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Budapest, 29 May 2026

Study Session: Exploring Planetary Health: Climate, Rights, and Participation

Report of the study session held by
International Youth Health Organization

in co-operation with the
European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest
9 - 14 of February, 2026



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.

I Executive Summary of the study session

The present report from International Youth Health Organization on study session: *Exploring Planetary Health: Climate, Rights, and Participation* provides a closer look into an initiative throughout which 26 participants from 14 CoE countries explored the intricate links between the climate crisis, public health, and democratic participation.

The present report serves both purposes - self-reflection tool for organisers, and as a guide for the other organisations working on similar themes. As such, it compiles the challenges the team encountered, the strengths and weaknesses of the study design, and the reflections and discussions that emerged among participants.

The programme provided a combination of educational inputs, skills development, and action-oriented learnings. The main highlights include:

- Knowledge-expanding sessions:** covered essential concepts such as planetary health, climate change, environmental determinants of health, and the recognition of a healthy environment as a human right;
- Soft-skills and capacity development sessions:** focusing on democratic participation, policy frameworks, stakeholder engagement, and practical advocacy skills;
- Outcome-oriented sessions:** focusing on supporting participants in designing concrete and tangible for future engagement.

In summary, the study session underlined the immediate need to integrate climate, health, and human rights into youth education and advocacy. We are proud to mention that participants designed 15 practical initiatives, and hence contributed to the Council of Europe's priorities on youth participation, democracy, and access to rights. The final output, the *Climate and Planetary Health Action Catalogue*, ensures that the impact of the session will extend beyond its immediate participants, inspiring other young people to take simple yet concrete actions within their reach.

II Introduction

This report is produced by IYHO, and it serves as a material resource that summarises the outcomes, key discussions, learning processes, and recommendations of the study session **“Exploring Planetary Health: Climate, Rights, and Participation”**, organised by the International Youth Health Organisation (IYHO) in cooperation with the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe in Budapest.

The presented report serves several purposes. Firstly, it provides methodological insights into the logic of the study session as it documents the needs analysis, rationale, main ideas, discussions, and comparison of envisioned and achieved learning outcomes that emerged during the study session.

Secondly, it provides an educational resource for participants and youth organisations interested in planetary health, climate justice, advocacy, and youth participation in policy shaping. Last but not the least, it adds up substantially to the broader work of the Council of Europe’s Youth Department by sharing perspectives, recommendations, and experiences from young people united at the intersection of health, environment, and human rights.

The report summarises the logic intervention deployed including programme outline, outcomes, outputs, and impact of the study session. Moreover, it outlines the central themes and learning methods, and highlights the results, conclusions, and follow-up actions as developed by participants and organisers. It intends to serve as both a track record of the activity and a reference document for future initiatives in the field of planetary health and youth engagement and empowerment.

Background and rationale for the study session

The climate crisis and environmental degradation are becoming increasingly recognised not only as environmental concerns, but also as matters of public health, social justice, and human rights. Apart from a nominal recognition, not many initiatives have tackled the challenge of teaching young people about the complex and interconnected nature of climate, human health, and human rights. While young people are among those most affected by these challenges, translating such broad and systemic concepts into integrative and relatable learning experience remains a key difficulty.

In response to this need, the study session “Exploring Planetary Health: Climate, Rights, and Participation” was developed to provide a simple yet comprehensive learning framework for young people. Grounded in human rights education and non-formal learning methodologies, the activity aimed to strengthen participants’ understanding of the interlinks between climate change, health, and youth activism and democratic participation. Special space was dedicated to critical reflection on how these interconnected challenges affect young people’s access to rights and their role in shaping more sustainable and equitable societies.

Aim and objectives

The study session aimed to empower young people in the health field to better understand the links between the environment and human health and to support them in taking action for a healthier, fairer, and more sustainable future.

To achieve this aim, the study session has centred around the following objectives:

1. To develop and deepen the understanding of the intersection of the climate crisis, health and structural inequality with a focus on young people.
2. To create a space for intercultural learning and exchange among young people from diverse backgrounds.
3. To explore how planetary health connects with youth rights, and democratic participation, and identify how young people can influence such policy and decision-making.
4. To build practical skills in advocacy, including communication and collaboration, for personal and professional growth.
5. To support participants in creating and committing to practical, measurable actions that advance the just transition toward a healthier, fairer future for people and the planet.

Participants' profile

The study session brought together a diverse group of young participants from across Europe, representing youth organisations, advocacy groups, and initiatives working in the fields of health, environment, and youth participation. The participants' cohort was predominantly young, with an average age of 24.67. The selection criteria revolved around motivation, personal connection to the topic, as well as the originality and sustainability of their ideas, while intentionally keeping experience balanced, as not to have an overly advanced group.

The group included youth leaders, activists, students, volunteers, youth workers, and young enthusiasts who were eager to engage in resolving issues related to climate change, public health, environmental justice, or youth advocacy. Some participants had previous experience in environmental activism or advocacy, while others were new to the topic but strongly motivated in exploring the intersection between climate, health, and social justice.

Geographically speaking, the applicants came from 20 different Council of Europe countries: United Kingdom, Armenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Italy, Türkiye, Albania, Spain, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, North Macedonia, Brazil, Egypt, Portugal, Greece, Belgium, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Germany. Of note, two participants who were UK-based were from Egypt and USA originally, and a participant from Belgium was Italian-Spanish by nationality, which adds to the diversity and inclusion of the group.

The organising organisation

International Youth Health Organisation (YHO) is a distinguished youth-oriented international organisation that empowers young people to contribute to health policy, advocacy, and education. YHO aims to strengthen youth participation in health-related decision-making processes and to support young people in becoming active contributors to healthier societies.

The study session was closely connected to YHO's strategic priorities, particularly its work in the section of environmental health and climate change. The organisation has a vast experience in organising study sessions, and this study session specifically builds on an earlier held study session in 2023 at EYC Budapest, called: *Mobilising Youth Towards Climate and Health Injustice*.

The main themes/issues addressed and connection with the Council of Europe

The programme of the study session focused on exploring the following themes: planetary health, climate change and environmental degradation, youth rights, youth advocacy and democratic participation. The focus of the study session was the exploration of the intersectionality of these interconnecting themes, and how they ultimately affect human wellbeing, and translating gained knowledge into actionable ideas.

The study session sought to step beyond mere theoretical discussions and support participants in translating knowledge into concrete actionable plans, and eventually tangible output. Noteworthy, the sessions were built in such a way to encompass the knowledge-extending sessions, also intercultural learnings, towards building practical skills in advocacy and democratic participation, and finally creating concrete steps and actionable ideas. As such, the overarching theme the study session revolved around was Planetary Health and the main issue addressed, in regards to the central theme which at the same time represents the strongest common point to the Council of Europe, is the session on *Healthy Environment as a Human Right* where participants gained thorough understanding of the human rights system and to recognise a healthy environment as an integral part of it.

Speaking of contributions, the study session contributed to the priorities of the **Youth for Democracy programme of the Council of Europe**, in particular **“Revitalising pluralistic democracy”**, by exploring how the climate crisis and environmental degradation adversely influence young people's opportunities to participate in democratic decision-making processes. At the same time, the activity addressed the priority of **“Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies”**, by examining how environmental and health challenges intersect with discrimination, inequality, and structural injustice affecting different communities. Moreover, by bringing together young people from different countries and backgrounds, the study session also embedded intercultural dialogue, human rights education, and youth participation - all core values of the Council of Europe's youth sector.

III Results and conclusions

-Recommendations or statements on issues that require particular attention and which could be addressed in the context of the European youth policy: to make the intersectionality of the issue of access to a healthy environment more visible (E.g. mainstreaming environmental or gender policy).

-Suggestions or proposals for the Council of Europe (including for the work of the Youth Department) - making the Council of Europe's work more visible and transparent for young people (e.g. How did the youth representatives vote? One of the participants, who developed this idea, was put in touch with a newly elected Advisory Council on Youth member - Adam Lambe). We hope that this collaboration will lead to a further expansion of the idea.

-Many people who were present at the event shared that this is their first time at a Council of Europe event, but definitely not their last and were eager to find out more ways to get involved in the work of the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

-People applied for future training or training for trainers.

-The following ideas are being discussed between the participants and the organisers of the study session at the moment this report was being produced, namely:

1. One participant from the United Kingdom proposed developing the idea of a *Public Tracker for Planetary Health*, an initiative aimed at enhancing transparency and accessibility of information related to decision-making processes on health and environmental issues within the Council of Europe. The idea seeks to strengthen youth participation by making institutional processes more visible and comprehensible.
2. Consultations with two participants from B&H on putting them through the stakeholders - public call "Dialogue for Future" which awards the projects which connect youth and environmental protection. They sought support in writing the application form on their idea of developing the applied theatre play on raising the awareness around planetary health among youth 8-12 y.o.

IV Programme - inputs and discussions

The overall programme of the study session was built and divided into five main blocks according to the content of each session that composed such blocks, corresponding to the specific objective of the study session. As such, the sessions were colour-coded for easier session flow-follow.

I. Grey-coloured sessions: the objective for these sessions was for participants to get to know each other, break the ice between each other and get to know the objectives of the sessions, what a study session is, and who the organisers are - YHO and Council of Europe. Additionally, we created a group contract with rules and behaviours we would like to see in the group for the best learning experience of the group. These sessions helped achieve *objective 2 - creating a space for intercultural learning and exchange among young people from diverse backgrounds*.

What worked? Looking back at the very beginning, we did manage to build a very nice group dynamic, the participants were hanging out with each other with almost everyone and there were no major conflicts. We also introduced *Reflection groups* at the end of each day and during those we inquired into the mood, the learnings and the needs of the group. The team aimed and managed as much as the programme allowed to reflect the upcoming needs of the group.

Challenges: the participants said that the games we introduced were a bit childish and instead they would've liked to hear a proper introduction of every other participant and team member - what is their experience, what brings them here, what organisation they come from etc.

What could've been done better?

- Organise a big circle in the beginning to hear from everyone; it is an investment of time, but it is essential.
- Organise a session on what is formal, non-formal and informal education - for many people, this was their first non-formal education session and coming from a formal education background, they were not clear on their expectations;

II. Orange-coloured sessions: after the tone was set, and the participants got to know each other slightly better, we proceeded with the sessions aimed at addressing the *objective 1) developing understanding of the intersection between climate, health, and structural inequality*. This block consisted of the following sessions: Introduction of Planetary Health and One Health, Climate Fresk, Shared Earth, Shared Health, Climate Resilience and Mental Health, Youth and Planetary Health: Industry, Marketing (Commercial Determinants). The team's intent for these sessions was for participants to develop a solid understanding of the main concepts and to tap into interconnectivity between planetary health and climate change, human behaviour, and social inequalities.

What worked? Participants seemed to have very nicely responded to the visual and auditory elements which were induced, concretely - short movie on planetary health deterioration. They liked the exploration of the mental health dimensions of climate change, and particularly intriguing was how different emotions (sadness, numbness, anger, etc) arose on a continuum while being prompted by the same stimuli.

Challenges: This block had a lot of concepts to be explained; the general impression is that we have attempted to encompass as many as relevant concepts possible, and yet not have dug deeper, causing some sessions to miss on the continuation and flow between them.

What could've been done better? - Focus on 1 or 2 key concepts; let participants do most of the work and go into depth in 1 or 2 things rather than trying to go over a lot of concepts but in a superficial way; Climate Fresk is a powerful tool, but inside of the flow of the Study Session it didn't serve to achieve the objectives and it didn't bring a lot of clarity;

Highlight session from the block: Climate Fresk

The Climate Fresk method helped participants grasp complex climate science through interactive, joint learning. Instead of passively receiving information, they actively built cause-effect links.

Key takeaways:

- recognising that climate change is largely driven by human activities such as energy use, land use, and consumption patterns
- systemic thinking - connections between emissions, biodiversity loss, and extreme weather
- deepened awareness of individual and collective responsibility, linking everyday behaviours with global consequences.

Discussions and reflections: Participants debated the balance between personal action and systemic change, the role of industries and governments, and issues of environmental justice. Many had “aha moments” when connecting human activities like fossil fuel use or deforestation to cascading impacts such as ocean acidification or food insecurity. They highlighted the complexity of climate systems and shifted perspectives-seeing climate change not as a distant issue but as an immediate public and planetary health concern.

From facilitator's point of view: “The progression from initial confusion to active engagement was valuable, and one main challenge I am proud of managing is uneven group pacing.” - Nino Chkhetiani.



III) The purple-coded sessions included: Healthy Environment as a Human Right (Democracy) and Advocacy, Simulation I: Adoption of a Youth Document, and Simulation Part II with debrief. These sessions were meant to enable further exploration on how *planetary health connects with youth rights, and democratic participation, and identify how young people can influence such policy and decision-making (objective 3)*. The team envisioned this block for participants to get a clearer understanding of the human rights system and recognised a healthy environment as an integral part of it. They explored and compared different frameworks and definitions, while also reflecting on their connection to democratic values such as participation, accountability, and justice.

What worked? Extending the previous health perspective towards the research and comparison of different frameworks (e.g UN, CoE, European Union) related to environmental rights and governance, seemed to have resonated very well with participants. Some participants appreciated learning more about CoE and its role.

Challenges: Combative argumentation during the debate, participants have had a heavy load of emotions following the Simulation session.

What could've been done better? Trigger warnings, highlighting the possibility of an energy draining debate; to include a debrief on the emotional side of participating at high-stake negotiations.

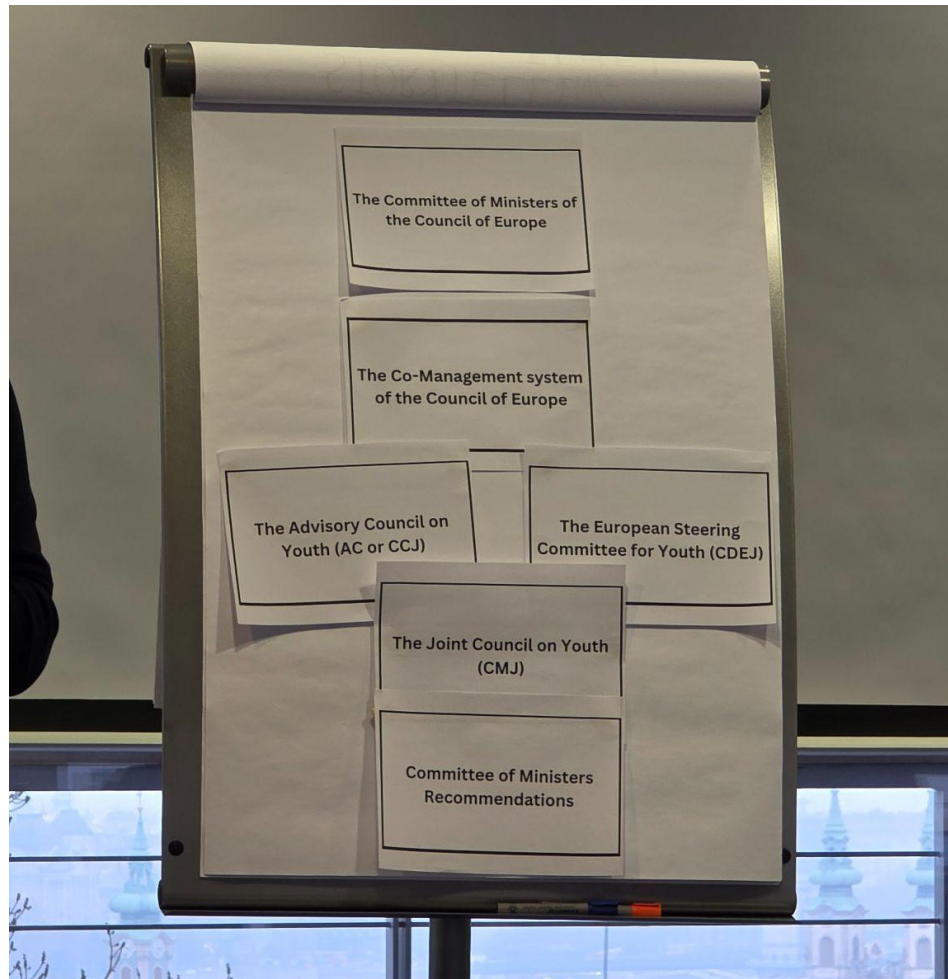
Highlight session from the block:

Simulation I: Adoption of a Youth Document and Simulation II + Debrief

This simulation was delivered by an external trainer to the team - Spyros Papadatos. He brought experience in non-formal education delivery of what sometimes come across as dry and abstract mechanisms of institutional work. He answered all questions that the group had for about 40 minutes on the working of the Council of Europe and The Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) before moving into the simulation of adoption of a youth document.

Key takeaways: The group acknowledged the importance of the seating in the room and the importance of the coffee breaks/lunches and other informal time during high-level decision-making engagements.

Discussions and reflections: If we have to do this activity again we would like to give a trigger warning in advance as role playing activities can carry energy and conflict to the rest of the programme. We noticed that it took the participants at least 24h to let go of something that happened during the simulation.



IV) The green-coded sessions, these addressed objective 4 - *building practical skills in advocacy, including communication and collaboration, for personal and professional growth.* Sessions included Open Space and Stakeholder Mapping and Strategic Planning for Planetary Health. Throughout these sessions, having moved forward from theoretical comprehension, participants mainly built practical skills in designing and planning advocacy initiatives.

What worked? Here the team gave more space for participants to be self-organisers and initiators of the topics that feel important to them. Also, this method was a perfect fit for balancing power dynamics by lightly “passing the ball” to participants, having trust in them to be the hosts of the conversations they found most important.

Challenges: No major challenges have emerged at this stage.

What could’ve been done better? Participants mentioned that it would be nice if they knew in advance that this type of open space will be included so they can already think if there were something they would like to present and prepare for it.

Highlight session of this block:

Open Space Technology

Guided by four simple rules (Whoever comes are the right people; Whatever happens is the only thing that could have; Whenever it starts is the right time) and the freedom to float around, these sessions seemed to have sparked the flow of ideas. Not only that, but participants also appreciated taking time to get to know each other on a more personal level - through their interests, what drives them, etc. The overarching question for hosting the conversations was: “*What meaningful conversations do we need to have to unlock our planetary action?*”

Key takeaways:

The free-spirited form seem to have worked well in two ways:

- it helped some to move from ‘we have no clue’ to getting an idea for the future action plans
- it deepened interpersonal connections and group cohesion.

Discussions and reflections: People were extremely interested in this self-organising methodology and many meaningful conversations were sparked. The team was left with the impression that participants would’ve liked more time for this methodology.

V) Finally, the **pink-coded sessions** tackled objective 5 - *supporting participants in creating and committing to practical, measurable actions that advance a just transition toward a healthier and fairer future*. These sessions included the Climate and Planetary Health Action Challenge, presentations of the Climate and Planetary Health Action Ideas Catalogue, and The Way Forward session focused on personal action plans and peer feedback. The sessions were mainly personal-growth oriented and helped synthesize all the gained learnings into concrete and actionable commitments.

What worked? During the „Way Forward” session, the most motivated and eager participants were encouraged to further receive the feedback from their peers on their action plans. Since it was fully volitional, and only for the ones who were „burning”, we take pride in having even 7 spots filled in for the presentation. Not making it obligatory, we have clearly seen the ideas that stood out and naturally, we hope to see some of them being implemented in the future.

Challenges: Generally, during the Action Challenge, there was use of ChatGPT which did not go unnoticed by team members, and some of the participants seemed to rush it off through the missions just to have more free time.

What could’ve been done better? Defining clearly and beforehand how AI tools can be used constructively (e.g., for brainstorming, language support, or idea expansion) rather than as shortcuts. Building in more checkpoints where facilitators could assess whether participants are engaging meaningfully with the content.

Highlight session of this block:
Climate and Planetary Health Action Challenge

Through the Action Challenge, participants worked through eight missions that mirrored the steps of strategic project planning, moving at their own pace individually or in pairs. Building on the knowledge and inspiration gained during the week, they were given hints and instructions for each mission to be completed and turn ideas into concrete plans. The open format was well received, as it allowed them to synthesise learning into meaningful future actions. As facilitators, it was a rewarding process to witness, as we saw how enthusiastic and motivated participants were to create these plans, even though the process was mostly self-led.

Another highlight session of this block:

The way forward: Creating Personal Action Plans and Peer Feedback sessions on the action plans

We used the Proaction Cafe method, where the most motivated individuals or pairs hosted a Cafe on their Action Plan. There were 3 rounds, each one with a guiding question: (1) “What is the quest behind the call/question/project?”, (2) “What is missing?”, (3) “What am I learning about myself? What am I learning about my project? What next steps will I take? What help do I still need?” Through this process participants were able to refine their idea with feedback and insights from other participants. Those who chose not to host a cafe, contributed to the debates at the other cafes. This session led to many fruitful, practical discussions on how to make the action plans a reality.

Key takeaways:

- Practical, peer-to-peer discussions that strengthened feasibility and confidence in action plans
- Concrete, motivated action plans synthesized from the week’s learning.

VI) Blue-coded sessions - marking the end and closing of the event, these sessions were destined to harvest the week’s experiences in an embodied way. As such, participants, within their reflection groups, were invited to present what they had learned through playful and performative formats such as sketches, pantomime games, poems, or stories created with Dixit cards, etc.

What worked? The ceremony of handing over certificates, with peers announcing each other, created a warm and celebratory wrap-up that resonated across the group.

Challenges: The reflective presentations were not always clearly understood or communicated in advance, as many participants improvised spontaneously and on the spot.

What could’ve been done better? Time management, as the closing sessions were meant to be concise and wrap-up earlier.

V Follow-up activities and dissemination of the main output

Building on the study session learnings, participants developed 15 actionable ideas which, put together, form the **Climate and Planetary Health Action Catalogue**. Designed to challenge the belief that individual efforts are insignificant, the digital Catalogue will serve as a lasting resource, inspiring young people to take simple, concrete steps for planetary health, even those who did not attend the session. It will be published through the (YHO) and the CoE, alongside participants encouraged to share it across their networks to amplify reach. At the time of writing, YHO and the Global Climate and Health Alliance are coordinating its release on April 22, Planet Health Day.

Appendices

1. Final Programme, as executed

	Day 0	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
7:30-09:30		Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
09:30- 11:00		Opening (Welcome session, initiation of group process)	Climate Fresk 1/2	Youth and Planetary Health: Industry, Marketing (Commercial determinants)	Open Space (everyone)	Stakeholder Mapping and Strategic Planning for Planetary Health	Presentations: Climate and Planetary Health Action Ideas Catalogue	
11:00-11:30		Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break	
11:30-13:00		Team activity (getting to know each other)	Climate Fresk 2/2	Healthy Environment as a Human Right (Democracy) and Advocacy 1.0	Open Space (everyone) Daily Evaluation & Reflection	Climate and Planetary Health Action Challenge 1/3	The way forward (accountability buddy)	
13:00-14:30		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
14:30 - 16:00		Study Session Kickoff: Goals, Needs & Expectations (framing for Open Space)	Shared Earth, Shared Health	Simulation I: Adoption of a Youth Document		Climate and Planetary Health Action Challenge 2/3	Closing and Evaluation	
16:00-16:30		Break	Break	Break	Free afternoon	Break	Break	
16:30- 17:30		Introduction of Planetary Health and One Health	Climate Resilience and Mental Health	Simulation Part II + Debrief		Climate and Planetary Health Action Challenge 3/3 + DEBRIEFING	Closing and Evaluation	
17:30- 18:00		Daily Evaluation & Reflection	Daily Evaluation & Reflection					
18:00 - 18:30				Daily Evaluation & Reflection				
18:30 - 19:00		Break	Break	Break		Daily Evaluation & Reflection	Break	
19:00- 20:00	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	
20:00-22:00	Welcoming evening	Game Night	Intercultural night	Movie night	Free Evening	Open Evening	Farewell Evening	

2. List of references

Primary resources:

Council of Europe. (2021). *Manual for Facilitators: A guide for organising and facilitating the educational process of study sessions held at the European Youth Centres*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Council of Europe. (2023). *Youth Perspectives on the Right to a Healthy Environment*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Youth Department.

Council of Europe. (2024). *Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people and climate action*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Geltch, M., Geltch, J., & Malcolm, F. (2024). *The Art of Hosting & Harvesting Conversations that Matter – Practice Guide*. Karlskrona Art of Hosting Training (KNA), Sweden.

Planetary Health Alliance. (2021). *São Paulo Declaration on Planetary Health*.

Additional resources:

Council of Europe & European Commission. (2021). *Sustainability and Youth Work: T-Kit No. 13*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

The Pro Action Café: <https://colabinternational.co.uk/pro-action-cafe>

Collective Story Harvest:

<https://arthives.org/sites/arthives.org/files/collectivestoryharvesttogo.pdf>

Open Space Technology: <https://transitionnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/How-to-run-an-Open-Space-event.pdf>

3. List of links where information about the study session was posted online to ensure visibility

[YHO website](#)

[YHO social media - Instagram](#)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DUtBPLMkee3/?igsh=ajhtY2J2eHljZ2Zi>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DU5nK9sCn6A/?igsh=MTdkeWhyMTZ3Y2YzcQ%3D%3D>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DU6M4ebDfsp/?igsh=MWZreWR0Yjg0dmZpcA%3D%3D>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DVYhX0mijeN/?igsh=MWd5MTNhcnY5OXIwaA==>