change by jumping in and taking the place of one of the characters. The enactments brought forth both direct positive and negative feelings in the participants, such as being reminded that in some contexts, tokenism and discrimination is very much present and the frustration of acting out a character that does not behave according to one’s own moral compass. The three different enactments touched upon financial obstacles to equal participation, binary facilitation, and candidate recruitment only based on ethnic profiling. The drama activity brought forth a number of learnings:

- that financial obstacles to participation tend to be frequent for those concerned and that the issue has to be dealt with well ahead of events through structural solutions
- an organisation for diversity requires someone to take leadership in a visual and strong way and vetting candidates needs to be based on values and own motivation to run in elections
- true representation in a political organisation requires years of establishing a safe space and proper internal debate, before presenting candidates that represent a different identity or community than the majority of the organisation membership
- that it takes a lot of courage for single individuals to ask for special consideration in a binary situation and that as an organiser it is important to be humble and acknowledge the diversity of the participants

The drama activity also amounted to a lot of best practises and ideas for better practises being shared in the group:

- anonymize the process of applying for grants and discounts to attend events by assigning the process to a separate committee or scholarship programme
- introduce sliding grades or donor systems for tickets
- the focus needs to be on the internal wholesomeness and true relationship to diversity in the organisation and not on the image of the political organisation when it comes to vetting candidates for election - anything else is tokenism
- when naming a candidate - any candidate - the organisation needs to take care to support the candidate and provide a tribe or candidate programme, especially in a digital context, that can follow the campaign on a more detailed level
- as a trainer and facilitator the first priority needs to be getting to know the participants and creating space for them and then choosing a more neutral manner of dividing groups than binary identities
- When hosting an event it is wise to plan ahead and think more thoroughly of e.g. what kind of participant data you gather in terms of accommodation, in order to make it as inclusive for the participants as possible

The third session of the third day took the next steps to finding suitable methods to better change the organisation and its culture for facilitating diversity. Diversity facilitators or changemakers need to have supporting documents to feel confident in applying change in a landscape or culture in an organisation. Those documents or methods might relate to gathering data and sentiments in the organisation, or they might relate to how the organisation portrays itself internally. During this session the participants evaluated a diversity checklist finalised by the participants in the 2020 digital event on diversity communication. The participants also evaluated the Women in Political Parties Index (developed by Liberal International), and discussed their ideas on methods for self-evaluation in an organisation. The session also contained a discussion on intersectionality, based on the feedback from participants. The discussion concluded intersectionality helps us analyse and understand what makes us who we are and ask ourselves how people interpret us and also see how we interpret ourselves. Intersectionality helps us understand how aspects of identities are interconnected and gradient.

In the final session the participants were meant to meet with rapporteurs on racism and other forms of discrimination, but unfortunately, the rapporteurs were not available for attending the study session. Therefore the Educational Advisor of the event, Stefan Manevski, presented the Council of Europe, the Advisory Council on Youth and the work of the CoE on e.g. anti-racism. The participants were curious about the consensus decision-making of the CoE and the large number of conventions accepted but not implemented by the CoE member states. The participants returned to the outcomes and conclusions of the previous sessions of the day and evaluated them before they listened to a song at the end of the session as a brief space for self-reflection.



On day four, the main focus laid on diversity and leadership in the participants' own organisations. The programme was outlined as following:

Session 1: Strengthening Diversity and Participation - What can we learn from other organisations' experiences? External Speaker: Jana Degrott - We Belong Europe

Session 2: Diversity finding mission - SWOT analysis and best practice sharing

Session 3: Power Flower exercise on intersectionality

Session 4: The Council of Europe's work on non-discrimination activities and projects

Session 5: Leadership skills under the magnifying glass

Session 6: Earn your leadership skills - Simulation exercise

During Jana Degrott's session the main topic was how to strengthen diversity and inclusion in your own organisation. Degrott also spoke about her own experience as a public political figure in Luxembourg. She presented the participants with a problem of her being the target of racism and harassment by people online and the participants got to discuss how this could be prevented on a local governmental level. One of Degrott's suggestions was to create an Inclusion Council, and the participants were challenged to ponder on the Council's role and working methods. The participants agreed that an Inclusion Council could increase accountability, inclusion and awareness by working towards the goal of having safe spaces and learning more about self care. The Council could offer both structural and mental support to those being harmed. The participants agreed that people who are causing harm need to be accountable for their actions.

Due to some reshuffling of the programme, the SWOT analysis was cut short and the participants did not get to present their SWOT analysis to the whole group, but the exercise was still a success. Many of the participants had not done a SWOT analysis before and thought that the exercise itself was good because it forced them to identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats when it comes to diversity in their organisation.

The Power Flower exercise explored our intersecting identities and the ways that they contribute to both oppression and privilege, illustrating how power is relational and always dynamic. By reflecting on what they identified themselves as and how these forces operate in people's lives, the understanding of identity, power, privilege and exclusion deepened as well as the understanding of how it affects our organisations, themselves as individuals and our societies. The remaining questions the participants were left to ponder on was focused on how to solve the injustices of our time, and how to join forces across our identities to build interconnected movements and action strategies.



For the leadership analysis the participants got to ponder in groups on what the top characteristics, abilities and beliefs of a leader are. During the discussions a list of characteristics were made. Some of the outtakes from the list were: Leaders are role models, diplomatic and fair. In the context of diversity, they are inclusive, democratic, diplomatic and emotionally intelligent. The characteristic of inclusiveness was brought up frequently and was one of the more important characteristics, with the idea that a leader should be able to integrate all people and groups in activities, organisations and political processes. especially those who are disadvantaged, have suffered discrimination or are living with disabilities. Leaders can advocate, delegate, adopt, delegate and communicate. A leader needs to be able to take action and be accountable in creating a better environment. The act of delegation can be seen as the ability to empower others to achieve a collective set of goals for a progressive future. Leaders believe in respect, tolerance, empathic understanding and deep listening. An empathetic leader shows interest in their team members' lives, their thoughts and feelings, and the challenges they may be facing. After taking the time to listen to them and evaluate, this leader will think of ways of helping them fulfil their needs to create a dynamic that works for them within the team. A leader is required to believe in deep listening, because there needs to be a suspension of judgement, and a willingness to receive new information – whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

In the final session, the participants got to participate in a town hall simulation, where everyone got assigned characters and a description of the situation in the village. After mingling and getting to know the other characters, an announcement by the local government was made, changing the lives of the villagers. After the debates on how to solve this issue, the participants reflected upon the idea of participatory democracy and inclusiveness. Some felt that the character of the refugee was not able to speak up in the same way as the mayor of the town or other characters in positions of power. Therefore, the participants argued, there should be a representative system of minority groups. Positive discrimination could also have improved the participation. Others thought that the voting system when voting on the decisions made in the town hall should be based on consent, rather than on majority voting system. When sitting in the town hall, the participants also pointed out that a circular seating instead of a town hall seating would have made it more inclusive and improved participation. In meetings like these there should also be a true equal footing and spaces to be heard for those who are the most affected, because it is easy to forget people that are not as vocal or have as much influence as others.

The fifth and final day was planned to be devoted for the participants to go over what they had learned during the week and reflect upon their learnings. They were also meant to reflect on the expectations they had at the beginning of the study session and examine if these were met. We were also going to have a session devoted to the Diversity Action Toolkit. The participants were meant to brainstorm about what the toolkit should include content wise as well as how it could be used in the organisations once it is done. Furthermore, the participants would take part in a graduation ceremony and receive their participation certificates.

Unfortunately, only the graduation ceremony could be organised, since we found out early on the final day that one of the participants unfortunately had gotten Covid-19. To keep everyone safe, we did not want to carry out the full programme of the final day. There were also a lot of questions regarding the next steps, since some were travelling home that day and were not sure if they had to re-organise their travel plans due to the exposure. Instead of the original programme, we made sure to answer all questions the participants had about the situation and make sure everyone felt safe. It was not an easy situation and it was difficult to provide information on short notice, but the staff at the European Youth Centre was very helpful and before long everyone was tested and those who needed to re-organise their travel plans got the support they needed to do so.

The abrupt ending to the study session was unfortunate. It would have been good to end the study session on a more positive note and give the participants a real opportunity to properly say goodbye to each other. However, the participants were very understanding and even though the study session did not end in the best possible way, the participants seemed very happy with the study session overall. And so are we, the trainers and facilitators of this study session.

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

As mentioned earlier in this report, we will create a Diversity Action Toolkit. We envision the toolkit to be an easily-digested booklet for political youth organisations, providing concrete tips on how to strengthen the diversity and participation in organisations. Even though we were not able to hold the brainstorming session about the Toolkit on the last day of the event, we took notes during all our sessions and have a lot of input from the participants that we will include in the booklet. The booklet will include the main topics discussed at this study session; diversity, inclusion and meaningful participation. It will also include chapters on leadership, self-analysis and policies needed to strengthen diversity and participation in organisations.

The work with the toolkit will be carried out during the Spring of 2022 and we envision it to be finalised by the Summer of 2022. Once it is done, we hope to be able to spread it both in a digital and printed format.



## APPENDICES

### Final Programme

#### Sunday, 21 November 2021

Arrival of participants  
19:00 Dinner  
21:00 Welcome Evening

#### Monday, 22 November 2021

09:30 Opening Ceremony - Introduction to Study Session  
11:00 Break  
11:30 Treasure Hunt - Team Building Activity  
13:00 Lunch  
14:30 A Pluralistic Society - Defining Human Rights  
16:00 Break  
16:30 Voice of the Youth - Empower Youth Participation  
18:00 Home Groups  
19:00 Dinner  
21:00 Warming Up Evening

#### Tuesday, 23 November 2021

09:30 Understanding Diversity and Inclusion  
11:00 Break  
11:30 Diversity and Inclusion: Here and Now!  
External Speaker: Adelaide Hirwe - ACP YPN  
13:00 Lunch  
14:30 Reflecting Intersectionality - going beyond the crosspoints of categories  
16:00 Break  
16:30 Manifestation of Diversity through the Political Processes  
18:00 Home Groups  
19:00 Dinner out in Strasbourg



## Wednesday, 24 November 2021

09:30 Diving into drama: Understanding the “Other” - part 1  
11:00 Break  
11:30 Diving into drama: Understanding the “Other” - part 2  
13:00 Lunch  
14:30 From Self-Analysis to Diversity Facilitation  
16:00 Break  
16:30 Where do your “Two Feet” take you? Be ready to meet the rapporteurs!  
18:00 Home Groups  
19:00 Dinner  
Free time

## Thursday, 25 November 2021

09:30 Strengthening Diversity and Participation - What can we learn from other organisations' experiences?  
External Speaker: Jana Degrott - We Belong Europe  
11:00 Break  
11:30 Diversity finding mission - SWOT analysis and best practice sharing  
12:15 Power Flower exercise on intersectionality  
13:00 Lunch  
14:00 The Council of Europe's work on non-discrimination activities and projects  
15:00 Leadership skills under the magnifying glass  
15:45 Break  
16:15 Earn your leadership skills - Simulation  
18:00 Home Groups  
19:00 Dinner & Cultural evening

## Friday, 26 November 2021

10:00 Information and discussion about the Covid outbreak (not in original programme)  
11:30 Closing of the event & Graduation Ceremony  
13:00 Lunch

## Saturday, 27 November 2021

Departure of participants

## List of Participants

### Belgium

Shanthuru Premkumar, Extinction Rebellion

### Bulgaria

Ahmed Mehmedov, LYMEC

### Finland

Maria Pulkka, Finnish Centre Youth (LYMEC)

Linda Sederholm, Swedish Youth of Finland (LYMEC)

### Germany

Emily Karius, Fridays for Future

Sarah Funcke, Young Liberals Germany (LYMEC)

Émilie Mbayi, African Union Diaspora Youth Initiative (ACP YPN)

Eva Städele, Fridays for Future

### Ireland

Leanne Mallen, Ógra Fianna Fáil (LYMEC)

David Griffin, Ógra Fianna Fáil (LYMEC)

Cormac Corr, Ógra Fianna Fáil (LYMEC)

### Latvia

Leonards Mazurs, Attistibai Youth (LYMEC)

### Norway

Andreas Hollås Ashaug, Young Liberals of Norway (LYMEC)

Emilie Ovnerud, Young Liberals of Norway (LYMEC)

Rahwa Yohaness, MANIFOLD Norway (ACP YPN)

### Spain

Francesc Gabriel Marti, Joventut Nacionalista de Catalunya (LYMEC)

Ida Reffhaug Andersen, Young Liberals of Norway (LYMEC)

### United Kingdom

Nkechi Adebayo, ACP YPN

### Jamaica

Twana Barrett, Caribbean Girls Hack (ACP YPN)

### Ethiopia

Bitania Berhanu, European Commission (ACP YPN)

## Lecturers

Adelaide Hirwe, ACP YPN  
Jana Degrott, We Belong Europe

## Preparatory team

Ida-Maria Skytte, LYMEC  
Winnie Mutai, ACP YPN  
Katharina Schreiner, LYMEC  
Lena Höglund, LYMEC  
Sara von Bonsdorff, LYMEC

## External Trainer

Dzhafer Saatcha, Youth Department

## Council of Europe Secretariat

Stefan Manevski, Educational Advisor, Youth Department  
Patrick Norlain, Programme Assistant, Youth Department

## List of references used

Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People  
Diversity Survey (developed at the LYMEC study session in June 2020)  
Liberal International's Women in Political Parties Index (WIPPI) Survey

## List of links where information about the study session was posted

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/LYMEC/status/1435990846562832389>  
<https://twitter.com/acpYPN/status/1437346133525807109>  
<https://twitter.com/LYMEC/status/1462801812134801408>  
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[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=10158230196568730&id=6975388729](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10158230196568730&id=6975388729)  
<https://www.facebook.com/ACPYPN/photos/a.1557184121244858/2622566928039900/>

Website:

[https://www.lymec.eu/speak\\_up\\_and\\_lead\\_making\\_space\\_for\\_diversity\\_and\\_participation\\_in\\_political\\_youth\\_organisations](https://www.lymec.eu/speak_up_and_lead_making_space_for_diversity_and_participation_in_political_youth_organisations)



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Lena Höglund, Facilitator and Trainer  
Winnie Mutai, Facilitator and Trainer  
Sara von Bonsdorff, Facilitator and Trainer  
Katharina Schreiner, Facilitator and Trainer

Adelaide Hirwe, External Speaker  
Jana Degrott, External Speaker

Chiara Liguori, Graphic Designer

Laia Comerma, External Support

## A very special thanks to:

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