

# Youth 4 Change

## Belgium

[www.viadonbosco.org](http://www.viadonbosco.org)

[Youth 4 Change | VIA Don Bosco](#)

### DESCRIPTION

Youth 4 Change is a **guided global citizenship project that spans two school years introduced in 2018**. The **first year** focuses on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and **challenges for students to discover and use their personal talents to contribute to achieving these goals**. An introductory workshop on the SDGs inspires the students to engage in civic initiatives that make a positive impact on their school environment, such as combating period poverty, greening the school playground, or researching the accessibility of the school building.

**Simultaneously, the project starts in a school in Tanzania (in collaboration with Flemish schools) or Benin (in collaboration with Walloon schools)**, where similar workshops on the SDGs are conducted, and initiatives are launched. Throughout the year, **both schools exchange their progress and learn from each other's experiences virtually**. This virtual exchange fosters a sense of **global collaboration and empowers the students to think beyond their immediate surroundings**.

In the **second year**, **more in-depth and travel-preparatory workshops are conducted with an 'ambassador group' of motivated students**. This group will have the opportunity to **travel to the partner school in Tanzania or Benin** for an intercultural meeting with their international peers. During the intercultural exchange, **they can learn from each other's unique perspectives and approaches towards tackling similar challenges**. The **exchange fosters cultural understanding and further inspires the students to take action as responsible global citizens**.

After the trip, the project continues at the school, incorporating the experiences and insights gained from the intercultural meeting. **The students can build upon their findings and continue working on the initiatives they started, ensuring that the positive impact they initiated has a lasting effect on both schools and their communities**.

The **focus** of the project is on:

1. **Empowerment of Youth:** it aims to empower young people and provide them with the necessary tools to discover their talents and potential.
2. **Global Citizenship:** it seeks to foster a sense of global citizenship among the students, encouraging them to think beyond their immediate surroundings and engage in initiatives that contribute to a more solidary, just, and nature-respecting world.
3. **Sustainable Development:** By introducing the 17 SDGs established by the United Nations, the program aims to inspire and support students in taking action to address various social, environmental, and economic challenges.
4. **Civic Engagement:** it encourages students to become active citizens and engage in their communities by undertaking their own citizenship projects that have a positive impact on society.
5. **Concrete Actions:** it provides a platform for students to turn their ideas and concerns into concrete actions within their schools, allowing them to make a tangible difference in their environment.

### IMPACT

**Pupils and teachers who participated in the trajectory fill in a survey at the end of the program** to evaluate what they have learned about global citizenship and the SDGs. Only the 'ambassador' pupils, those who participate in the exchange trip, are evaluated. They generally show **significant growth in understanding the concept of 'global citizenship'**, the notion of **stereotypes**, and an **awareness** that they, too, hold such **biases**. Pupils who took part in the trajectory often express that they now understand that despite having different cultures and habits, we are all the same.

Testimony ambassador Mila (16):

*"I know my most important lesson right away - and that is: we are all the same. We live on the other side of the world and have our own cultures, with our own habits. But in reality, we are all just human beings. Humans in a unique way, humans in the same way. We all live on the same planet. We breathe the same air. We do so many things the same way. That own little culture makes you somewhat unique, but I've drawn the conclusion: you are and remain just a human being. You are actually very alike. The fact that you can resemble each other so much amazed me, and that will definitely stick with me. And I really enjoyed the journey a lot."*

Testimony ambassador Emma (16):

*"I must honestly say that before this whole journey, I didn't know what global citizenship meant. But now, for me, it means becoming more aware and learning from people, both nearby and far away, through a sort of collaboration. But that collaboration can also be in the form of conversations. I think global citizenship is very important because you can learn so much from each other - and it makes you think beyond just Belgium. It helps you see connections between different cultures and customs."*