

CG(2024)47-19
15 October 2024

Summary of projects drawn up and implemented by youth delegates

Meaningful Youth Representation in Rural Communities

Thomas Olsen AARHEIM

Drobak, NORWAY

For my project through the Rejuvenating Politics program, I wanted to explore to which extent youth located in rural areas are familiar with opportunities that allow for meaningful youth engagement. My hypothesis has always been that for my home country of Norway, most persons under 30 (youth), are not aware of the various opportunities there are to participate and engage in international forums such as the Council of Europe. Thus, the aim of my project was to travel around my area (a part of rural Norway), to talk with young persons about what constitutes meaningful youth engagement. The layout of my presentation both educational and interactive. It started with a brief breakdown of the Council of Europe and its mission and many mandates, before closing in on the Congress and its Rejuvenating Politics program. The latter part of the presentation was focused on what makes youth engagement meaningful. I introduced different ideas of youth engagement, ranging all the way from youth washing, youth manipulation, meaningful youth engagement and youth-coordination. Lastly, the young persons were given a range of scenarios that align with the above descriptions. They were then asked to identify which scenario fits with what use of youth engagement. The goal of this activity was to actively engage youth in deliberating their own participation and how it might be used or abused.

There were many lessons learned from this project. The most challenging aspect for me turned out to be reaching the young persons in question. My main method was to reach out to high schools and upper secondary schools both before summer and after. Now, for my project to work with the hypothesis I wanted to reach out to schools in rural areas. However, out of the schools I reached out to, only a few responded positively. Before summer, my main issue was that classes were busy with exam periods and then of course the summer vacation. After summer, my main challenge was that I myself resumed my studies abroad, meaning that I was unable to attend lectures in person. I did, however, manage to go and talk to a handful of young persons (around 100) after summer before my studies commenced.

The School of Media Literacy

Adrijana AGOVIC

Podgorica, MONTENEGRO

The Association for Responsible and Sustainable Development (UZOR), in collaboration with the Hanns Seidel Foundation, organized a Media Literacy School titled "How to Identify Foreign Influence in Media Content" on September 24-25, 2024, at the Maestral Hotel in Pržno (Municipality of Budva). The school aimed to equip young people with the skills necessary to recognize fake news and propaganda, vital for building resilience against media misinformation. The program placed a special emphasis on identifying foreign influence in media content and bolstering societal resistance to negative foreign narratives.

With around 25 participants aged 18-30, the two-day training covered critical topics such as digital security, the significance of Euro-Atlantic alliances, the role of the Council of Europe, and the promotion of European values. Participants were trained to find reliable information and differentiate between facts and disinformation. Two university professors, experts in the field, delivered the content, ensuring high-quality learning and engagement.

The Media Literacy School revealed several key lessons. First, young people are eager to learn how to navigate the complex digital landscape, but many lack foundational skills in media literacy. There is a clear need for ongoing education in this area. Participants found the practical examples of disinformation and foreign propaganda particularly useful, emphasizing the importance of hands-on learning. Furthermore, the discussions highlighted the critical role that media literacy plays in safeguarding democratic values and promoting informed civic participation. Many participants expressed interest in further exploring digital security and the impact of foreign narratives on public opinion.

Twin your diversity
Afia Mansoor AHMED
 Mannheim, GERMANY

Twin your Diversity is an initiative aimed at promoting diversity and fostering meaningful action. The project connects individuals from various cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds to share experiences, build mutual understanding, and create inclusive spaces. Through an online application on twinyourdiversity.de, 10 participants were selected from 50 applicants. Paired into teams of two, called “twins,” they had three weeks to create a project reflecting their diversity and addressing a societal challenge. Supported by mentors, the participants worked in a safe space.

The final projects, presented in a World Café format to over 100 attendees, included a digital cookbook (Twin Cuisine), a mentorship platform (Diversity Matchmaker), and community hubs offering resources for LGBTQ+, women, and people with disabilities (Neighborhood Centers). Other highlights included a cultural art exhibit and a project on cross-cultural friendships.

By challenging stereotypes and promoting solidarity, the initiative aims to break down barriers and foster collaboration. Twin your Diversity was awarded the Democracy Prize for its impact.

One of the key lessons learned is the importance of creating safe and open environments for honest conversations about diversity and inclusion. Participants are more willing to engage when they feel respected and valued. Additionally, building long-term relationships between diverse individuals requires ongoing support and sustained engagement beyond single interactions. Financial support is also crucial for projects like Twin your Diversity, as it simplifies the realization of goals and ensures their sustainability.

The Lessons of the 4th Summit of the Council of Europe and Youth Participation in Democracies
Sindri ASGEIRSSON
 Reykjavík, ICELAND

The project aimed to educate youth on the importance of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, focusing on the outcomes of the 4th Summit since it was hosted in Iceland. It consisted of a short presentation about the CoE, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the summit hosted by Iceland followed by a group discussion to engage participants in understanding the role of these institutions in promoting democracy and human rights. The participants consisted mainly of political science students at the University of Iceland. However, the event saw low participation due to poor timing and insufficient advertising, which limited its reach and impact.

The project highlighted the importance of both timing and promotion when organizing youth-focused events. Scheduling conflicts forced me to host the event inconveniently, which significantly affected attendance. Additionally, the project revealed the lack of knowledge of the Council of Europe and opportunities for youth participation in local democracies. The event did however underline the fact that young people in Iceland are very interested in participating in local democracy so my recommendations for future projects would be to inform of the opportunities that do exist for young people in Iceland to participate in democracy at all levels.

Brdovec Youth EuroConnect**Danijel BAČAN**

Brdovec Municipality, CROATIA

The "Brdovec Youth EuroConnect" project aims to increase awareness among young people and children about the Council of Europe and European values. Currently, Croatian youth have limited knowledge in these areas, and this initiative seeks to bridge that gap. Through four workshops held between June and November 2024, participants will explore the history, values, and policies of the Council of Europe, as well as engage in discussions about Europe's shared future. The workshops will take place at local schools and community centers, with collaboration from schools, the youth council, and municipal bodies. The project also includes the distribution of educational materials to reinforce learning.

Engaging young people with complex political topics requires interactive and relevant approaches. Localizing the discussion of European values helps make them more relatable. Collaboration with educational and municipal institutions ensures credibility and support for the initiative. Furthermore, providing accessible materials like brochures and notebooks strengthens the retention of information among participants.

The EUK Youth Union**Alicia Ann BLOUNT**

Nottingham, United Kingdom

Aims and actions:

To survey the opinions, concerns and beliefs of young people in under-represented regions and demographics of Nottinghamshire about the current state of British democracy, awareness of the Council of Europe, and the adequacy of existing youth participation structures or institutions. This involved visiting 16–19-year-olds in education institutions, leading presentations about the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and requesting attendees to complete physical questionnaires.

Lessons Learned:

All attendees felt that local authorities didn't actively or adequately include youth, youth structures or youth opinions in everyday democratic life. This sentiment spreads beyond the local level and also into the national. This lack of inclusion, in most cases, led to disillusionment amongst young people who felt politics, democracy and simple community and local life was not meant for them, and did not welcome them. All attendees unanimously advocated for greater platforms designed for young people, and believed greater civic education would support young people to have incentives to participate more with increased understanding of our democracy.

'Face2Face: meeting with authorities'**Sofiia BOHDANOVA**

Chernivtsi, UKRAINE

The project 'Face2Face: meeting with authorities' was aimed to create a platform for open communication between young people and representatives of various branches of authority, empowering youth to engage in civic matters, create open discussions, raise their voices and concerns as well as offered insights into how different branches of authority function, their responsibilities, and how decisions impact society. Around 100+ young people from the Chernivtsi region have attended three 'face2face' meetings with local authorities of different levels, namely the Head of Chernivtsi Regional State Administration, Director of the Department of Education and Science and Director of the Department of Social Protection. Through the meetings, youth from the whole region introduced their ideas directly to those in power and established a foundation for future common initiatives and partnerships.

Young people want to be heard. One of the most striking ideas that became a fact after the implementation of the project is that young people are ready to discover, ask questions and act and local authorities are open to discussion and cooperation. The main thing is that both sides should be prepared to listen and hear each other. 'No decisions about youth, without youth' - should become a key point, through open discussion and collaboration local authorities can receive information about things that are important for young people from them directly, not to come up with something unnecessary for youth.

RegiON - To leave or not to leave? Opportunities for young people in the regions

Kristýna BULVASOVÁ

CZECHIA (online)

Project RegiON was an online event focusing on issues connected to regional disparities in the distribution of possibilities for youth in the Czech Republic. The aim of the project was to connect youth with somewhat limited opportunities in order to:

- Increase their awareness about existing opportunities and how those activities benefit individuals in both their professional and personal life
- Foster a discussion about issues youth currently face with a focus on trying to find reasons for those issues
- Take a youth-centered approach to identifying possible solutions. Participants were targeted through a collaboration with local experts.

Lessons learned can be divided into a few categories:

1. Sustainability and long term impact: The complexity of the topic requires a wider discussion and during my event I have seen the need to follow up the event with future activities. At this point, there is a plan on organizing further exchanges with closer focus on the stakeholder groups (e.g. handicapped youth) or on concrete ideas that were formulated during the event.

2. Challenges of the event format: Although the event mainly focused on disadvantaged and rural youth identified by local experts, the response of the target group did not reach expectations, thus impacting the representativeness of results and pitche strategies. When organizing future events, I would minimize access to youth through institutions and maximize a highly personalized approach to such hard-to-reach individuals (e.g. through social networks of existing contacts).

3. Result analysis: Viable systematic solutions must start by empowering youth to meaningfully engage in a dialogue with schools and other institutions that have direct impact on the motivations of individuals. Participants proposed stronger advertisement of possibilities by schools, building on existing social networks, attractive topics and accompanying elements of an event in order to be able to reach unengaged youth. Participants have also stressed that the issues with access often include lack of interest of youth to do extracurricular activities as such and a stark lack of knowledge regarding the existence and location of the relevant information, which causes them not to pursue an inquiry into that matter, effectively proving that the hypothesis of the event is relevant in praxis.

4. Informal impressions: Although the event took place online, I was thankful for the openness of the participants to talk about culturally sensitive issues (e.g. issue of financing of the participation in extracurricular projects).

YOUth Taking the Lead**Sofia CAMAGLIA**

Rome, ITALY

The event followed the World Café format, fostering an open, inclusive, and interactive environment where participants could engage in dynamic discussions on European citizenship and youth participation.

Three thematic discussion tables were set up to facilitate focused dialogues on the following topics:

- Youth Activism and Participation
- Communication and Dissemination: Online and Offline Campaigning
- News and Information

In addition to these discussions, a workshop on how to effectively communicate and engage with topics related to the European Union was hosted by the Europe Direct of Roma Tre University. The primary goals of the event were as follows:

- Creating a Platform for Youth Expression
- Encouraging Dialogue and Understanding
- Empowering Youth for Active Citizenship

The event underscored the crucial role of cooperation in successful event organization: by working together, we were more effective and able to reach a broader audience. It also became evident how essential it is to offer young people a safe and respectful environment where their voices are heard and valued. Given this space, they show a strong eagerness to contribute to shaping their communities and the future of Europe. However, many participants expressed difficulty in finding the right tools and opportunities to make an impact. This highlights the need to improve communication around available resources and pathways for youth engagement.

Monitoring of the application of the Revised European Charter on Youth Participation in Andorra la Vella, Andorra *(joint project with delegates from Albania, Ireland and Lithuania)*

Lisa CRUZ LACKNER

Andorra la Vella, ANDORRA

This project aims to evaluate how well the municipality of Andorra la Vella complies with the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. The project involved surveys distributed to both local authorities and key stakeholders, including youth associations, to assess the effectiveness of youth engagement in governance processes. Key actions included gathering data on youth policy frameworks, institutional support, and the participation of marginalized youth groups. The findings provide valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement in local youth participation.

The project revealed that while youth participation frameworks and institutional support are well-established, there is a need to increase youth representation in local government and explore participatory budgeting. Additionally, expanding outreach to marginalized groups could further enhance inclusivity, ensuring broader representation in decision-making processes.

YOUth vote
Tarik DELJKOVIĆ
 Odense, DENMARK

The aim and objectives I wanted to achieve with my project were to boost overall democratic confidence among young people in my municipality and to prepare them for the European Parliament election. This effort was also meant to impact their future engagement and participation in democratic elections positively. To achieve this, I combined a presentation with a panel discussion. Firstly, I delivered a 30-minute presentation with a short introduction to the work of the congress and then a more detailed explanation about three political topics concerning the European Parliament elections. Afterward, there was a panel discussion for 1 hour with 4 candidates for the European Parliament. During the panel discussion, the students had the chance to hear about the 4 different candidates and ask them questions to prepare them for the election.

One of the lessons learned during the project was the importance and value of early exposure. The project took place three weeks before election day, and this early exposure for young people is critical when it comes to their democratic engagement. Another important lesson I would like to highlight is the importance of giving young people an opportunity to engage in political conversations with decision-makers. The youth were more than capable of engaging in discussions on different political topics and asking relevant questions to the candidates.

Stairway to Europe
Ivan DONEV
 Kochani, NORTH MACEDONIA

The aim and the objective of the project was to encourage youth engagement, activism and action and to help them better understand how and where to volunteer. This was expressed towards the participants through a three part panel discussion on different volunteering topics. Through questions and answers the youth gained knowledge and gained a better understanding of how it is to volunteer through the panelists stories.

The lessons learned from this event was learning how to organize an event. It was a very hard journey as I had to organize a bigger venue, over 10 speakers and promote it on social media. Social engagement and event organizing have become much easier after the project.

Bridging Gaps: Promoting Democratic Participation and Human Rights Awareness
Marie FRITSCH
 Marseille, FRANCE

This project aims to encourage reflection on democracy and human rights while empowering youth from disadvantaged neighborhoods, fostering their personal development, increasing their awareness of their rights, and creating meaningful opportunities for positive change. Targeting young people aged 12 to 25 from disadvantaged neighborhoods in Marseille, the initiative involves workshops designed to engage participants from diverse ethnic, social, and religious backgrounds. Key activities include brainstorming sessions, awareness-raising sessions, and quiz debates that promote critical reflection on democracy, representation, and human rights. Participants also explore questions about democracy and their potential for civic engagement.

Lessons learned:

- Timing: Starting the project early, even before finalizing a detailed plan, proved beneficial, allowing ideas to evolve organically

- **Importance of Inclusivity:** Ensuring that all voices are heard, particularly those from marginalized groups, is very important as it deepens the richness of discussions
- **Adaptability to Audience Needs:** Tailoring content and delivery methods (such as interactive tools) to the specific backgrounds and experiences of participants helps to increase engagement and comprehension
- **Building Community Partnerships:** Collaborating with local organizations or schools can enhance credibility and provide additional resources and support. Gaining this support also helps to finalize the project on time and brings new ideas to help the project grow
- **Real-World Applications:** Highlighting real-life examples of human rights issues can make the content more relatable and impactful for participants.
- **Long-Term Engagement Strategies:** Developing plans for continued involvement or initiatives beyond the project can help sustain momentum and commitment to civic engagement.

Youth Rights Step by Step

Aleksandra GAYTANDJIEVA

Yambol, Ruse, Veliko Tarnovo, Razgrad, Dobrich and Varna, BULGARIA

The aim of this project was to give young people the opportunity to address their needs and concerns with local authorities and to advocate for a follow-through. This was achieved through consultations with young people from several municipalities in Bulgaria. During the different events attendees got familiar with the instruments of youth participation on a local level (based on the Revised European Charter), drafted their own recommendations for improvement of youth participation in their own municipality, and presented them in front of local authorities (local youth experts, vice-mayors and mayors). Lastly participants were asked to rank youth participation in their municipality based on the steps of the Ladder of Participation by Roger Hart (which is the reasoning behind the name 'Youth Rights Step by Step').

All of the suggestions made by the young people were included in a report paper addressed at local and national authorities, with the intention of highlighting the importance of youth participation and suggesting tools to be implemented in their youth policies and strategies.

Although each group of young people had distinct concerns regarding their municipalities, what stood out everywhere was the need for more youth spaces, improving access to the labor market and consistent involvement of young people in the decision-making process. Youth Centers and the need for more job opportunities were also brought up a lot.

Also noticeable was the difference in approach from local authorities, with some who were open to receiving negative feedback and showing interest in what the youth had to propose, and with others reacting defensively and scaring off some of the participants from sharing their opinions. I believe this showed that local authorities in Bulgaria still have a long way to go when it comes to respectful inclusion of youth perspectives.

Democracy Under Construction

Debora GONÇALVES

Multiple, PORTUGAL

Over the past few months, I have had the privilege of being invited to numerous events across Portugal, with a particular focus on the Algarve, the region from which I hail. Initially, I had devised a plan to launch a project that would require sustained participation from several local associations. However, due to a lack of adequate responses, I made the decision to adjust my approach. Rather than pursuing

the original plan, I opted to leverage the visibility I had gained to promote the project in a different manner. I focused on using my platform to encourage young people to apply, sharing with them both my initial uncertainties and the incredibly positive outcomes I experienced through my participation. I provided detailed insights into the application process, the preparatory stages, and the meaningful engagement we have while in Strasbourg.

This alternative approach allowed me to raise awareness about the initiative and its benefits to more than 60 individuals. Additionally, I utilized my personal social media channels to further amplify the message, highlighting the significance of the Youth Delegate program. Through these platforms, I emphasized the invaluable opportunities for personal growth and professional development that come with being a part of such a program. Furthermore, I underscored how participating in this initiative has enabled me to build a robust international and European network, while also fostering stronger connections within Portugal itself. Throughout this period, I had the opportunity to collaborate with several prominent institutions in Portugal, further enhancing the visibility and impact of the initiative. One of the key organizations I engaged with was the Erasmus+ Agency in Portugal, with which I participated in a campus event focused on sustainability. In this context, I served not only as a mentor but was also invited to speak in my capacity as a Youth Delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. This platform allowed me to share my experiences and insights, contributing to the broader discourse on youth participation and sustainable development.

Additionally, I worked closely with the Regional Delegation of the Portuguese Institute for Youth and Sports (IPDJ). Through this collaboration, I was able to engage with a diverse group of young people, further promoting the goals of the program and encouraging active youth involvement in both local and international initiatives. The partnership with these esteemed institutions provided me with invaluable opportunities to amplify the message of the Youth Delegate program, while also fostering stronger relationships with key stakeholders in the fields of youth development and public policy in Portugal. Furthermore, I proposed the development of a regional-level project in which a group of young individuals, selected by their peers, would be designated as delegates for the region each year. These delegates would collaborate closely with local municipalities to ensure the implementation of proactive and effective youth policies. The objective of this initiative would be to create a dynamic platform for youth representation, allowing young people to play an active role in shaping policies that directly impact their communities, while fostering stronger partnerships between youth and local authorities.

Fake News and Democracy Workshop

Natália GREGOROVÁ

Trnava, SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The workshop consisted of several key sections: first, an introduction to the Rejuvenating Politics initiative, followed by the theoretical concepts of Fake News. Next came practical exercises with specific examples, focusing on how to identify the Fake News. The final part was a discussion on the impact of Fake News on democracy.

The activities aimed at promoting methods to recognize the fake news and encouraging discussions about its impact on democracy involved conducting interactive workshops with high school students. The key outcome was spreading the knowledge to students to help reduce the spread of fake news, which could negatively affect democracy.

The project provided several insights. Students became more aware of fake news and its threat to democracy alongside enhancing critical thinking, which is a necessary skill to evaluate the credibility of information. Interactive workshops were successful at engaging students in open discussions about how misinformation shapes opinions and can affect democracy. The project highlighted the importance of education and understanding constantly evolving misinformation tactics, methods, and consequences.

Tartu Exploration Game: Know Your Local Municipality

Henrik HARJUS

Tartu, ESTONIA

For this project, a mobile city exploration game targeted towards young people was created. The project aimed to teach young people about the functions and importance of their municipal government in a fun, but also interactive way that speaks to youth. The players had to visit different points of interest that are related to or managed by the local government, such as the library, a park, and even the city hall. Once they reached a certain location, they watched a video that explained the relation of local government to that site.

The players would then answer a simple question about the video and gain points. Based on the points, a leaderboard was formed, and the top 5 players earned a small prize. Youth apathy is one of the most urgent dangers to local democracy, which is why this project's focus is to educate young people on the topic of municipal governance.

The game gave young people a general overview of the functions of their local government. This included statistics, funding information and the general leadership structure of different sites. In addition to that, what the project did was encourage an active lifestyle and spending time outdoors amongst young people, which was an excellent bonus.

Unfortunately, this project also highlighted a few issues, primarily the inaccessibility of local officials when it comes to youth-led projects. However, any issues that were encountered were solved promptly.

Presenting the Council of Europe among the Youth

Taisya HOVHANNISYAN

Yerevan, ARMENIA

The project "Presenting the Council of Europe among the Youth" aimed to raise awareness about the Council of Europe, particularly the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, among young Armenians. The primary goal was to inform them about the opportunities for civic engagement and how they can become active citizens or even youth delegates. To achieve this, we organized one in-person seminar with ESN Armenia and two online seminars in collaboration with other NGOs. These sessions provided participants with a comprehensive understanding of the Council's work, emphasizing the importance of youth participation in local and regional governance. The project successfully engaged a diverse group of young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and introduced them to the tools necessary for contributing to democratic processes.

One key lesson learned was the importance of customising content to different audiences. Online formats were effective for reaching rural participants but required interactive components to maintain engagement. Collaborating with youth organizations was crucial in mobilizing attendees, yet the project also highlighted the need for continuous engagement after seminars to sustain participants' interest in becoming active citizens. Lastly, the project emphasised the need for clear and accessible language and materials, ensuring that information on international institutions like the Council of Europe reached a broad, diverse audience.

From Strasbourg to rural action: A talk about youth participation & Your voice matters:

Youth participation in action

Maria Virginia ILIUTA

Castillo de Bayuela and Talavera de la Reina, SPAIN

My project aimed to promote youth participation through two talks in two key locations of my life: Castillo de Bayuela, the village where I grew up, and Talavera de la Reina, the city where I went to high school. Having experienced a lack of information on youth opportunities, I sought to address this gap by sharing my experiences as a Youth Delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

of the Council of Europe. In Castillo de Bayuela, I gave a talk in the Town Hall during the Cultural Week, which takes place every year, focusing on rural youth participation and its significance. I also invited a very involved local woman, Nuria, to highlight the importance of reestablishing a Youth Association, as in my village we lack one at the moment. In Talavera, I planned a similar talk at my former high school, emphasizing youth participation at the city level. My goal was to inspire young people to engage in civic life and highlight their role in shaping democratic societies. I truly focused the talk on how much their voice matters in society, and how important it is for them to get involved in civic life through youth participation. By adapting the talks to each location, I sought to raise awareness and encourage dialogue between youth and local authorities.

From these two projects, I learned that raising awareness is the first step towards action. Giving the talks in two different places, where young people face different challenges, requires addressing youth participation according to their needs. However, in both I shared a key message: Young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow, but rather the leaders of today, as we have a vital role to play in the present, in our local communities. Through this idea, I wanted to show what kind of contributions they can make at the local level, and they were very interested in it! Another key lesson was the power of personal connection. Sharing my own experiences as a young person resonated more deeply with the audience, helping to break down the perception that civic engagement is distant or irrelevant. I also recognized the value of collaboration; inviting local voices to participate in the project by sharing their experiences. I learned that when proposing a kind of project like this, both the local authorities of my village and the teachers of the high school were very enthusiastic about the idea. This positive response encouraged me and reinforced my belief that youth-led initiatives are not only welcomed but highly valued in these communities. It is very important to share what we learn, from young person to young person.

Strengthening Youth Opportunities and Participation

Nino KARALASHVILI

Tbilisi and Kashuri, GEORGIA

The project aimed to raise the awareness of young people about the importance of meaningful youth participation and engagement. Also, they were informed about various beneficial resources or projects that will help them to develop key lifelong learning competencies and be more actively represented in the decision-making process. In cooperation with the Youth Agency, I implemented a one-day workshop, where young people were provided with information about the youth opportunity platform, advisory councils, international projects and other means for youth participation. Also, within the framework of an awareness raising campaign about youth opportunities, I held a meeting with young people living in Khashuri Municipality where topics of our discussion were forms of participation, as well as opportunities and challenges of meaningful youth participation at local and national level. At the end of the meeting, I shared my personal experience as, young delegate of the Congress.

What I learned from this process is that it is very important to actively collaborate with different stakeholders, especially when the topic concerns young people. Also, it's crucial to inform and empower young people living at the municipal level, since in many cases they have neither access to international projects or youth services nor have access to information about these opportunities.

Monitoring of the Application of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life in Tirana *(joint project with delegates from Andorra, Ireland and Lithuania)*

Jon KOLA

Tirana, ALBANIA

My project focused on monitoring the initiatives and policies related to youth participation in Tirana. The aim was to evaluate how well the principles of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life are being applied within the city. I examined the municipality's efforts to engage young people in decision-making processes and initiatives designed to foster youth involvement in local governance. This included assessing the effectiveness of platforms for youth consultation and the inclusiveness of opportunities provided by the municipality for civic engagement.

The findings from this monitoring process were presented to stakeholders, including youth organizations and local leaders, with the goal of enhancing youth participation and strengthening their role in shaping the future of Tirana. In this context, I prepared a workshop on youth participation, aimed at empowering young people with the knowledge and tools to better engage with local authorities.

Lessons learned:

- **Importance of Accessible Information:** One key lesson was the role that access to transparent information plays in encouraging youth participation.
- **Engagement Beyond Policy:** Youth involvement cannot be limited to policy discussions alone. There is a need for more opportunities, such as workshops, events, and participatory projects.
- **Collaboration with Local Authorities:** A strong relationship between local authorities and youth organizations fosters a participatory and open environment where youth feel heard and valued.
- **Need for Continuous Monitoring:** The project underscored the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation of youth-related initiatives to ensure that efforts to promote participation remain relevant, adaptive, and impactful.

Engageons-Nous : Comprendre et Construire la Démocratie de Demain

Boris LENNAERTZ

Wallonia, BELGIUM (Online)

My project aimed to empower young citizens in Wallonia by enhancing their understanding of the Belgian political system and encouraging their active participation in democracy. A series of online webinars and workshops were organized to teach participants about political institutions, decision-making, and civic engagement. Workshops focused on community issues fostering critical thinking, public speaking, and collaborative decision-making. The project also equipped participants with digital communication skills to amplify their political actions through social media. The fully digital format allowed for greater accessibility, overcoming logistical barriers and attracting participants from across the region.

The digital format enabled broader participation and proved to be an effective tool for reaching diverse audiences across Wallonia. However, keeping participants engaged required interactive elements such as breakout sessions. Hands-on exercises are essential for future digital projects to maintain interest. Additionally, showing the real-world impact of political engagement through success stories significantly increased participants' motivation to act in their communities.

United Nations Engagement Event: Future Peacemakers

Liana LIU IOANNIDES

Nicosia, CYPRUS

I approached the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus to initiate an engagement event bringing together 50 youth aged 15-20 to explore the role of the UN in the Cyprus peace process, and engage in two-way dialogue with UN diplomats on the application of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in Cyprus. The youth involved came from three youth organizations active in the areas of peace education and peace dialogue, and were divided into working groups to discuss specific areas of the Youth, Peace and Security process. The UN agencies involved were the peacekeeping force, the UN Committee on Missing Persons, the UN police, the Good Offices and the diplomatic mission. The officials involved included the head of the diplomatic mission in Cyprus, Mr. Colin Stewart.

Very few youth in Cyprus get the opportunity to engage in official contexts with stakeholders of the track 1 (negotiations) peace process, and to understand the process and what exactly each stakeholder does. The project succeeded in achieving its goal of creating an avenue for two-way dialogue between youth activists and UN officials, so that both understand the integral role of the other in the peace process. This event created networks between the youth organizations involved and UN Cyprus, with the aim of fostering collaboration for future youth-led projects.

Building bridges - Fighting polarization for engaged youth

Maria MARKKULA

Tampere, FINLAND

The project consisted of a survey to the youth for the Tampere region and an event organized on the 1st of October.

In the survey the respondents were asked 7 questions about youth participation, polarization and the current state of social discourse. The survey got 175 responses from young people living and studying in the Tampere region.

To highlight the results of the survey an event was organized in collaboration with the regional youth council of the Tampere region. The event consisted of a presentation about the Council of Europe and its Congress, the Rejuvenating Politics project, the youth delegates, and the results of the survey. This presentation was followed by a panel discussion with students, activists from youth organizations and a member of parliament about the topic of the event and the results of the survey.

The survey's results highlighted young people's strong interest in influencing societal issues, with answering surveys and voting being the most preferred methods. However, the majority view current societal discourse as neutral or negative, finding it lacking in constructiveness and impacting their willingness to participate. Respondents expressed hopes for more respectful, civil, and open discussions based on facts and evidence, with a focus on compromise and youth involvement.

From the results of the survey and the discussions had at the event, the main lesson and take away from the project is the effect our current state of social discourse has on young people. All of us have to do our best in our everyday lives to better the way we speak about our society and each other to open spaces of influence to more people.

Youth Participation in Local Authorities in Poland

Julia MAZURKIEWICZ

Warsaw, POLAND

This project aimed to explore youth participation in local governance in Poland, focusing on Warsaw and its surrounding cities. Given the growing importance of young people's involvement in civic activities, the project sought to assess their level of participation, satisfaction with inclusion, and perceptions of local government actions. It also examined their electoral participation and familiarity with youth-targeted initiatives. A 9-question anonymous survey was conducted with a sample of 20 respondents, who rated their attitudes on a 1-5 scale. Additionally, an open-ended question asked for suggestions to improve youth engagement and the community, providing recommendations for fostering dialogue between local governments and young people.

The project reveals a gap between high voter turnout among Polish youth and their low engagement in community initiatives. While young people recognize the value of participation, only 20% are involved in local governance, indicating barriers such as poor communication and limited opportunities. The findings highlight the need for local governments to improve outreach and create an environment where young voices are heard. Respondents proposed several ideas for enhancing youth engagement, including regular meetings with activist movements, youth-initiated projects, school-based education on governance, and creating a youth advisory group to foster more meaningful participation.

The State of Local Democracy according to Maltese Young People

Ella MICALLEF DARMENIA

MALTA

This project aimed to engage young people with their local communities by fostering understanding of local governance and connecting them to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. It sought to collect feedback from young Maltese on governance and participation, compile this into a report for local authorities and policymakers and bridge the gap between youth and decision-makers by fostering dialogue. The project also aimed to contribute to the consultation for the Youth Participation Charter, which will be signed in Malta in 2025, while promoting youth representation and raising awareness of the Youth Delegate Program.

The project featured interactive sessions combining educational components with discussions on local governance, adapting to different age groups and collecting ongoing feedback. Stakeholder engagement was crucial, with meetings held with Hon. Alison Zerafa Civelli and Miriam Teuma to ensure alignment with Malta's Youth Policy Agenda. Collaborations extended the project's reach, including a partnership with the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, helping establish youth councils across Malta and Gozo.

Key outcomes included increased youth engagement and valuable feedback on governance. The data was compiled into a report for policymakers and informed the revision of the Youth Participation Charter. Media engagement helped raise awareness of the Congress and the Youth Delegate Program, contributing to broader visibility within governance structures.

Youth at the local level**Jovana MILUROVIĆ**

Belgrade, SERBIA

This initiative was focused on young people aged 14 years and the goal was to teach them the basics of participating in politics. The goal is to show youth why it matters, and especially how to do this. Democracy culture in my country is not really something that is often talked about, so I wanted to implement the idea in youth. I have represented the work of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The development of civil society is important, and I showed the ways you can become active in your society. Afterwards, we played a short simulation of elections. The aim was for them to see that decision-making could start at a micro level. Politics is not something far away from their school at the national level. This was especially important since the youth were from rural areas, so the national level of decision-making felt even further. They were introduced to the basic mechanisms of local authorities. This workshop ended with an interesting debate.

Youth have the potential for improvement. Their ideas are important and can drive changes in the societies. They learned about democracy and their rights, focusing on the ability to express their views. Simulation of elections and the debate got them engaged and they saw the ways their arguments could change the course of the decision-making process. I believe that they saw that youth should not be mere spectators, but actors in civil society.

Youth Horizons - Unleashing Youth Potential in Regions Facing Grave Challenges**Panagiotis MOUMTSAKIS**

Tilos, Mantoudi-Limni-Agia Anna, Kozani, Tripoli, GREECE

The Youth Horizons initiative aims to empower young people in Greece by involving them in sustainable development and local governance through local youth summits. The primary goal is to foster youth engagement in addressing local challenges and promote the creation of municipal youth councils.

The initiative included:

1. Ptolemaida Summit: Focused on the green transition, with workshops on renewable energy and youth involvement in regional planning
2. Tilos Summit: Addressed the rural-urban divide, focusing on sustainable tourism and economic development in remote communities
3. Limni Summit: Centers on disaster recovery post-wildfires, with discussions on environmental conservation and resilience

Common Objective: Across all summits, the aim was to establish municipal youth councils to provide a platform for youth participation in local governance.

The summits consisted of interactive workshops, panel discussions, and networking sessions, tailored to the specific needs of each region. The initial idea was to host these three youth summits, however, after the huge success of the Tilos Youth Summit, representatives from the Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance, particularly the Special Authority responsible for the green and just transition, demonstrated interest in organizing two additional summits in Kozani and Tripoli, both focusing on the green transition. Since Ptolemaida is geographically close to Kozani, I decided to rename it to the Kozani Youth Summit and added the fourth summit in Tripoli.

Finally, a key achievement of the summits was the commitment by the Municipalities of Tilos and Limni to establish youth councils, marking significant progress in integrating youth into decision-making processes.

The Youth Horizons initiative revealed key insights about youth engagement in sustainable development. Establishing municipal youth councils is powerful tool, which can empower young people to bring fresh, innovative ideas to local governance, driving meaningful change.

Tailoring summits to address specific local issues—such as the green transition, disaster recovery, and the rural-urban divide—made the discussions more relevant and effective. Strong partnerships with organizations like the Onassis Scholars' Association, municipalities, and youth NGOs were essential in bridging the gap between youth and policymakers. One of the most valuable outcomes was the establishment of municipal youth councils in Tilos and Limni, showing the long-term potential for these councils to influence local governance and decision-making. However, a key lesson learned was that youth at the local level seemed largely unaware of the role of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Council of Europe. This highlighted the need for more efforts to raise awareness about their role and how youth can actively participate in broader democratic processes.

Improving Youth Participation and Capacity-Building in Limerick: A Pathway to Local Development *(joint project with delegates from Albania, Andorra and Lithuania)*

Jack O'CONNOR

Limerick, IRELAND

This report explores strategies for enhancing youth participation and capacity-building in Limerick, focusing on engaging young people aged 18 to 30 in local governance and development. With 32% of Limerick's population under 30, youth represent a critical resource for shaping the city's future. The report examines Ireland's centralised governance structure, the gaps in youth engagement at the local level, and the unique opportunity presented by Limerick's Directly Elected Mayor. The report forms part of a group project with the Youth Delegates from Albania, Andorra, and Lithuania, who explore their own structures to provide inspiration for Limerick to emulate. Key recommendations include leveraging local universities for youth-led projects, establishing formal platforms for youth participation, and implementing pulse surveys to gauge youth priorities. The aim is to create a virtuous cycle of improvement, where young people actively contribute to and benefit from Limerick's growth.

Successful youth engagement requires more than top-down policies. Limerick must create localised, flexible platforms for youth participation, giving young people meaningful roles in decision-making. Addressing the gaps in services for the 18-29 demographic is essential, as is fostering a collaborative environment between universities, local authorities, and the private sector. Data-driven tools like pulse surveys can provide low-cost continuous feedback, ensuring that youth priorities are reflected in local strategies.

Youth in Democracy: Participation of Youth in Local and Regional Life

Ilgin PASLI BROMBACH

İzmir, TÜRKİYE

The Youth in Democracy project aimed at raising awareness among youth multipliers about participation mechanisms and opportunities at local and regional levels and empowering them to foster participation in İzmir and beyond. A panel discussion brought together representatives from youth NGOs, İzmir Municipality's Youth Department, City Council's Youth Assembly, and a young political leader who shared insights into youth participation frameworks, emphasizing the important role of youth in shaping democratic societies. The panel gathered a diverse group of participants, including youth leaders, NGO representatives, and local authorities and fostered collaboration among and providing them with resources, such as the Revised European Charter on the participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, to disseminate among youth they work with and for. Participants were introduced to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities' work on youth policies and alongside practical tools for fostering youth participation in local and regional life.

Targeting youth multipliers proved to be an effective strategy for expanding the project's impact. Participants not only gained insights but also expressed their commitment to disseminating the knowledge and tools provided.

Another takeaway was the need for increased awareness and understanding of key frameworks, such as the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life as many participants were unfamiliar with these essential resources.

The feedback from the participants demonstrated a need for more frequent platforms for dialogue, meaningful engagement and cross-sector collaboration between youth, authorities, and other stakeholders particularly on the local level.

Digital Lives of the Youth

Amadej PETAN

Brežice, SLOVENIA

The project aimed to enhance understanding among decision-makers in Brežice about how young people participate in politics and express themselves online. It also sought to empower local youth by sharing how their peers in 15 countries across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia engage in political expression, thereby strengthening their own advocacy efforts.

To achieve these goals, we first analyzed my existing research on youth political expression in the Middle East and Asia. Collaborating with two colleagues from Slovenia, we expanded our research to examine the use of memes as tools for political expression among Slovenian youth, focusing on differences between peripheral towns and urban centers.

On September 2, 2024, we presented our findings in a creative space in Brežice to representatives from student associations, young researchers, municipal officials, youth center staff, and the Croatian Youth Delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The event included discussions on implementing our insights, encouraging online political participation, and educating politicians on understanding youth digital expressions. Additionally, we recorded two podcast episodes for the local youth center's podcast to reach a broader audience.

We discovered a significant awareness gap among local decision-makers, who often lack understanding of youth political expression online due to generational differences in communication styles like memes and short-form videos. Bridging this gap is crucial for effective youth engagement. Additionally, many young people are unaware of the impact their online advocacy can have. Our research showed that viral political narratives originating from youth online platforms were sometimes adopted by mainstream media and entered formal political debates, yet the youth's contributions were rarely acknowledged. This highlights the need to empower youth to recognize their influence and for society to value their input.

Between Cultural Preservation and National Integration: Minority Youth in Latvia

Anna RAMKOVICA

Jūrmala City, LATVIA

This research explores the challenges faced by young people from national minorities in Latvia, particularly the Russian-speaking community, as they navigate the balance between preserving ethnic identity and integrating into Latvian society. Amid rising national security concerns due to Russian aggression toward Ukraine, public discourse often conflates the Russian Federation's actions with the Russian national minority in Latvia, exacerbating tensions. Notably, the 2022 shift to Latvian-only instruction in schools has left many Russian speakers feeling marginalized, fearing the loss of their cultural and linguistic rights. The study employs a theoretical framework followed by a survey of 80 youths from Jūrmala, where minorities make up 47.2% of the population. The main findings emphasize that, while these youth value their cultural heritage, they also recognize the importance of learning Latvian for social and professional integration. Recommendations include fostering dialogue between communities and the state to dispel stereotypes and promote social cohesion, improving Latvian language education, and promoting policies that support both national unity and cultural diversity.

The research highlights key lessons for integrating national minorities in Latvia. Effective policies must respect their cultural and linguistic rights to prevent alienation, as seen with the backlash against the 2022 school language reforms. Conflating external geopolitical threats with internal minority issues can exacerbate societal fragmentation. Addressing language barriers is crucial for improving minority youth's academic performance and social integration, requiring curriculum adaptation and teacher training. Informal school segregation and ethnic self-identification challenges also persist. Promoting intercultural events, fostering open dialogue, and engaging youth are essential for building a more cohesive and inclusive society.

From my personal experience conducting this research, I learned the importance of including a broader sample size to ensure diverse perspectives, which would have enriched the findings. Engaging a larger group of participants, particularly from different regions, would have provided a more comprehensive view of the challenges faced by minority youth as it's a state issue. Additionally, incorporating teachers' insights into the survey would have been valuable. Their perspectives could help shape more effective recommendations, especially in addressing curriculum adaptation and language teaching methods, which are key to fostering integration and improving the academic performance of minority students.

Wahlradar - Austrian election campaign neutral and objective

Tobias REINHOFER

Graz, AUSTRIA

The "Wahlradar" project aimed to strengthen Austria's democracy by increasing voter participation and political awareness, especially among young people, whose engagement has been statistically, steadily declining. To address this, I developed accessible online tools on our website and social media platforms to provide neutral, objective information about elections, with a particular focus on the Austrian parliamentary elections in late September 2024. Our primary goal was to empower citizens—especially young voters—to form their own opinions by presenting unbiased content. Most of our data came directly from political parties via questionnaires, supported by my national delegation, ensuring accurate and comprehensive information. We shared this on social media and our website, alongside educational posts about the importance of voting, election procedures, and statistics, all designed to raise awareness of the democratic process. In addition to informational content, we created a "Kahoot Quiz" about the upcoming election to engage young people in a playful yet informative way. We also collaborated with "Wahlkabine," a well-known election quiz, further expanding our outreach. One of the project's key challenges was promotion, particularly because I wasn't always in Austria during the campaign period.

However, since "Wahlradar" was an online initiative, I leveraged Austria's largest student network, "Schülerunion," to promote the project in schools and through my network of student representatives. This enabled us to reach an audience of young Austrians and encourage more conscious voting.

I realized how important good promotion is, especially for a project that aims to educate and engage people. Even if your message is great, it only matters if you can reach the right people with it. I also learned a lot about the views of young people and saw how many of them are not really interested in politics. This was the main problem I wanted to address with "Wahlradar".

Engaging Youth in Democratic Processes: Workshops on Participation in Referendum and Presidential Elections

Grigore RINJA

Bălți, Chișinău, Cahul, REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

My project was to encourage young people to actively participate in the upcoming referendum and presidential elections. The initiative involved organizing three workshops across different regions of Moldova, engaging a total of 60 young people, 20 from each location.

The workshops were designed to educate participants about the electoral process, the importance of voting, and the role young people can play in shaping their communities through civic participation.

Each session included interactive discussions, presentations from experts in electoral law, and simulations that demonstrated how voting works in practice.

The workshops revealed a strong interest among participants but also highlighted common challenges, such as a lack of accessible information about voting procedures and a general feeling of disconnection from political processes. By the end of the sessions, participants felt more confident in their understanding of the electoral process and expressed a greater willingness to engage in future elections.

Lessons learned:

1. One of the key takeaways from the project was understanding the barriers young people face when it comes to electoral participation. Many participants cited a lack of clear, accessible information about voting and the overall political process as a significant hurdle, which can contribute to low turnout among young voters.
2. Tailoring the content of the workshops to address region-specific issues proved to be an effective strategy for capturing the interest of the participants. Involving local experts and discussing the relevance of elections to local governance helped participants relate the importance of voting to their own communities.
3. While the workshops generated enthusiasm, it became clear that follow-up actions and sustained support are essential to keeping young people engaged in political processes. Regular updates, continued dialogue, and peer-to-peer support networks are key to ensuring long-term participation.
4. Hands-on activities like election simulations allowed participants to experience the process in a practical way, making them feel more comfortable and prepared to vote when the time comes. This experiential learning approach proved to be a powerful tool in boosting participants' confidence.

Learning Democracy, Shaping the Future! (German: Demokratie lernen, Zukunft gestalten!)

Lana Lulu ROSATTI

Canton of Berne, SWITZERLAND

The project "Learning Democracy, Shaping the Future" is a workshop designed to be implemented in schools for students of all ages. It is structured with flexible modules that can be adapted to different age groups and levels of understanding, making it suitable for a wide range of educational settings. As part of my project, I visited three different classes in the canton of Bern, working with students of varying ages to test and refine the workshop. The overarching goal of the project is to provide teachers with practical and accessible resources for teaching democratic principles in a way that resonates with students. By offering a customizable approach, the workshop seeks to foster political awareness and encourage young people to engage with political processes from an early age. In doing so, it aims to empower students and help them feel more confident in their ability to participate in shaping the future of their communities.

The project has revealed that political education is frequently neglected in many schools, which likely plays a significant role in the low voter turnout among 18 to 25-year-olds. Without a solid foundation in political knowledge, young people often lack the tools and confidence to actively engage in democratic processes. This can make them feel excluded and unsure of their right to have a voice in shaping their society. By highlighting these gaps in education, the project emphasizes the need for better political education in schools to encourage more active participation among young people in future elections.

Building Sustainable Cities

Elina ROTARU

Cluj-Napoca, Zalău, ROMANIA

The project aimed to empower young people to participate in sustainable urban development by exploring their vision for greener, youth-friendly cities. The workshops focused on two main activities:

- Building Sustainable Cities: Participants engaged in hands-on sessions where they discussed and designed models of sustainable cities, focusing on green infrastructure, public spaces, and eco-friendly transport solutions
- Community Mapping and Research: Through structured research forms and community mapping, participants analyzed the current state of Cluj and Zalău, identifying key urban issues and areas for improvement from a sustainability perspective

A key outcome was the collection of valuable insights into how young people perceive their cities and potential sustainability improvements.

I learned that young people see great potential for improvement in Cluj and Zalău, especially in areas like green spaces, transport, and sustainability. They feel they have valuable ideas and opinions but often lack the power to drive change. This gap highlighted the need for more education on advocacy, empowering them not only to express their views but also to take action. Participants expressed a strong desire to be more involved in decision-making processes, reinforcing my belief that we should focus on promoting how to be effective advocates for sustainable urban development.

Monitoring of the Application of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life in the region in Vilnius District Municipality *(joint project with delegates from Albania, Andorra and Ireland)*

Sandra SLUŠNYTĖ

Vilnius, LITHUANIA

The aim of the project was to report on the application of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life in the region in Vilnius District Municipality as well as gain insight from youth representatives, assessing the efforts of Vilnius City Municipality to comply with the Charter. In order to better understand how these recommendations are being implemented in Vilnius, two survey studies were carried out. In addition to analyzing the results of the surveys, the aim of this document is to compare the views of the local authorities and youth representatives, to identify potential areas of gap and to identify recommendations on how to improve the inclusion of young people and to strengthen the implementation of the Charter in the Vilnius Municipality.

While the results from the side of youth representatives vary and differ from the answers Vilnius City Municipality has provided, the overall situation can be considered decent and, on some levels, even good. There is ground to believe that communication issues play a huge role in how the work of Vilnius City Municipality is perceived. The need for practical solutions and structural reforms has been mentioned to ensure more meaningful and inclusive youth participation in governance. Concrete suggestions on the actions that could be taken are included in the full report.

YOUTHCAST

Maya TENTONI

SAN MARINO (shot in the municipality of Serravalle, distributed online across three different platforms)

YOUTHCAST is a six-episode podcast series, available on YouTube and Spotify and promoted through Instagram, developed by a team of seven members of the youth association YOUth. The

podcast features interviews with 24 political candidates representing all eight parties running in the national elections. The discussions address key issues such as party ideologies, the future of young people, education, employment opportunities, women's rights, abortion, and more. While originally designed to engage younger voters, the podcast also garnered interest from older audiences, who found its clear and accessible presentation of political matters highly valuable. Feedback highlighted that YOUTHCAST provided a much-needed service, filling a gap in political discourse by simplifying complex vocabulary and subjects, without compromising accuracy of information.

The project was praised for helping listeners approach the world of politics with greater confidence, enabling them to make more informed decisions by deepening their understanding of key political themes and the parties' stances on them.

The YOUTHCAST project highlighted the need for unbiased, accessible information about political matters in a country dominated by affiliation between newspapers and parties. It highlighted that simplifying complex political issues helps engage both younger and older audiences (as proved by positive feedback and by the participation registered during the in-presence closing event, where candidates and citizens were encouraged to get to know each other). The candidates appreciated the opportunity to engage in a civil discussion among themselves, facilitating a calm and respectful debate where differing opinions were presented—an environment that is not often achievable in Parliament or within broader political contexts. Moreover, the project demonstrated that youth can produce high-quality, committed content. The success of the podcast also emphasized the effectiveness of digital platforms in reaching new audiences and reinforced the importance of clear communication in political discourse.

Be aware!
Zsuzsa VIDÓ
 HUNGARY

The main objective of my project was to show young people how it is like to work at the Congress as a Youth Delegate, and what opportunities they might have that the Council of Europe offers. I wanted to reach as many young people as possible and would like to reach even more with the 47th Congress Sessions.

As most young people use social media, I decided to use one of the most popular site, the TikTok. I made daily vlogs at the Conference of National Associations of Local and Regional Authorities, showing what it looks like. The videos reached thousands of young people all over Hungary and I received a lot of questions in comments and in private messages from people who would like to participate in programs like this in the future. I would like to make videos of it until the application opens for the next year's youth delegates, so more and more people are getting engaged with the youth programs of the Council.

While social media might be really dangerous for young people (and for anyone else), it is really unlikely that users would get off from these sites. What we can do is producing educational content, spreading awareness about opportunities, creating a safe online environment and community, and teaching media literacy from a very early age. There is a huge need for this kind of online content, and I really hope I encourage other youth workers who are dealing with youth representation to show off their valuable work. I also realized that while there is an immense amount of toxic content flowing from social media, it is possible to make room for the good, so we can create a healthy online environment.

Connecting Sarajevo to the Way of St. James

Timur VILIĆ

Sarajevo, Međugorje, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Located on the historical crossroads of different cultures and civilizations, Bosnia and Herzegovina with Sarajevo as its capital is a place where the Orient and Occident meet, in more ways than one. To further build on this reputation, remaining at the same time within the context of European cultural area and values, the main aim of this project is to promote religious, cultural and ethnic cooperation and understanding by connecting Sarajevo to the network of the roads which constitute the Way of St. James, leading to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain.

Through this project, the local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which includes Sarajevo and other communities through which the roads would pass, would be brought closer to Europe, and the project would facilitate closer cooperation and relationship between these communities and their counterparts throughout Europe. It would also boost the reputation of Sarajevo as the first majority Muslim city in the network and would increase the understanding towards the autochthonous Bosnian and Herzegovinian Catholics.

The main activities included multiple meetings bringing different stakeholders together, especially those that otherwise would have little incentive to sit at the same table, as well as educational materials and workshops for youth, with the aim of spreading the knowledge and raising awareness about the importance of interreligious understanding and cooperation.

The project presents a complex challenge of bringing together many stakeholders of vastly different backgrounds from different spheres of life, as well as representatives of many different communities and levels of government. Besides that, the project in its essence is a long-term one, requiring a long preparation period, copious amounts of planning, thorough preparation, and continuous effort, meaning that it could not be completed by the time of the Congress session.

However, the pleasant and positive surprise is that all the contacted stakeholders were more than happy to participate, and the youth was interested in participating in the activities, which will continue in the coming months and years. Emphasizing the European aspect of the project helped draw in many interested parties, and the fact that the Way of St. James is also the First Cultural Route of the Council of Europe helped get participants involved.