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EPIC IDEA

EMPOWERING YOUTH PARTICIPATION FOR INCLUSIVE AND PLURAL COMMUNITIES

D2.2 (WP2) – Report of the Bottom-up analysis on young people's perspectives on the future of the EU

With the technical support of

YTRO

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The **EPIC_IDEA project** brings together four organizations in a collaborative effort aimed at enhancing democratic participation among citizens, with a particular focus on young people, across Italy, Hungary, Spain, and Portugal. The project seeks to strengthen young citizens' connection to the core values of the European Union (EU) and empower them to actively engage in shaping the future of Europe. Through the various activities planned under the project, young people will be equipped to participate in the broader discourse surrounding the EU, contributing to the formation of a new narrative about the European Union. This will foster a truly **bottom-up approach**, ensuring that the voices of young people are integral in promoting diverse, inclusive, and sustainable societies.

The project provides an opportunity for young citizens to explore and deepen their role as key players in the future of the EU. It focuses on equipping them with the essential skills, competences, and tools necessary to address challenges at local, national, and European levels. By supporting youth in understanding their responsibility in advocating for EU values, gender equality, fundamental rights, and democracy, the project fosters the development of future generations who can act in a meaningful way to influence EU policy and society at large.

Each participating organization operates within its own specific framework, demographic context, and level of experience with youth engagement. However, they are united by a shared objective: **creating long-term empowerment for young citizens.** This will facilitate their involvement in decision-making processes at all levels—from local to European—and ensure that their actions have a real, measurable impact on building a more inclusive society grounded in the values of the European Union.

Development of Strategic Documents and Resources

Throughout the duration of the EPIC_IDEA project, an array of strategic documents, operational guidelines, and shared resources are currently being developed to support project's efforts.

In particular, the second phase of the project (**Bottom-up analysis on young people's perspectives regarding the future of the EU** - Work Package 2) played a critical role in this process, focusing on the creation, administration, and implementation of surveys, online focus groups, and interviews.

The **Analysis** aimed to serve as a foundational research phase within the project, designed to collect and examine both qualitative and quantitative data to better understand the experiences, perceptions, and needs of young people and youth workers across Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary. This process was not only instrumental in shaping the direction of the project's activities, but also intended to inform broader, long-term strategies for fostering inclusive, diverse, and democratic societies at both local and European levels.

This activity involved over **400 people**, including both young people and youth workers from different backgrounds, and marked the starting point for the project's work. The data collected from these activities serve as a central foundation for shaping the project's subsequent actions and formulating activities that best meet the needs of the participants.

This Report presents the results of the ***Analysis***, offering a comprehensive overview of the main findings. A **key focus** of the analysis was the identification of common trends and outcomes across the four countries involved in the project. These common results have proven instrumental in creating practical tools for working with the target groups, ensuring that the project's activities are closely aligned with the needs and expectations of young citizens.

Chapter Overview and Key Insights

Chapters 2 and 3 present the results from the surveys administered to young people and youth workers in each country, along with the aggregated common findings. This process has been particularly valuable as it allowed the team to tailor the approach to the specific needs of each country. By doing so, it was possible to create more effective data collection tools that could identify the key aspects of the challenges facing young people in each local context.

The surveys remained open from December 2024 until the end of January 2025 to allow for maximum participation, ensuring that the voices of all beneficiaries were captured. Ultimately, **312 surveys** were completed, with **190 responses from young people** and **122 from youth workers**. These results provided a robust foundation for understanding the issues most pertinent to the young citizens of Italy, Hungary, Spain, and Portugal.

After the initial analysis of the survey data, each partner organization was provided with the main findings from the surveys and with **AI-generated images** that visually represented the responses given by young people regarding their dreams and concerns.

These images served a dual purpose: firstly, to facilitate the start of online focus groups and interviews discussions by offering visual content that resonated with the participants; and secondly, to enrich the qualitative analysis by deepening the insights derived from the quantitative survey data.

These images were tailored to each country but shared common macro-group themes, such as concerns regarding the future, health and well-being, societal expectations, global issues, work and study, as well as dreams focused on career development, lifestyle desires, personal growth, relationships, and economic security.

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth analysis of the country-specific results from the online focus groups and interviews. A total of **122 participants (30 from Italy, 37 from Spain, 27 from Portugal and 28 from Hungary)**, including both young people and youth workers, engaged in these discussions from February until April 2025. These sessions provided valuable insights into the participants' lived experiences and reinforced the findings from the earlier surveys.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the collected data. The findings highlight the main trends and insights that emerged from the surveys, focus groups, and interviews, providing a deeper understanding of young people's perceptions of the EU and their role in shaping its future. The conclusion underscores the importance of fostering youth empowerment and ensuring that young people have the tools, knowledge, and opportunities to actively participate in democratic processes at all levels.

Practical Implications and Recommendations

This Report serves as a practical resource for **EPIC_IDEA's partners**, offering effective strategies for promoting youth empowerment at the local level.

By documenting the outcomes and key findings from the **Bottom-up analysis**, this assessment contributes to the growing body of knowledge surrounding intercultural development and youth engagement across Europe. Additionally, the report offers clear guidelines for implementing the project's activities during its duration.

Chapter 2: Survey for Young People

* The percentages of the categories are calculated each time relative to the total number of participants because, often, the responses took into consideration multiple categories identified for clustering.

PARTICIPANTS/SAMPLE

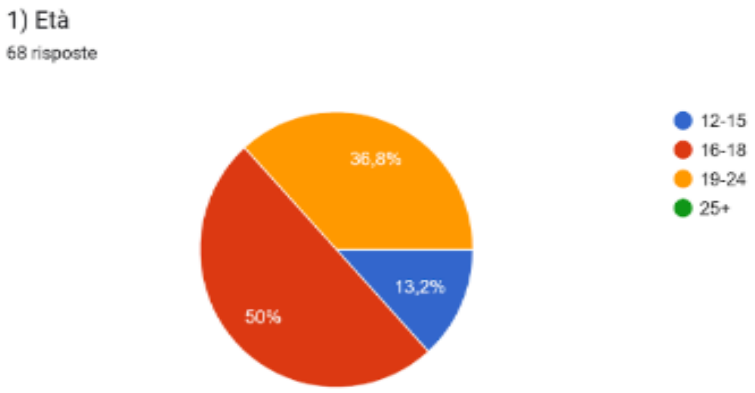
Young people
Italy: 68 respondents (35,8%)
Spain: 52 respondents (27,4%)
Portugal: 52 respondents (27,4%)
Hungary: 18 respondents (9,4%)

Total: 190 respondents (100%)

1. ITALY

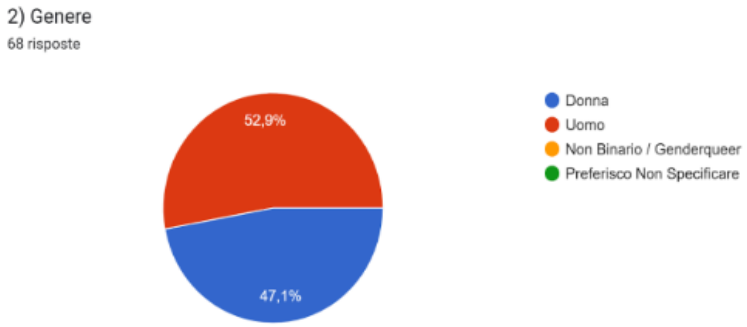
Section 1: Demographic and contextual information

Question 1: Age



Half of the Italian participants are aged between 19 and 25 years, which means they are/should be in their university/early career years. Around one third of the respondents are 16-18 years old (36,8%), i.e. in their last high school years, while the remaining (13,2%) are young adolescents attending middle or high schools.

Question 2: Gender



The respondents are almost equally split between male (52,9%) and female (47,1%).

Question 3: What is your main occupation?

57 respondents (83,8%) declared they are currently studying, while 6 (8,8%) are working in different fields, such as secretary jobs, librarian, actor, and waitress. 5 out of 68 (7,4%) are unemployed or not studying.

Question 4: What do you do in your free time?

Looking at the answers, we clustered them into different groups (ordered by number of answer):

1. **Social relationships**: 24 out of 68 (35,3%) state they usually see friends, while 7 (10,3%) say that they spend their free time with their family. Only 1 (1,5%) say they spend their free time with their partner.
2. **Sports**: 23 participants (33,8%) say they practice a sport. When mentioned, the majority of them report they play volleyball and basketball.
3. **Culture & Arts**: 10 respondents (14,7%) say they listen to and/or play music, and read, respectively. 2 of them (2,9%) paint, while 1 (1,5%) play theatre.
4. **Media & Technology**: 6 participants (8,7%) say they usually watch movies and TV shows, 3 (4,3%) use social media and play videogames, respectively. 1 (1,5%) is interested in graphics and informatics.
5. **Study**: 8 out 68 (11,8%) report they typically study in their free time.

6. **Volunteering & Activism**: 6 respondents (8,7%) affirm they do volunteering activity
7. and/or are involved in activist associations.
8. **Sleep & doing nothing**: 3 (4,3%) respondents say they do nothing in their free time, while 2 (2,9%) say they usually sleep.
9. **Go around**: 4 participants (5,9%) say they typically go around alone.

We can observe that socializing and spending time with peers represent the main interest during leisure time, as also demonstrated by the prevalence of team sports among those mentioned (volleyball, basketball). This finding reveals an interesting and somewhat unexpected trend among the surveyed age groups: they tend to prefer activities that involve direct physical interaction with people rather than digital experiences.

Question 5: What are your dreams?

For this question, we clustered the answers we received in more overarching groups, as following:

1. **Career development & Professional growth**: 13 replies (19,1%).
   Some participants say they would like to work in the educational field, while others dream of themselves as professional athletes.
2. **Voyages & Experiences**: 11 replies (16,2%).
   Most of the replies here refer to the generic desire to travel and see new places. Some participants link this desire to their willingness to learn new languages.
3. **Lifestyles & Specific desires**: 7 replies (10,3%).
   Some of the specific dreams reported in this category are becoming famous, living alone, owning a small country house, and owning a gym.
4. **Wealth & Economic safety**: 7 replies (10,3%).
   Being successful and fulfilled is what most of the participants mention as their personal dream, followed by the desire of becoming rich.
5. **Personal growth & Happiness**: 4 replies (5,9%).
   Most of the answers in this category are related to the achievement of personal goals. One participant says they want to be of help for others to grow and be happy.
6. **Relationships & Family**: 4 replies (5,9%).
   Some participants mention they want to create a family, while one mentions instead the concept of kinship.

The main aspirations among young people in Italy emphasize career and professional growth, with a significant portion dreaming of success in education or sports. There is also a strong desire for travel and personal experiences, with some wanting to explore new places or learn new languages. Lifestyles and specific desires such as fame, owning property, or having a gym show a more materialistic or status-driven side. The theme of personal growth and happiness is also present, with individuals hoping for inner fulfilment and achievement of personal goals. Family creation and relationships are mentioned but to a lesser extent.

Question 6: What are your fears?

For this question, we followed the same procedures as the previous one:

1. **Future & Uncertainties**: 19 replies (27,8%).
   Many participants report they fear the inability to fulfil themselves and their dreams. Others are generally afraid of the future, of not being happy, and growing up.
2. **Work & study**: 8 replies (11,8%).
   Here, some answers refer to the concern of being unemployed and making not enough money. Since many participants are still studying, they mention the fear of committing to a path that won't let them achieve their dreams. And further of starting a job that does not satisfy them. Very young participants are concerned with the choice of university and homeworks.
3. **Relationships & Social expectations**: 8 replies (11,8%).
   Some participants mention being afraid of exclusion and abandonment, and of losing the people who they love. Others instead fear not being able to meet others' expectations or being judged by other people.
4. **Society & Global issues**: 6 replies (8,7%).
   Some respondents are scared by wars and global violence, while others mention discrimination and hate as sources of concern. Climate crisis is another theme reported here as they are poverty and social media. Lastly, two participants differently say they are afraid by the government and by being controlled and under surveillance by the State.
5. **Health & Personal wellbeing**: 5 replies (7,2%).
   Responses here are generally mentioning death and diseases as a source of fear and concern for our sample.

The fears expressed by young people in Italy are primarily centerd around personal uncertainties and societal pressures. Uncertainty about the future stands out as a significant concern, with many participants fearing they will not be able to fulfil their dreams or achieve happiness.

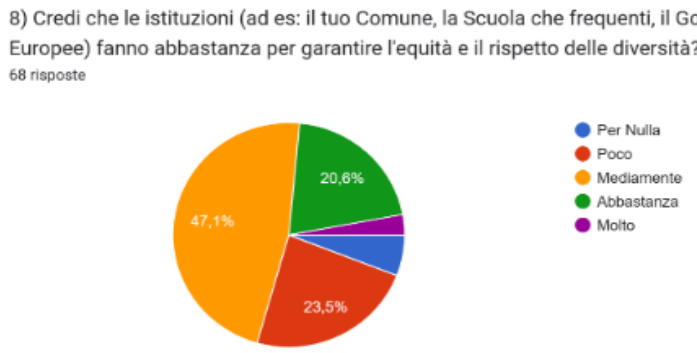
This uncertainty is compounded by worries about work and study, with participants voicing concerns over potential unemployment, dissatisfaction with their chosen careers, and academic challenges like homework and university decisions. The fear of relationships and social expectations also plays a role, with participants expressing anxiety about being judged or excluded, and the fear of losing loved ones. On a broader scale, there is a sense of worry regarding society and global issues, particularly global violence, discrimination, climate change, and the surveillance of individuals. Health and personal well-being are also significant concerns, with many young people expressing fears related to death, illness, and personal health struggles.

Section 2: Inclusion and belonging

Question 7: How diverse do you consider the city you live in (in terms of: culture, ethnicity, language, social background, religion)?

The majority of participants (35,3%) consider their city moderately diverse, while a quarter of them (25%) consider their city to be definitely diverse and slightly diverse, respectively. This difference may depend on the neighbourhood where each participant lives and hangs around, which can be more or less multicultural. Lastly, the 8,8% consider their city to be very diverse, while the 8,9% not diverse at all. Again, this difference may be caused by the reason mentioned above.

Question 8: Do you think that the institutions (municipalities, schools, national government, European institutions) do enough to guarantee equity and respect for diversity?



32 respondents (47,1%) say that the institutions are moderately able to support and guarantee equity and diversity. 16 of them (23,5%) state instead that the institutions don't provide enough support, and 4 (5,9%) are more negative, stating the institutions provide absolutely no support. On the other hand, 14 participants (20,6%) and 2 participants (2,9%) state the institutions act properly and very properly to guarantee equity and respect for diversity, respectively. This tension can be explained by the different background and experience of each participant, which may vary a lot depending on, for instance, their culture, ethnic group, social extraction, and religion.

Nevertheless, the responses reveal a slightly critical attitude toward institutions, with a widespread perception that efforts to ensure equity and respect for diversity are partial or inadequate. While many young people acknowledge some level of commitment from authorities, they see it as limited or ineffective, highlighting the need for more decisive action. Notably, only a small group believe that institutions are functioning adequately, suggesting a lingering lack of trust in the system. This could indicate a sense of disillusionment or the perception that current measures are neither truly inclusive nor impactful in daily life.

Question 9: Do you have any relevant relationship with one or more institutions?

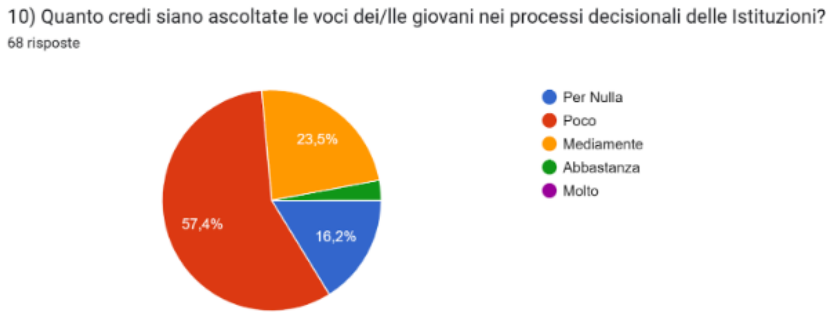
40 participants (58,8%) reply with a negative answer, while 28 (41,2%) with a positive one. This may be a flag for a lack of trust in institutions and/or for the inability of the institutions to engage young people with meaningful activities.

Question 9b: If yes, can you briefly describe it?

Most of the respondents (46,3%) to this question say they mostly interact to different extent with school and university. 2,5% of them report they had or have a relationship with the municipality, in the form of collaboration within a project frame, or as municipal councillor.
Others report they are part of a youth association (3,5%), participate in conversation with the mayor (3,5%), take part in laboratories organised by the municipality (3,5%), collaborate with the municipal library (3,5%), are part of a party (3,5%), or interact with the regional institutions (3,5%).
The responses to this question suggest a rather distant relationship between young people and institutions. Most do not have significant ties to them, which may reflect a lack of trust or the perception that institutions do not provide meaningful opportunities for engagement. This disconnect could stem from a sense of disillusionment or from institutions' struggles to communicate effectively and remain accessible to young people.
Among those who do engage with institutions, the educational sector – schools and universities – is by far the most frequently mentioned, indicating that interaction occurs primarily out of necessity rather than a genuine desire to connect. Other forms of engagement, such as participation in municipal projects, youth associations, or dialogues with local administrations, are less common and involve only a minority. This suggests that while opportunities for interaction exist, they remain limited or are perceived as inaccessible to most young people.

Overall, the data indicate that institutions need to strengthen their efforts to actively engage young people by creating more visible, inclusive, and meaningful participation opportunities.

Question 10: How much do you think young people's voices are heard by institutions in decision-making processes?



Generally, the answers to this question are negative, varying from slightly listened to (57,4%) to not listened to at all (16,2%). 23,5% of the participants say their voices are moderately listened to by the institutions, while only the 2,9% state they are definitely listened to.
The answers to this question demonstrate a lack of trust in the institutions and a sense of abandonment felt by the young generations. The data here are aligned with the ones emerged from the previous question.

Question 11: Who do you feel hears the youngsters' voice the most?

45 respondents (66,2%) say they feel they are heard by families and friends, immediately followed by social centers, cultural centers, and youth centers (44 out 68, 64,7%).

15 participants (22,1%) report they believe grassroots associations and NGOs, and schools and universities, respectively, to listen to their opinions, ideas, and needs. 10 respondents (14,7%) think the European Union is an institution able to hear youth voices, while only the 4,4% feel this to be true at national level.

Here, it can be noted how proximity in relationships is a relevant factor to feel inclusion, belonging, and agency: the first three options mentioned in the list are the ones that allow young people to exercise a certain degree of power and, at the same time, to feel they are relating with people who they can trust.
Furthermore, and significantly, the European Union is being indicated 3 to 10 times more than national and local institutions, indicating a certain level of trust in this organ. This suggests that the EU is perceived as attentive to young people's needs.

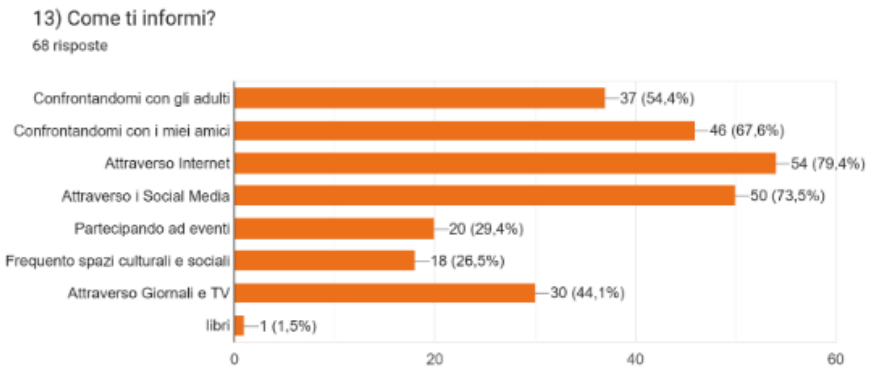
Question 12: What does participation mean to you?
Based on the answer provided by the participants, we created different clusters of definition, which we summarize in the following list (ordered by number of answer):

1. **Be involved** (more or less active): 18 replies (26,5%).
2. **Provide help**: 16 replies (23,4%).
3. **Express yourself**: 14 replies (20,6%).
4. **Belong**: 12 replies (17,5%).
5. **Be committed**: 8 replies (11,8%).
6. **Be present**: 5 replies (7,2%).
7. **Get informed**: 3 replies (4,3%).
8. **Listen to others**: 2 replies (2,9%).
9. **Feel important**: 1 reply (1,5%).

The most frequent response suggests that many respondents see participation as a spectrum, from passive presence to active engagement. Participation can be about contributing to a collective effort or about having a voice, while it is also tied to social identity and inclusion. Some answers indicate how participants see participation as requiring responsibility or awareness, rather than just action. Overall, the replies suggest that, for most respondents, participation is an active and social concept, but with varying degrees of responsibility and engagement.

Section 3: Getting informed and participating

Question 13: In what way do you get informed?

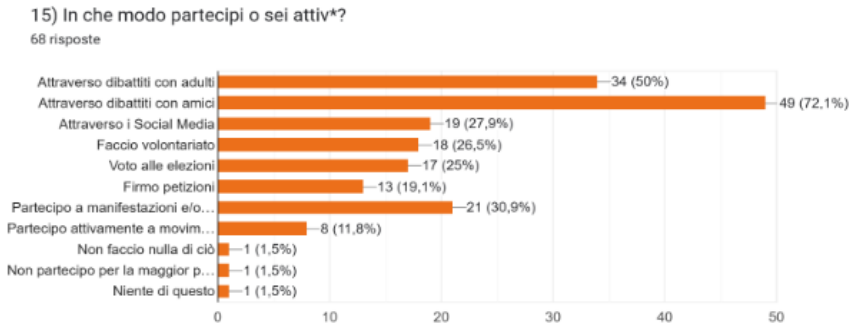


Internet and social media are the two main media mentioned to get informed, with 54 (79,4%) and 50 (73,5%) responses, respectively. They are followed by peer information sharing (46 replies, 67,6%) and by engaging in conversations with adults (37 answers, 54,4%). 30 of the participants report journals and TV to be sources of information (44,1%), while 20 (29,4%) by participating in events and 18 (26,5%) attending cultural and social centers. Only 1 participant (1,5%) reports to get informed by reading books.

Question 14: How do you rate the information you have access to?

32 participants have a positive opinion on the quality of the information they have access to, with 27 participants (39,7%) considering it to be good and 5 (7,4%) to be excellent. 25 (36,8%) consider it to be sufficient. 11 of them have a negative opinion, with 10 (14,7%) saying it is mediocre and 1 (1,5%) insufficient.
This means that almost half of the participants trust the sources they rely on to get informed, while one third has a moderately good opinion on their validity. Only around 15% of the participants say they don't trust and consider their sources and quality to be valid.
The main sources of information mentioned – social media and the internet – come with the challenge of fake news and the difficulty of distinguishing it from reliable information. The high number of positive responses to this question suggests a general trust in these sources, which may indicate the need to strengthen critical evaluation skills. A recent study found that at least one in three teenagers struggles to identify false news, a finding that aligns with the responses given in this survey.

Question 15: In what ways do you participate or activate?



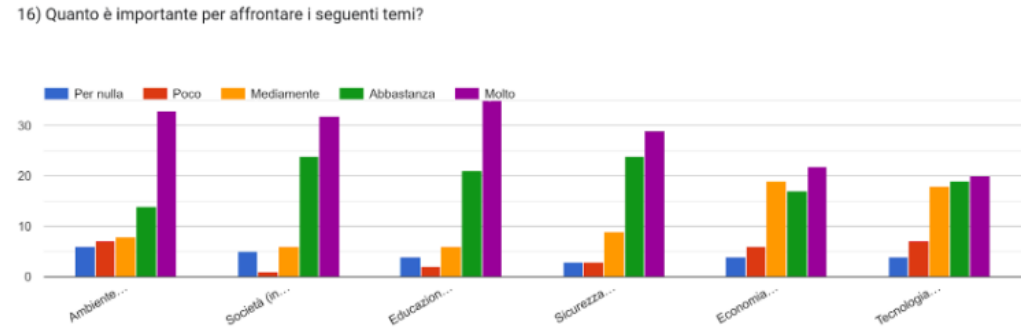
Conversations with friends and peers (49 replies, 72,1%) and adults (34 answers, 50%) are reported to be the main ways to participate or be active, followed by participating in demonstrations and events (21 replies, 30,9%). 19 participants (27,9%) say they use social media and networks to be active, while 18 (26,5%) mention volunteering as a way to participate. A quarter of the participants (17, 25%) vote as a means to exercise their active contribution and 13 (19,1%) sign petitions. 8 participants (11,8%) have an active role in movements, associations, groups, or political parties. 3 participants (4,5%) report they are not involved in any of the choices mentioned in the question.

Data shows that a significant part of the sample participates in demonstrations and events and does volunteering activities in order to bring their own contribution. This demonstrates their interest in social and political matters. At the same time, looking at the overall results and despite the aforementioned data, we can note a huge gap between very personal and easy-to-achieve means to participate and more institutionalized and social ways. This suggests the need to strengthen engagement with collaborative activities.

Question 15b: If you actively participate in movements, associations, groups or political parties, what kind are they and in what areas do they operate?

The participants here mentioned youth groups/parties and volunteering associations.

Question 16: How relevant is it to address the following themes (environment - society - education - security - economy - technology)?



We order the themes considering the overall positive reply (definitely important and very important), which result in the following list:

1. **Education**: 56 positive answers (35 very important and 21 definitely important). Education is also the theme that received the least negative replies (4 not important at all and 2 slightly important). 6 participants consider it to be a moderate important theme to address.
2. **Society**: 56 positive answers (32 very important and 24 definitely important). This theme received the same number of negative replies (6), but 5 participants say this theme is not important at all. 6 participants consider it to be a moderate important theme to address.

3. **Security**: 53 positive answers (29 very important and 24 definitely important). This theme received the same number of negative replies (6), with 3 participants saying this theme is not important at all and 3 it is slightly important. 9 participants consider it to be a moderate important theme to address.
4. **Environment**: 47 positive answers (33 very important and 14 definitely important). Interestingly, although being considered the fourth most important theme to address, it is also reported to be the least important to tackle, with 6 participants saying it is not important at all and 7 it is moderately important. 8 participants state it is moderately important.
5. **Economy**: 39 positive answers (22 very important and 17 definitely important). 10 participants believe this theme is not important to address, with 4 reporting it is not important at all and 6 it is slightly important. 19 participants consider it to be a moderate important theme to address.
6. **Technology**: 39 positive answers (20 very important and 19 definitely important). 11 participants don't think this theme is important to tackle, with 4 reporting it is not important at all and 7 it is slightly important. 18 participants consider it to be a moderate important theme to address.

The results from Italy highlight a strong emphasis on education and societal issues, suggesting that young people recognize the importance of knowledge and social dynamics in shaping their future. The fact that education received the least negative replies indicates a broad consensus on its fundamental role in personal and collective development. Similarly, the high ranking of society and security suggests concerns about social stability and safety, which could be influenced by broader national or global trends.

The lower ranking of environmental issues is particularly noteworthy. While 47 participants considered it important, it also received the highest number of negative replies, indicating a divided perception. This could suggest that, despite widespread awareness of climate challenges, some young people may feel disengaged or sceptical about their ability to influence these issues. Alternatively, other concerns, such as economic security or immediate social problems, may overshadow environmental priorities.

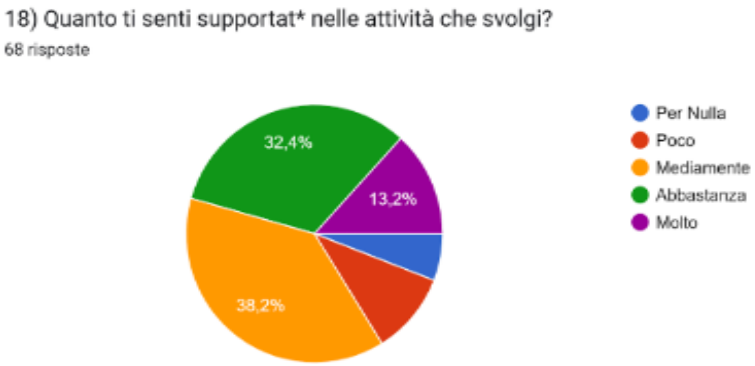
Another striking aspect is the lack of emphasis on human rights. While this could indicate that young Italians take fundamental rights for granted, it might also suggest a perception that these issues are either already well-addressed or not under immediate threat. However, given the increasing global discourse on human rights, this absence raises questions about how these topics are framed within the national context.

The relatively low prioritization of the economy and technology suggests that, while these topics are acknowledged as relevant, they may not be perceived as urgent or pressing compared to education and societal well-being. This could reflect either confidence in existing economic and technological structures or a perception that other foundational aspects – such as education – are prerequisites for addressing economic and technological challenges effectively.
Overall, the data reveals a prioritization of social and educational issues over economic, technological, and environmental concerns, highlighting areas where engagement and discourse could be further encouraged.

Question 17: Do you think that your actions can contribute to change?

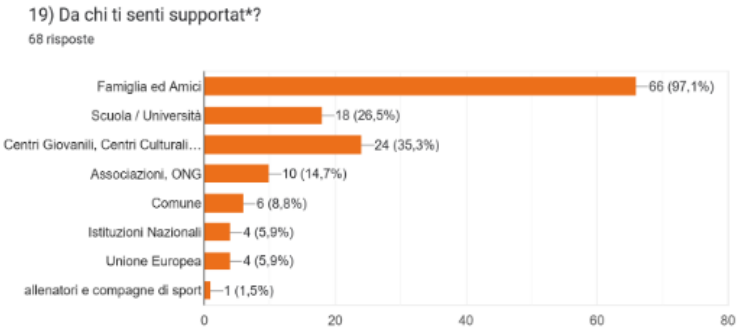
39,7% of the participants believe they can actively contribute to change, with 8 (11,8%) saying they very definitely think they have this possibility and 19 (27,9%) they can definitely contribute to change. 19,2% have instead a negative opinion, with 12 participants (11,8%) stating it is slightly possible for them to contribute to change and 5 (7,4%) it is not possible at all. 24 respondents (35,3%) believe they have a moderate possibility to contribute to change.
This data is reassuring, meaning that young people have hope toward a better future, and feel they have enough power to change our world to achieve it.

Question 18: How supported do you feel in the activities you do?



Like the previous question, also in this one the majority of participants provides a positive answer, stating that they feel very definitely supported (9 respondents, 13,2%) and definitely supported (22 respondents, 32,4%). 11 participants say they don't feel supported enough instead, with 7 (13,2%) stating they feel slightly supported and 4 (5,8%) not supported at all. Lastly, 26 participants (38,2%) report they feel moderately supported in the activities they do. Also, this data is reassuring. Here, what can be read is a moderate-to-positive perception of young people in terms of trust they have toward others' support (people and institutions).

Question 19: Who do you get support from?



Our participants report to be mostly supported by friends and families (66 replies, 97,1%). 24 of them (35,3%) say they receive support from youth, cultural, and social centers, while 18 (26,5%) from schools and universities. 10 respondents (14,7%) state they are supported by NGO and associations. 6 (8,8%) cite the municipalities as supportive institutions, followed by national institutions and the European Union (4 answers, respectively. 5,9%). Lastly, 1 participant (1,5%) say they are supported by their coaches and teammates.
This data is particularly significant as they highlight the type of support young people consider essential: primarily emotional and motivational. At the same time, local, youth and cultural centers also emerge as important realities to provide support for young people. These spaces not only provide opportunities for social interaction but also actively support youth initiatives, encouraging participation and helping to strengthen social bonds and community identity.
Many less states receive support from more institutionalized realities. Therefore, it is not as easy to say as it is for the previous data how much of their trust or distrust (given the previous answers) is placed in those.

Section 4: Tell us more about it

Question 20: Are you interested in other themes?

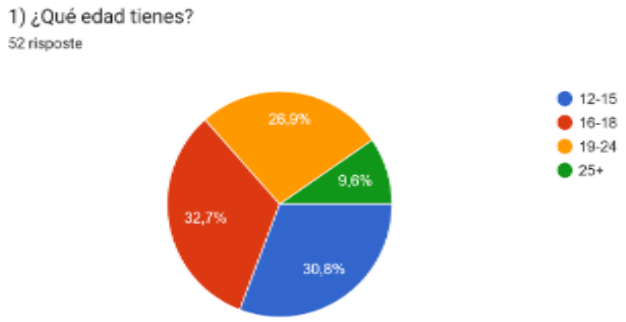
Further topics of interest for young people that emerged from our survey are the following:

1. **Matters related to the future**.
2. **Housing crisis**.
3. **Diversity & Inclusion**.
4. **Neurodivergences & Disabilities**.
5. **(Civic) education**.
6. **Culture & Arts**.
7. **Volunteering**.
8. **Sports**.

2. SPAIN

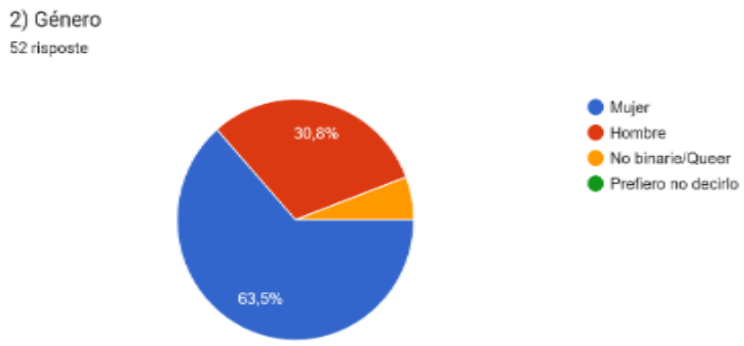
Section 1: Demographic and contextual information

Question 1: Age



A bit more of a third (17 respondents, 32,7%) of the participants is aged between 16 and 18, while another third (16 respondents, 30,8%) is aged between 12 and 15. This means that more than one half of the Spanish sample is adolescent. Of the remaining 36,5%, 14 participants (26,9%) are between 19 and 24 years old, while 5 (9,6%) are 25 or older.

Question 2: Gender



In our sample there is a huge predominance of young women (33 participants, 63,5%) over young men (16 participants, 30,8%). 3 participants (5,8%) are non-binary.

Question 3: What is your main occupation?

36 respondents (69,1%) say they are currently studying (middle school, high school, university, and PhD), while 9 (17,2%) are working. 5 out of 52 (9,5%) are unemployed or not studying. 1 participant (1,8%) says they are currently doing a sport (volleyball).

Question 4: What do you do in your free time?

Looking at the answers, we clustered them into different groups (ordered by number of answer):

1. **Culture & Arts**: 15 respondents (28,7%) say they read, while 7 (13,5%) draw or paint. 6 of the participants (11,4%) mention they listen to and/or play music.
2. **Social relationships**: 19 participants (36,4%) state they usually see friends, while only 1 (1,8%) say that they spend their free time with their family and their partner, respectively.
3. **Sports**: 19 participants (36,4%) say they practice a sport. When mentioned, the majority of them report they dance.
4. **Media & Technology**: 6 participants (11,4%) say they usually watch movies and TV shows and 2 (3,7%) use social media and play videogames, respectively.
5. **Nature**: 7 respondents (13,5%) say they spend their free time immersed in nature, typically walking.
6. **Food**: 2 participants (3,7%) state they love eating in their free time, while 1 (1,8%) says they usually cook.
7. **Volunteering & Activism**: 2 respondents (3,7%) affirm they are involved in activist associations.
8. **Sleep**: 2 respondents (3,7%) say they usually sleep in their free time.

Interpersonal relationships and sports are central to young people's lifestyles. Additionally, there is a clear preference for cultural activities such as reading, painting, and music over video games or digital devices. A noteworthy aspect is the strong connection to nature: several participants report spending their free time walking and immersing themselves in green spaces, deliberately distancing themselves from urban environments.

Question 5: What are your dreams?

For this question, we clustered the answers we received in more overarching groups, as following:

1. **Career development & Professional growth**: 24 replies (46,1%).
   Generally, participants say they want to be successful and satisfied with their job. Some participants say they would like to work in the educational field, while others dream of themselves as psychologists, professional athletes, artists, medics, lawyers, and mechanics.
2. **Personal growth & Happiness**: 15 replies (28,7%).
   Most of the replies here mention being happy and peaceful. Others report instead they dream of being able to fulfil their own goals, nurturing their own passions, and becoming independent.
3. **Relationships & Family**: 7 replies (13,5%).
   Some participants mention they want to create a family or help their own. 2 participants say they want to be of help for others, while one mentions instead the concept of kinship.
4. **Voyages & Experiences**: 5 replies (9,5%).
   All the replies here refer to the generic desire to travel and see new places.
5. **Lifestyles & Specific desires**: 3 replies (5,8%).
   Here, the participants mention the desire to live in a safe and equitable society. A very specific dream mentioned is buying a house.
6. **Wealth & Economic safety**: 2 replies (3,7%).
   Being economically independent is the dream mentioned in this category.

The responses provide valuable insight into participants' aspirations, highlighting the central role of work and personal growth. The most common dream is professional fulfilment, with ambitions spanning education, psychology, sports, the arts, and technical fields. This suggests not only a desire for career success but also a need to identify with a meaningful role in society. At the same time, a significant number of participants express dreams related to personal fulfilment and happiness—both as inner peace and the ability to pursue passions and achieve individual goals. This indicates that success is not solely defined by career advancement but also by balancing it with well-being.
Less frequently mentioned, but still relevant, are aspirations related to relationships and family, reflecting a desire to build strong connections or support loved ones. Travel also emerges as a dream, showing an openness to exploration and new cultural experiences.

Among the less common responses are specific desires tied to lifestyle, financial security, and social justice. While wealth is not a top priority, the emphasis on economic independence suggests a widespread concern for future stability.
Overall, these responses reveal a generation striving for both professional achievement and personal well-being, balancing success, happiness, and meaningful relationships.

Question 6: What are your fears?

For this question, we followed the same procedures as the previous one:

1. **Work & study**: 22 replies (42,2%).
   Being our sample very young, most of them are worried about not succeeding in their studies or concerned with studying in general. Here, some answers refer to the concern of being unemployed.
2. **Future & Uncertainties**: 18 replies (34,5%).
   Many participants report they fear the inability to fulfil themselves and their dreams. Others are generally afraid of the future, and not comfortable with the overarching feeling of uncertainties.
3. **Relationships & Social expectations**: 15 replies (28,7%).
   Many respondents say they are afraid of losing the relationships they currently have with their families and friends. Some of them fear the lack of approval and comprehension from the others, while 3 participants mention the fear of not being supported in their activities.
4. **Society & Global issues**: 10 replies (19,1%).
   Here, many participants are scared by economic insecurity and crisis, and by consumerism and capitalism. Climate, housing, and government crises are other themes mentioned in this cluster, as it is the regularization of immigrant citizens. Lastly, 1 participant says they are concerned by war, privilege, and patriarchy, respectively.
5. **Health & Personal wellbeing**: 3 replies (5,8%).
   Responses here are generally mentioning death and mental health issues as a source of fear and concern for our sample.

The most common fear revolves around education and work, which aligns with the participants' age group. Anxiety about not completing studies or finding a job reflects a broader concern about the future and the challenges of entering the professional world. This suggests that, for many young people, academic and career success is seen as crucial for personal fulfilment and security.

Reinforcing this, uncertainty about the future is another major concern. Many fear not achieving their dreams or struggling to find a clear path in life, reflecting the instability of the current socio-economic climate. The difficulty in envisioning a stable and satisfying future highlights the need for greater security and support.

Relationships and social expectations also emerge as significant sources of worry. Many participants fear losing emotional connections or lacking understanding and approval from others. This underscores the importance of social recognition and emotional support for youth well-being, as well as how the fear of isolation or judgment shapes their self-perception.
On a broader scale, concerns about social and global issues – such as economic instability, climate change, and political crises – indicate a strong awareness of systemic challenges. This suggests a generation attuned to global inequalities and injustices.
Lastly, a smaller number of responses mention fears related to health and personal well-being, including concerns about death and mental health struggles. While less frequent, these fears highlight the growing importance of psychological well-being among young people.
Overall, these responses portray a generation grappling with uncertainty, social pressures, and economic difficulties while demonstrating a deep awareness of both global and personal challenges shaping their future.

Section 2: Inclusion and belonging

Question 7: How diverse do you consider the city you live in (in terms of: culture, ethnicity, language, social background, religion)?

More than a half of the participants (30 respondents, 57,7%) consider their city definitely diverse, while 9 (17,2%) consider their city to be very definitely diverse. 8 participants (15,4%) feel their city is moderately diverse, while 5 (9,5%) consider it to be slightly diverse. Interestingly, no participant replies with “not at all”.

Question 8: Do you think that the institutions (municipalities, schools, national government, European institutions) do enough to guarantee equity and respect for diversity?

23 respondents (44,1%) say that the institutions are moderately able to support and guarantee equity and diversity. 10 of them (19,1%) state instead that the institutions don’t provide enough support, and 2 (3,7%) are more negative, stating the institutions provide absolutely no support. On the other hand, 14 participants (26,1%) and 3 participants (5,8%) state the institutions act properly and very properly to guarantee equity and respect for diversity, respectively.
The data suggests that young people see their city as diverse and generally view institutions positively in supporting inclusivity. However, it appears that much of this diversity and coexistence stems from grassroots initiatives led by citizens and local organisations. Therefore, institutions should further encourage these efforts, recognizing their role in strengthening social bonds and fostering community cohesion.
This aligns with findings from the Eurydice (2023) report, which highlights how educational authorities collaborate with equality bodies and independent organisations to promote diversity and inclusion in schools. Such partnerships are especially crucial in educational settings, reinforcing the need for institutional support in fostering inclusive communities.

Question 9: Do you have any relevant relationship with one or more institutions?

34 participants (65,4%) reply with a positive answer, while 18 (34,6%) with a negative one. This means that institutions are often able to engage young people with meaningful activities.

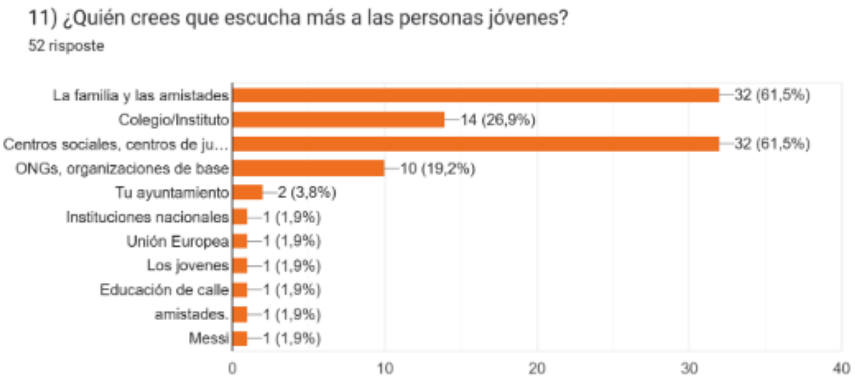
Question 9b: If yes, can you briefly describe it?

Responses here report on relationships and interaction with city councils, NGOs, sport associations, and school; and participation in youth organisations and volunteering activities, local events, and workshops organised by public entities. Lastly, 2 participants say they engage in relationships with public institutions because of their work.

Question 10: How much do you think young people's voices are heard by institutions in decision-making processes?

Generally, the answers to this question are mildly negative, varying from slightly listened to (38,5%) to not listened to at all (7,7%). 36,5% of the participants say their voices are moderately listened to by the institutions. Only 9,6% and 7,7% state they are and very definitely listened to, respectively.
The answers to this question demonstrate a partial lack of trust in the institutions and of agency.
Although young people interact with various institutions, the most significant finding is their perception of being excluded from decision-making processes. This highlights the need to strengthen youth representation, giving them greater freedom of expression and a more influential role in local associations and institutions.
On a broader scale, increasing youth involvement at regional, national, and European levels would be beneficial. A concrete example is the European Youth Forum, which represents young people at the EU level and engages with institutions like the European Commission and the European Parliament to shape youth policies. Expanding and making such initiatives more accessible at local and national levels could further enhance youth participation.

Question 11: Who do you feel hears the youngsters' voice the most?



32 respondents (61,5%) say they feel they are heard by families and friends, and by social centers, cultural centers, and youth centers.
14 participants (26,9%) report they believe schools and universities listen to their opinions, ideas, and needs. 10 respondents (19,2%) think NGOs and grassroots associations are institutions able to hear youth voices, while only 2 respondents (3,8%) feel this is true for their municipality. Lastly, only 1 participant (1,9%) states they trust national institutions and the European Union to hear youth voices.

The replies here show how close relationships play a crucial role in young people's positive perception over their own agency and sense of belonging: this is true for families and friends, but also for social, cultural, and youth centers which are usually safe spaces where people can openly show themselves to others. Looking at the data, this may be also partially true for schools and universities.
These data once again highlight the importance of local organisations, which are perceived as friendly institutions where young people feel free to express themselves and are encouraged to actively participate in community initiatives.

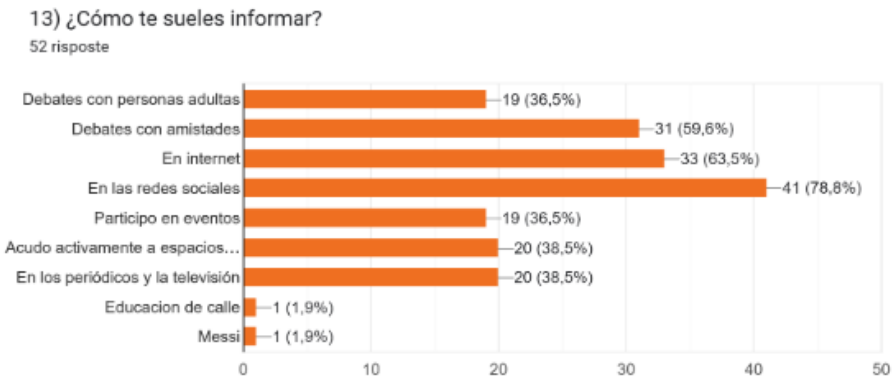
Question 12: What does participation mean to you?
Based on the answer provided by the participants, we created different clusters of definition, which we summarize in the following list (ordered by number of answer):

1. **Express yourself**: 14 replies (26,8%).
2. **Provide help**: 10 replies (19,1%).
3. **Be committed**: 10 replies (19,1%).
4. **Be involved** (more or less active): 7 replies (13,5%).
5. **Collaborate**: 4 replies (7,7%).
6. **Belong**: 3 replies (5,8%).

These data outline a more active concept of participation, centered on self-expression, concrete engagement, and support for others. Participation is understood as direct action, where young people feel the need to take on a proactive role in society, making a tangible contribution to change.
Conversely, definitions that imply more passive involvement – such as merely being part of a group or included in a context without taking specific action – are less relevant. This suggests a strong preference for forms of participation that emphasize individuality and personal initiative, highlighting the desire to be heard and to have a real impact on the community.

Section 3: Getting informed and participating

Question 13: In what way do you get informed?



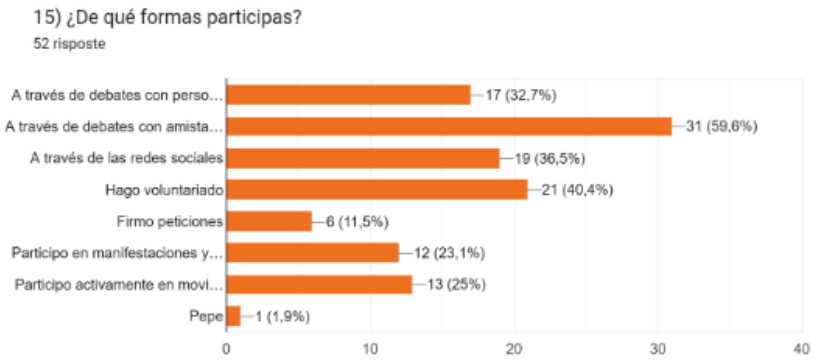
Social media and internet are the two main media mentioned to get informed, with 41 (78,8%) and 33 (63,5%) responses, respectively. They are followed by peer information sharing (31 replies, 59,6%) and by attending cultural and social centers, and through journals and TV (20 replies each, 38,5%). Engaging in conversations with adults and participating in events are mentioned 19 times (36,5%).

Question 14: How do you rate the information you have access to?

25 participants have a positive opinion on the quality of the information they have access to, with 19 participants (36,4%) considering it to be good and 6 (11,4%) to be excellent. 16 (30,8%) consider it to be sufficient. 11 of them have a negative opinion, with 9 (17,2%) saying it is mediocre and 2 (3,7%) insufficient.

This means that almost half of the participants trust the sources they rely on to get informed, while one third has a moderately good opinion on their validity. Only around 20% of the participants say they don't trust and consider their sources and quality to be valid.
Social media and the internet are the primary sources of information for many, yet they also come with the challenge of fake news. The considerable number of positive responses suggests that young people tend to trust these platforms, which points to the necessity of improving their ability to critically assess the information they encounter.

Question 15: In what ways do you participate or activate?

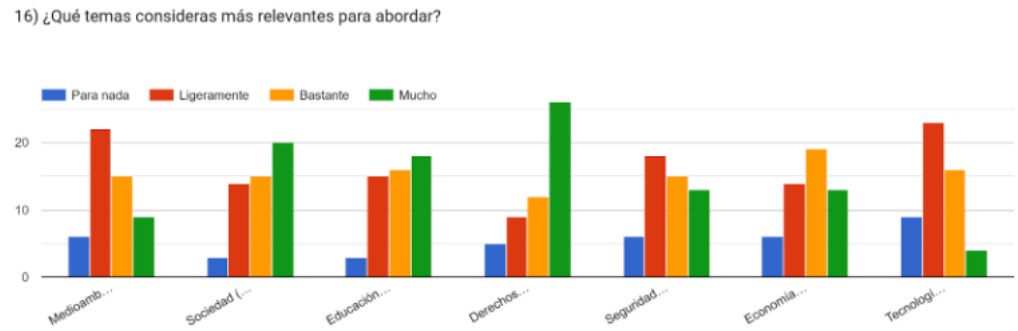


Conversations with friends and peers (31 replies, 59,6%) are reported to be the main ways to participate or be active, followed by volunteering (21 replies, 40,4%). 19 participants (36,5%) say they use social media and networks to be active, while 17 (32,7%) mention conversions with adults. A quarter of the participants (13, 25%) have an active role in movements, associations, groups, or political parties, while 12 (23,1%) take part in events or demonstrations. Lastly, 6 (11,5%) report they sign petitions as a means to exercise their active contribution. Interestingly, nobody mentions "vote".
These results show, once again, the crucial role of social interaction and dialogue in shaping young minds emerges, fostering greater awareness and critical thinking. Young people seem to recognize the importance of these discussions for their personal growth and future.
This awareness is also reflected in their active engagement in volunteer work, participation in movements, associations, and political parties, as well as their presence at events and demonstrations. From this perspective, the respondents show a concrete interest in actively contributing to the development of their community and taking part in decision-making processes that shape their future.

Question 15b: If you actively participate in movements, associations, groups or political parties, what kind are they and in what areas do they operate?

The participants here mentioned youth groups/parties and volunteering associations.

Question 16: How relevant is it to address the following themes (environment - society - education - security - economy - technology)?



We order the themes considering the overall positive reply (definitely important and very important), which result in the following list:

1. **Human rights**: 38 positive answers (26 very important and 12 definitely important). Human rights is also the theme that received the least negative replies (5 not important at all and 9 slightly important).
2. **Society**: 35 positive answers (20 very important and 15 definitely important). This theme received 17 negative replies, with 3 participants saying this theme is not important at all and 14 it is a moderately important theme to address.
3. **Education**: 34 positive answers (18 very important and 16 definitely important). This theme received 18 negative replies, with 3 participants saying this theme is not important at all and 15 it is a moderately important theme to address.
4. **Economy**: 32 positive answers (13 very important and 19 definitely important). 20 participants believe this theme is not important to address, with 6 reporting it is not important at all and 14 it is slightly important.
5. **Security**: 28 positive answers (13 very important and 15 definitely important). This theme received 24 negative replies, with 6 participants saying this theme is not important at all and 18 it is slightly important.
6. **Environment**: 24 positive answers (9 very important and 15 definitely important). Environment receives a higher number of negative answers compared to positive ones (28), with 6 participants saying it is not important at all and 22 saying it is a slightly important topic to address.

7. **Technology**: 20 positive answers (4 very important and 16 definitely important). 32 participants don't think this theme is important to tackle, with 9 reporting it is not important at all and 23 it is slightly important.

The highest number of votes for human rights suggests a strong sensitivity toward the protection of fundamental freedoms and respect for other humans – issues that are likely perceived as universal and essential for collective well-being.
Society and education also receive high levels of attention, indicating widespread awareness of the importance of social dynamics and the formative role of education in shaping individuals and communities. Education, in particular, is seen as a key tool for personal growth and building a stable future.
Economy and security garner a substantial number of positive responses but also a significant share of negative opinions, indicating a more divided perception. This could suggest that while some young people view these topics as crucial for their future, others find them less immediately relevant to their daily lives.
On the other hand, the environment and technology receive more negative responses than positive ones. The environmental data is particularly interesting, as it contrasts with the common narrative that portrays young people as especially sensitive to ecological issues. This might indicate a gap between awareness of the problem and the perceived ability to influence it. Meanwhile, technology may be seen as already fully integrated into everyday life, making it less of a concern that requires urgent action or attention.
Overall, these findings highlight the need to foster discussions on less prominent issues and better understand the underlying reasons behind these perceptions.

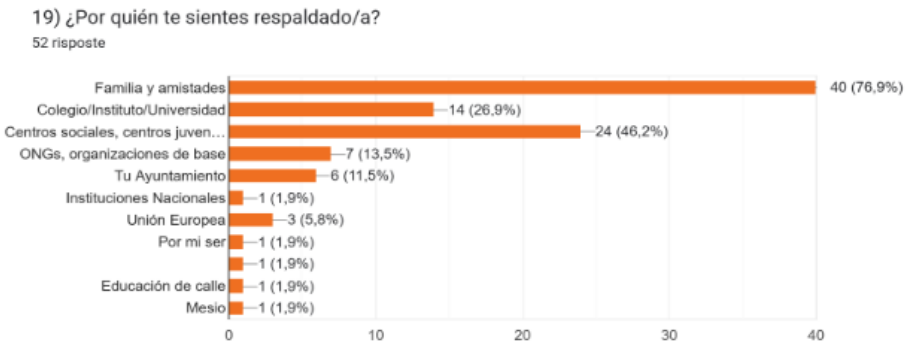
Question 17: Do you think that your actions can contribute to change?

36,5% of the participants believe they can actively contribute to change, with 9 (17,3%) saying they very definitely think they have this possibility and 10 (19,2%) they can definitely contribute to change. 30,8% (16 participants) have instead a negative opinion, stating it is slightly possible for them to contribute to change. 17 respondents (32,7%) believe they have a moderate possibility to contribute to change.
The positive responses might indicate a greater importance given to individual and collective engagement, fostered by concrete experiences of participation, such as volunteering or activism in movements and associations. However, the perception of limited impact could stem from a lack of trust in institutions, difficulty in seeing tangible results, or the complexity of global issues, which are often perceived as too complicated for a single individual to influence. To strengthen confidence in their ability to make a difference, it would be beneficial to promote initiatives that highlight youth agency and make visible the transformative experiences that are already underway.

Question 18: How supported do you feel in the activities you do?

For this question, the majority of participants (28, 53,8%) state they feel moderately supported in the activities they do. A fourth of them (13 participants, 25%) instead have a positive opinion, with 10 of them (19,2%) saying they are definitely supported and 3 (5,8%) very definitely supported. Lastly, 11 respondents (20,9%) have a negative opinion, with 9 (17,2%) feeling they are slightly supported and 2 (3,7%) they are not supported at all.
Here, there is a close balance between positive and negative opinions, while the predominance of them is moderate. What can be read is a mild perception of young people in terms of trust they have toward others' support (people and institutions).

Question 19: Who do you get support from?



Our participants report to be mostly supported by friends and families (40 replies, 76,9%). 24 of them (46,2%) say they receive support from youth, cultural, and social centers, while 14 (26,9%) from schools and universities. 7 respondents (13,5%) state they are supported by NGOs and associations. 6 (11,5%) cite the municipalities as supportive institutions, followed by the European Union (3 answers, 5,8%), and national institutions (1 answer, 1,9%).
Reading this question together with the previous one, we can note that most of the participants receive moderate support from their families and friends, and from grassroots associations or centers.
This data is particularly revealing as it underscores the kind of support young people deem essential, with emotional and motivational support standing out as the most crucial. Local youth and cultural centers also play a vital role, not only offering spaces for social interaction but actively nurturing youth initiatives, encouraging participation, and helping to reinforce both social bonds and community identity. In contrast, fewer respondents report receiving support from more institutionalized organisations, making it harder to gauge, as with the previous data, the level of trust or distrust they place in these entities.

Section 4: Tell us more about it

Question 20: Are you interested in other themes?

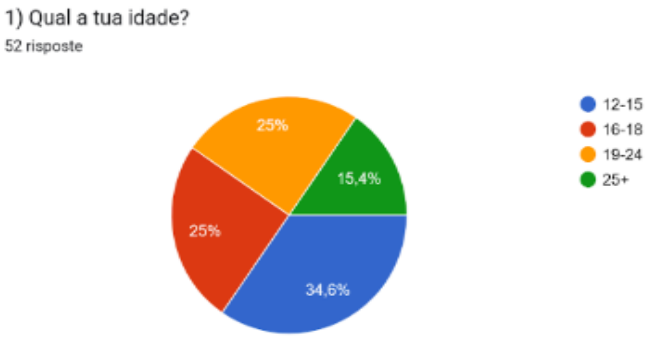
Further topics of interest for young people that emerged from our survey are the following:

1. **Diversity, Inclusion & Discriminations**.
2. **Democracy & Participation**.
3. **Rights & Justice**.
4. **(Civic) education**.
5. **Culture & Arts**.
6. **Environment**.
7. **Society & Economy**.
8. **Politics**.
9. **Social media**.
10. **(Mental) Health**.
11. **Feminism**.
12. **Sports**.

3. PORTUGAL

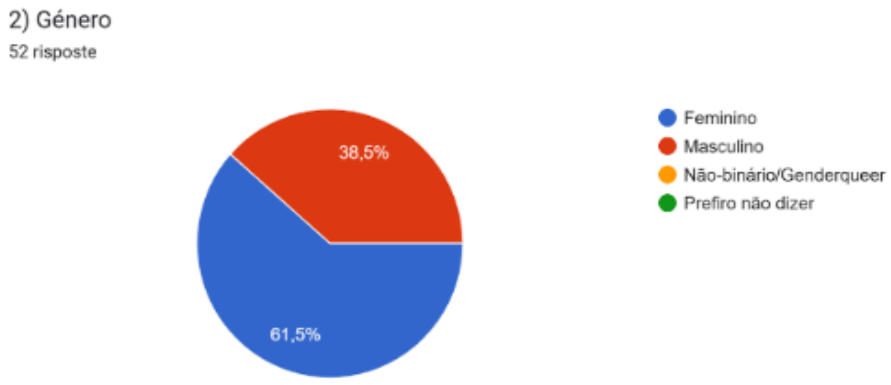
Section 1: Demographic and contextual information

Question 1: Age



A bit more of a third (18 respondents, 34,6%) of the participants is aged between 12 and 15, while a quarter (13 respondents, 30,8%) is aged between 16 and 18. This means that more than one half of the Portuguese sample is adolescent. Also 13 respondents (25%) are aged between 19 and 24, while 8 (15,4%) are 25 or older.

Question 2: Gender



In our sample there is a huge predominance of young women (32 participants, 61,5%) over young men (20 participants, 38,5%).

Question 3: What is your main occupation?

29 respondents (55,8%) say they are currently studying (middle school, high school, and university,), while 16 (38,8%) are working. 4 out of 52 (7,7%) are unemployed or not studying. Also 4 participants (7,7%) say they are currently doing a sport (football).

Question 4: What do you do in your free time?

Looking at the answers, we clustered them into different groups (ordered by number of answer):

1. **Social relationships**: 12 participants (23,1%) state they usually see friends, while 6 (11,4%) say that they spend their free time with their family. Only 1 respondent (1,8%) mentions they spend their free time with their partner.
2. **Culture & Arts**: 5 respondents (9,5%) say they read, while 3 (5,8%) draw or paint. 8 of the participants (15,2%) mention they listen to and/or play music.
3. **Media & Technology**: 6 participants (11,4%) say they usually watch movies and TV shows, 7 (13,5%) play videogames, and 2 (3,7%) use social media.
4. **Sports**: 14 participants (26,8%) say they practice a sport. When mentioned, the majority of them report they play football.
5. **Nature**: 3 respondents (5,8%) say they spend their free time immersed in nature, typically walking.
6. **Food**: 1 participant (1,8%) states they love eating and cooking in their free time, respectively.
7. **Sleep & Do nothing**: 1 respondent (1,8%) says they usually sleep and do nothing in their free time, respectively.
8. **Self-care**: 1 participant (1,8%) states they take care of themselves in their free time.
9. **Activism**: 1 respondent (1,8%) affirm they are involved in activist associations.

Here, interpersonal relationships and sports play a central role. There is a significant percentage of people who use video games and watch TV shows. Regarding cultural activities, there is a preference for music. Similarly, some participants mention spending their free time walking in nature, thus choosing to distance themselves from urban spaces.

Question 5: What are your dreams?

For this question, we clustered the answers we received in more overarching groups, as following:

1. **Career development & Professional growth**: 24 replies (46,1%).
   Generally, participants say they want to be successful and satisfied with their job. Some participants say they would like to work as professional athletes (football, fighting, gymnastic, and volleyball), doctors, entrepreneurs, photographers, and teachers.
2. **Relationships & Family**: 8 replies (15,2%).
   Here, all the participants mention they want to build a family.
3. **Lifestyles & Specific desires**: 8 replies (15,2%).
   Here, the participants mention the desire to live a comfortable life. A very specific dream mentioned is buying a house and a car.
4. **Personal growth & Happiness**: 6 replies (11,5%).
   Most of the replies here mention being happy and calm. Others report instead they dream of being able to fulfil their own goals and nurturing their own passions.
5. **Voyages & Experiences**: 6 replies (11,5%).
   All the replies here refer to the generic desire to travel and see new places.
6. **Wealth & Economic safety**: 6 replies (11,5%).
   Being rich is the dream mentioned in this category.

The responses highlight how the participants' dreams are strongly oriented toward personal and professional achievement, with almost half of them aspiring to a fulfilling career. This suggests a strong desire for stability and success at work, likely reflecting the social and economic pressures that influence young people.

The importance placed on relationships and family, though less significant than career aspirations, still indicates a need to build solid and lasting bonds. Similarly, the desire for a comfortable life, travel, and experiences emphasizes the pursuit of well-being and personal fulfilment, showing that success is not seen solely in professional terms but also in the quality of life.

Finally, the presence of a significant number of responses related to economic security highlights an awareness of financial difficulties and the value of financial stability for realizing one's dreams. Overall, these data show a balance between career ambition, the desire for personal peace, and the need for material security.

Question 6: What are your fears?

For this question, we followed the same procedures as the previous one:

1. **Work & study**: 15 replies (28,8%).
   Being our sample very young, most of them are worried about not succeeding in their studies or concerned with studying in general.
2. **Future & Uncertainties**: 12 replies (23%).
   Our participants are worried of not succeeding and achieving their goals, not being happy, and of change.
3. **Relationships & Social expectations**: 11 replies (21,1%).
   Most of the respondents mention their family as a source of concern. Some are worried for their future families, while others are afraid of not making their relatives proud.
4. **Society & Global issues**: 8 replies (15,4%).
   Here, housing, climate, economic, and political crises are mentioned, together with instability and the lack of support for youth.
5. **Health & Personal wellbeing**: 6 replies (11,5%).
   The most pressing concern in this cluster is young people's mental health. Some participants are scared by their own death or the one of a relative.

The responses highlight how the participants' main fears are related to academic and professional success, signalling a strong sense of pressure and uncertainty about their future path. This likely reflects both personal expectations and social influences, which push young people to worry about their success.

The anxiety about the future and uncertainty emphasizes a widespread fear of not being able to achieve their goals or find happiness, indicating general insecurity about the changes and challenges of adult life. At the same time, the weight placed on relationships and social expectations shows how crucial family recognition and support are for young people, who fear disappointing those around them. In all these cases, the responses are almost the exact counterparts of the dreams mentioned before.

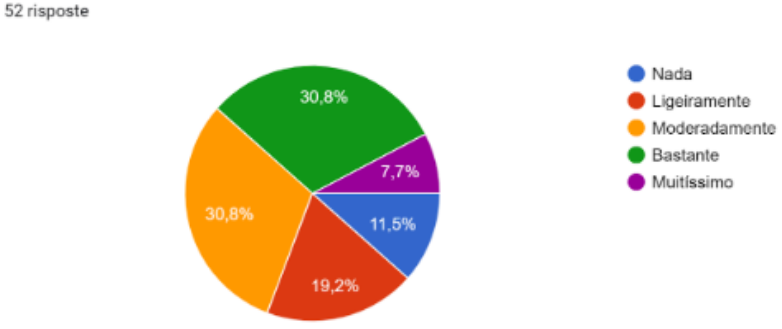
Concerns about global and social issues, such as economic, climate, and political crises, highlight an awareness of the structural difficulties in society, while the topic of mental health emerges as an important issue, reflecting the growing debate on the importance of psychological well-being among young people. Overall, these data paint a picture of insecurities that range from personal to social levels, suggesting the need for more support and empowerment opportunities for the younger generations.

Section 2: Inclusion and belonging

Question 7: How diverse do you consider the city you live in (in terms of: culture, ethnicity, language, social background, religion)?

A third of the participants (16 respondents, 30,8%) consider their city definitely diverse, while 6 (11,5%) consider their city to be very definitely diverse. 34,6% (18 responses) believe their city is moderately diverse, and 6 participants (11,5%) feel their city is slightly diverse, and not diverse at all, respectively.

Question 8: Do you think that the institutions (municipalities, schools, national government, European institutions) do enough to guarantee equity and respect for diversity?



16 respondents (30,8%) say that the institutions are definitely able to support and guarantee equity and diversity, while 4 of them (7,7%) state they are very definitely able to provide support. 10 participants (19,2%) affirm the institutions are slightly able to provide support, and 6 (11,5%) are more negative, stating the institutions provide absolutely no support. Lastly, 16 participants (30,8%) believe the institutions are moderately able to support and guarantee equity and diversity.
Here, we can note how the overall view on the effectiveness of institutions is very balanced between more negative, positive, and moderate opinions.

Question 9: Do you have any relevant relationship with one or more institutions?

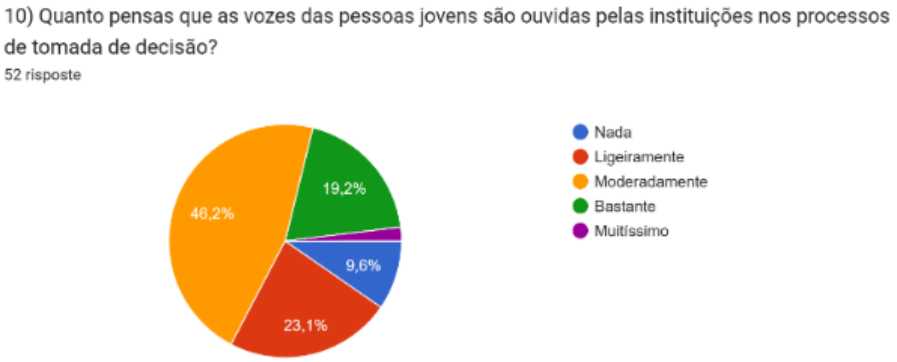
30 participants (57,7%) reply with a negative answer, while 22 (42,3%) with a positive one. This means that institutions are not so able to engage young people with meaningful activities.

Question 9b: If yes, can you briefly describe it?

Responses here report on relationships and interaction with city councils, (sport) associations, and school; and participation in youth organisations and volunteering activities, the young mayor project. Lastly, 3 participants say they work in school, municipality, and as a mediator. The data emerged from the last questions highlight participants' distance or indifference toward institutions. However, those who actively participate in youth organisations, volunteer activities, or municipal initiatives seem to have a more positive perception of their role. This suggests that institutions, particularly at higher levels, maintain few direct relationships with young people, making them less relevant or accessible.

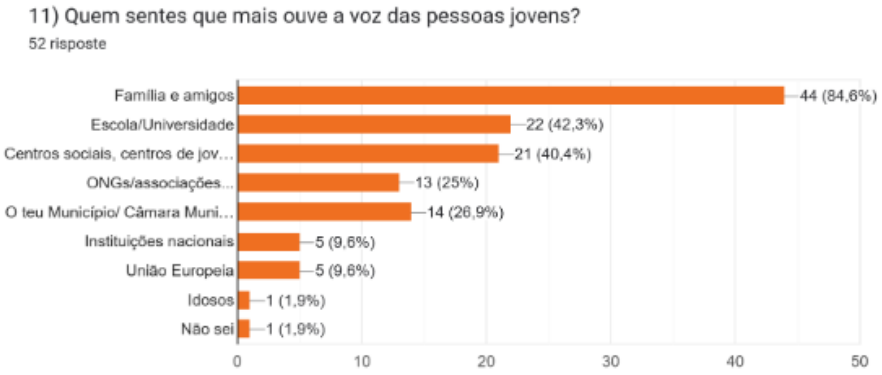
This could indicate a need for institutions to engage more with young people in meaningful ways, perhaps by strengthening local networks and ensuring that higher-level institutions become more approachable and relevant to their daily lives.

Question 10: How much do you think young people's voices are heard by institutions in decision-making processes?



Generally, the answers to this question are moderate (24 replies, 46,2%). 10 participants (19,2%) believe youth voices are definitely listened to, while only 1 (1,9%) says their voices are very definitely heard. On the other side, 12 participants (23,1%) state youth voices are slightly heard, while 5 (9,6%) have a more negative opinion, affirming this doesn't happen at all.
These responses confirm what has already been highlighted: only a small percentage of young people are actively involved with institutions, while the majority perceive them as distant and view them with a certain degree of distrust.

Question 11: Who do you feel hears the youngsters' voice the most?



44 respondents (84,6%) say they feel they are heard by families and friends, followed by schools and universities (22 answers, 42,3%), and social centers, cultural centers, and youth centers (21 answers, 40,4%).

14 participants (26,9%) report they believe their municipalities listen to their opinions, ideas, and needs, while 13 respondents (25%) think NGOs and grassroots associations are institutions able to hear youth voices. Lastly, 5 participants (9,6%) state they trust national institutions and the European Union to hear youth voices, respectively.
The replies here show how proximity plays a crucial role in young people's positive perception over their own agency and sense of belonging, which is demonstrated by the high number of replies for family and friends. Our participants perceive this is also partially true in schools and universities, and in social, cultural, and youth centers where they still have the chance of engaging closely with others. Interestingly, more than a quarter feels their municipalities are amongst the institutions that hear youth's voices, which can be linked to the participation in the young mayor project.

Question 12: What does participation mean to you?

Based on the answer provided by the participants, we created different clusters of definition, which we summarize in the following list (ordered by number of answer):

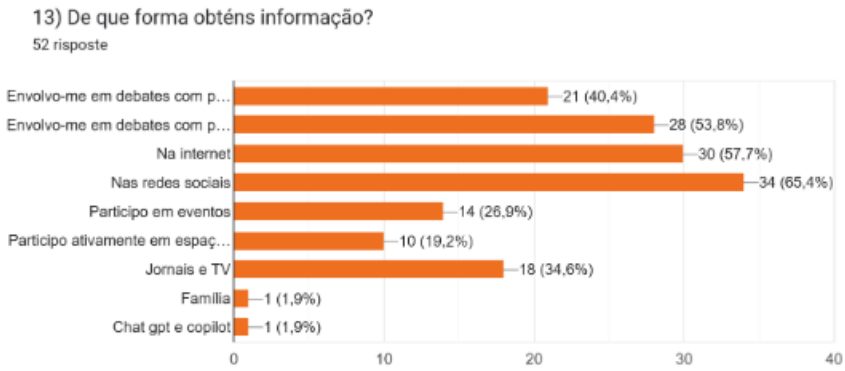
1. **Be committed**: 15 replies (28,8%).
2. **Express yourself**: 11 replies (21,1%).
3. **Provide help**: 11 replies (21,1%).
4. **Be involved** (more or less active): 11 replies (21,1%).
5. **Belong**: 5 replies (9,6%).
6. **Get informed**: 3 replies (5,8%).
7. **Mingle**: 2 replies (3,8%).
8. **Collaborate**: 1 reply (1,9%).
9. **Talk to others**: 1 reply (1,9%).
10. **Vote**: 1 reply (1,9%).

These data outline an active conception of participation, centered around self-expression, concrete engagement, and supporting others. Participation is thus seen as a direct action, demonstrating the need of young people to take a proactive role in society, contributing tangibly to change.

In contrast, definitions implying more passive involvement, such as simply being part of a group or being included in a context without a specific action, are less relevant. This suggests a strong interest in forms of participation that emphasize individuality and personal initiative, highlighting a desire to feel heard and to make a real impact on the community.

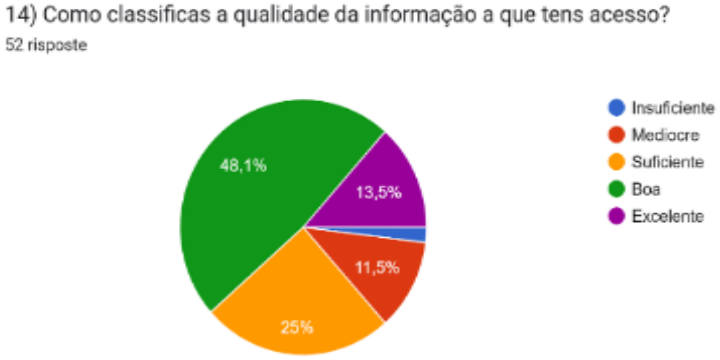
Section 3: Getting informed and participating

Question 13: In what way do you get informed?



Social media and internet are the two main media mentioned to get informed, with 34 (65,4%) and 30 (57,7%) responses, respectively. They are followed by peer information sharing (28 replies, 53,8%) and having conversations with adults (21 replies, 40,4%). Journals and TV receive 18 replies (34,6%), while attending events 14 (26,9%). The active attendance to social, cultural, and youth centers is mentioned 10 times (19,2%). Lastly, 1 participant directly refers to AI as a means to access information.

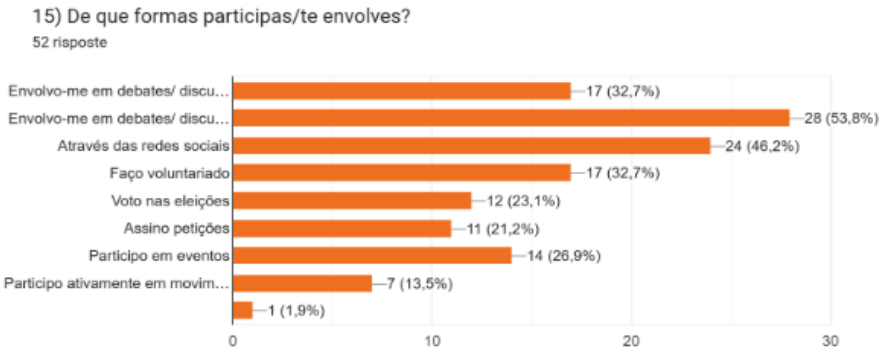
Question 14: How do you rate the information you have access to?



32 participants have a positive opinion on the quality of the information they have access to, with 25 participants (48,1%) considering it to be good and 7 (13,5%) to be excellent. 13 (25%) consider it to be sufficient. 7 of them have a negative opinion, with 6 (11,5%) saying it is mediocre and 1 (1,9%) insufficient.

This means that almost two third of the participants trust the sources they rely on to get informed, while a quarter has a moderately good opinion on their validity. Only around 15% of the participants say they don't trust and consider their sources and quality to be valid.
This is an extremely positive finding, as it indicates that most of the young participants pay close attention to the source of information. Compared to the results from Spain and Italy, this trend might be influenced by the older age of the participants, who tend to take a more critical and thorough approach when selecting and verifying information. This heightened awareness of sources suggests a growing emphasis on critical thinking, which is a positive sign for media literacy and public awareness regarding news and information.

Question 15: In what ways do you participate or activate?

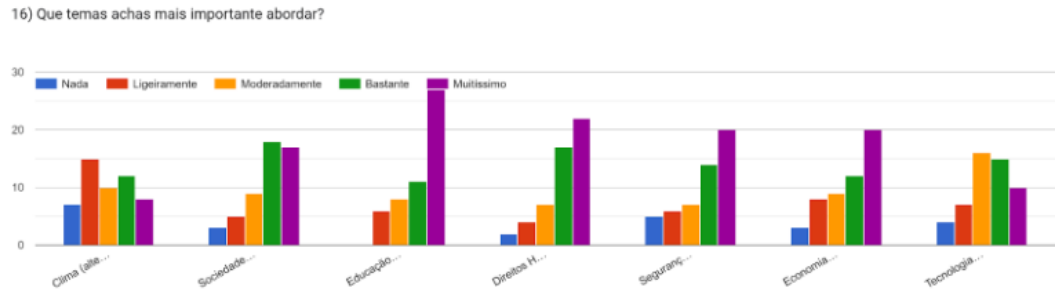


Conversations with friends and peers (28 replies, 53,8%) are reported to be the main ways to participate or be active, followed by the use of social media (24 replies, 46,2%), having conversations with adults, and volunteering (17 replies each, 32,7%). 14 participants (26,9%) say they participate in events, while 12 (23,1%) mention voting, and 11 (21,2%) sign petitions. Lastly, 7 of them (13,5%) have an active role in associations or movements.
Once again, peer-to-peer interaction emerges as the most common form of participation, confirming the importance of dialogue and the exchange of ideas. Participation is primarily understood in a social sense, but there is also an increase in responses indicating a more political engagement, such as attending events, signing petitions, and, to a lesser extent, voting. Additionally, a significant percentage chooses to engage actively through volunteering or by taking on a direct role in movements and associations.

Question 15b: If you actively participate in movements, associations, groups or political parties, what kind are they and in what areas do they operate?

The participants here mentioned political parties, youth groups/parties, and volunteering associations. Some of them mention the youth mayor project.

Question 16: How relevant is it to address the following themes (environment - society - education - security - economy - technology)?



We order the themes considering the overall positive reply (definitely important and very important), which result in the following list:

1. **Human rights**: 39 positive answers (17 very definitely important and 22 definitely important). Human rights receives 6 negative answers (2 not important at all and 4 slightly important), and 7 moderately important answers.
2. **Education**: 38 positive answers (27 very definitely important and 11 definitely important). This theme received 6 negative replies, all of them being slightly relevant to address, and 8 moderate replies.
3. **Society**: 35 positive answers (17 very definitely important and 18 definitely important). This theme received 8 negative replies, with 3 participants saying it is not important at all and 5 it is a moderately important theme to address. 9 participants believe it is a moderately important topic to tackle.
4. **Security**: 34 positive answers (20 very definitely important and 14 definitely important). 11 participants believe this theme is not important to address, with 6 reporting it is not important at all and 5 it is slightly important. 7 participants believe it is moderately relevant to address.

5. **Economy**: 32 positive answers (20 very definitely important and 12 definitely important). This theme received 11 negative replies, with 3 participants saying this theme is not important at all and 8 it is slightly important. 9 participants believe it is moderately relevant to address.
6. **Technology**: 25 positive answers (10 very definitely important and 15 definitely important). 11 participants don't think it is an important topic to address, with 4 believing it is not relevant at all and 7 slightly relevant. 16 participants believe it is moderately relevant to address.
7. **Environment**: 20 positive answers (8 very definitely important and 12 definitely important). 22 participants don't think this theme is important to tackle, with 7 reporting it is not important at all and 15 it is slightly important. 10 participants believe it is moderately relevant to address.

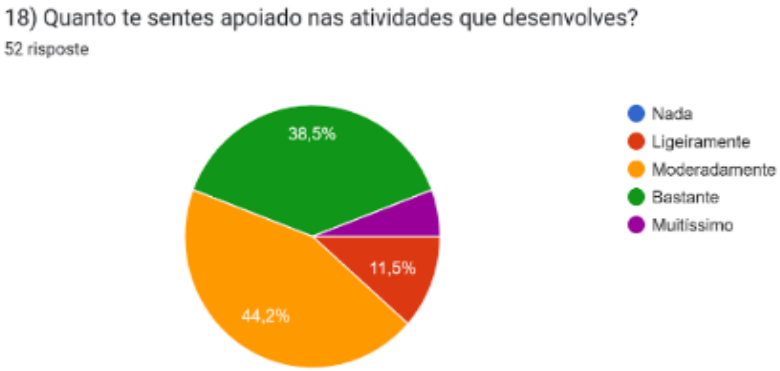
The data analysis shows that participants place great importance on human rights, education, and social issues, themes that receive the highest number of positive responses. This suggests a strong sensitivity towards the protection of fundamental rights and the need for a more equitable and educated society. Security and the economy are also considered important priorities, although with a slight decrease in support compared to the first three themes, signalling attention to stability and economic well-being.
On the other hand, the environment and technology receive the fewest positive responses, with a significant percentage of participants not considering them a priority. This may indicate a sense of distance from these issues or a lower awareness of their direct impact on daily life. However, the number of responses that rank them as "moderately relevant" suggests that, although not absolute priorities, they are still seen as aspects worth paying attention to.

Question 17: Do you think that your actions can contribute to change?

51,9% of the participants believe they can actively contribute to change, with 10 (19,2%) saying they very definitely think they have this possibility and 17 (32,7%) they can definitely contribute to change.

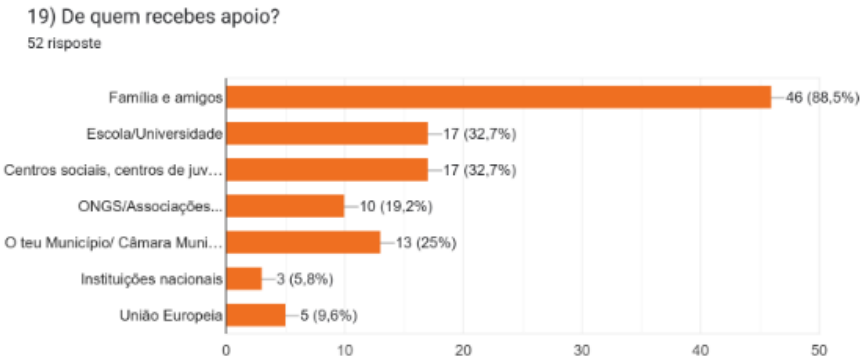
13,5% (7 participants) instead have a negative opinion, stating it is slightly possible for them to contribute to change (4 replies, 7,7%) or not possible at all (3 replies, 5,8%).
18 respondents (34,6%) believe they have a moderate possibility to contribute to change.
This data shows a spread positivity among our participants to be able to actively contribute to change. It is interesting to note the participants' perception in relation to their age: they are young individuals about to enter the workforce, aware that their actions can impact the future. This awareness could translate into a greater willingness to participate, especially if accompanied by the commitment of institutions to create concrete opportunities for personal growth through projects that value the active contribution of younger generations.

Question 18: How supported do you feel in the activities you do?



For this question, the majority of participants (23, 44,2%) state they feel moderately supported in the activities they do. 23 of them instead have a positive opinion, with 20 (38,5%) saying they are definitely supported and 3 (5,8%) very definitely supported. Lastly, 6 respondents (11,5%) have a negative opinion, feeling they are slightly supported. There are no “not at all” answers.
Here, there is a predominance of positive responses matched by the more moderate ones. What can be read is a positive perception of young people in terms of trust they have toward others’ support (people and institutions).

Question 19: Who do you get support from?



Our participants report to be mostly supported by friends and families (46 replies, 88,5%). 17 of them (32,7%) say they receive support from schools and universities, and youth, cultural, and social centers, respectively. 13 (25%) from the municipalities, while 10 respondents (19,2%) state they are supported by NGOs and associations. 5 (9,6%) cite the European Union and 3 the national institutions (5,8%).

Once again, the majority of young people gave positive responses regarding the support received from friends and family, indicating a strong desire for collaboration in building shared life projects. However, support from public and private institutions was seen as less relevant, highlighting the need for greater engagement from these institutions to be more present and supportive, fostering the enthusiasm and initiative of younger generations.

Section 4: Tell us more about it

Question 20: Are you interested in other themes?

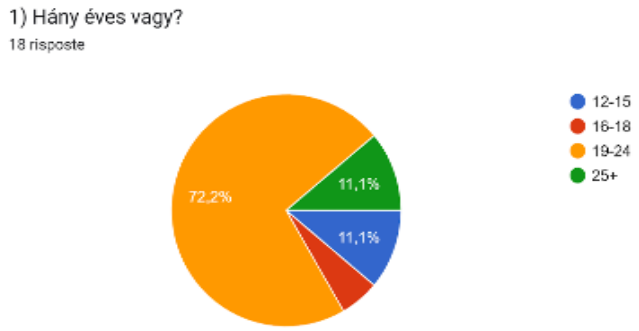
Further topics of interest for young people that emerged from our survey are the following:

1. **Rights & Justice**.
2. **Diversity & Inclusion**.
3. **Culture & Arts**.
4. **Technology**.
5. **Society & Economy**.
6. **Politics**.
7. **Science**.
8. **Education**.
9. **Job market & Entrepreneurship**.
10. **Sports**.

4. HUNGARY

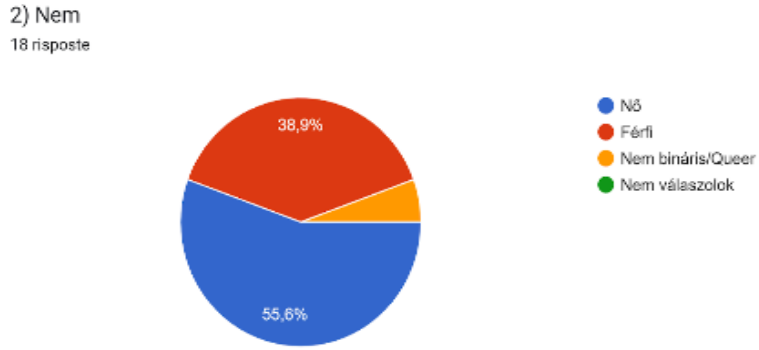
Section 1: Demographic and contextual information

Question 1: Age



The majority of the participants (13, 72,2%) are aged between 19 and 24 years. 2 participants (1,1%) are between 12 and 15 years old and 25 or older, respectively, while 1 (5,5%) participant is aged between 16 and 18.

Question 2: Gender



10 participants (55,5%) are young women, while 7 (38,9%) are young men, and 1 (5,5%) is non-binary.

Question 3: What is your main occupation?

11 respondents (61,1%) say they are currently studying (mostly university), while 5 (27,8%) are working. 3 out of 18 (16,7%) are unemployed or not studying.

Question 4: What do you do in your free time?

Looking at the answers, we clustered them into different groups (ordered by number of answer):

1. **Culture & Arts**: 5 respondents (27,8%) say they read and listen to and/or play music, respectively, while 2 (11,1%) draw or paint.
2. **Sports**: 10 participants (55,5%) say they practice a sport. When mentioned, the majority of them report they dance.
3. **Social relationships**: 6 participants (33,3%) state they usually see friends.
4. **Media & Technology**: 1 participant (5,5%) says they usually watch movies and TV shows, 2 (11,1%) play videogames and use social media, respectively.
5. **Study & Learn**: 2 participants (11,1%) mention they study and learn in their free time.
6. **Handicraft**: 2 participants (11,1%) mention they do handicraft projects in their free time.

The data show a strong inclination toward physical and cultural activities in free time, with sports being the primary choice among participants, particularly dance. Artistic and cultural activities such as reading, music, and visual arts also play a significant role, suggesting an interest in creative expression and personal growth. Social relationships are also central, indicating that free time is often seen as an opportunity to spend time with friends. However, activities related to media and technology are less represented compared to other studies on youth, suggesting a possible difference in the leisure habits of the analysed sample. Finally, the presence of responses related to studying and manual work highlights an interest in continuous learning and practical, craft-related activities.

Question 5: What are your dreams?

For this question, we clustered the answers we received in more overarching groups, as following:

1. **Voyages & Experiences**: 8 replies (44,4%).
   All the replies here refer to the generic desire to travel and see new places, like Australia.

2. **Career development & Professional growth**: 4 replies (22,2%).
   Generally, participants say they want to be successful and satisfied with their job. One says they would like to work as a musician and another one is writing a book.
3. **Lifestyles & Specific desires**: 4 replies (22,2%).
   Here, the participants mention the desire to live a comfortable life. A very specific dream mentioned is buying a house.
4. **Personal growth & Happiness**: 4 replies (22,5%).
   Most of the replies here mention making their dreams come true and achieving their goals. Others say they want to learn, grow up, and find their way and place.
5. **Relationships & Family**: 3 replies (16,7%).
   Here, all the participants mention they want to build a family.
6. **Wealth & Economic safety**: 2 replies (11,1%).
   Being financially independent is the dream mentioned in this category.

The data reveal a strong desire for exploration and discovery, with travel being the most common dream among participants. This indicates curiosity about the world and a desire to have meaningful experiences outside of their usual context. Professional and personal growth also emerge as central aspirations, with a wish to find satisfaction in work and fulfil personal ambitions. The dream of a comfortable and secure life is paired with the desire to build relationships and a family, reflecting a need for both material and emotional stability. The recurring theme of financial independence suggests the importance of financial security in achieving personal fulfilment.

Question 6: What are your fears?

For this question, we followed the same procedures as the previous one:

1. **Future & Uncertainties**: 8 replies (44,4%).
   Our participants are worried of instability and of not finding opportunities.
2. **Health & Personal wellbeing**: 4 replies (22,5%).
   Some participants are scared by their own death or the one of a relative, while others by diseases.
3. **Relationships & Social expectations**: 4 replies (22,5%).
   Most of the respondents mention they are afraid of disappointing others or to be alone.
4. **Work & study**: 3 replies (16,7%).
   Some of the participants here are worried about not succeeding in their studies, while others are afraid to fail at their job or find a job that does not satisfy them.

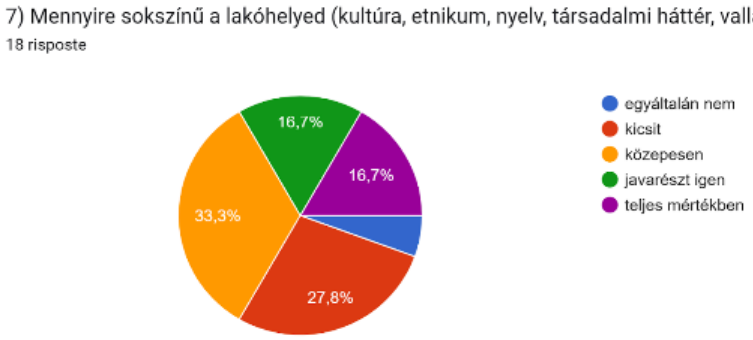
5. **Society & Global issues**: 3 replies (16,7%).
   Here, climate, economic, and political crises are mentioned.

The fears expressed by participants reflect a widespread insecurity about the future, with concerns about instability and a lack of opportunities being the predominant worry. The personal sphere also plays a significant role, with anxieties related to one's own health and the health of loved ones, as well as fears of loneliness and failing to meet others' expectations.

The work and academic fields emerge as another source of uncertainty, with fears of failing in studies or not finding a fulfilling job. Lastly, concerns about global crises, though fewer in number, highlight an awareness of socio-economic and environmental issues impacting the contemporary world.

Section 2: Inclusion and belonging

Question 7: How diverse do you consider the city you live in (in terms of: culture, ethnicity, language, social background, religion)?



6 participants (33,3%) consider their city moderately diverse, while 3 (16,7%) consider it to be definitely and very definitely diverse, respectively. 5 respondents (27,8%) feel their city is slightly diverse and only 1 (5,5%) to be not diverse at all.

Question 8: Do you think that the institutions (municipalities, schools, national government, European institutions) do enough to guarantee equity and respect for diversity?

6 participants (33,3%) say that the institutions are slightly able to guarantee equity and respect for diversity, while 4 (22,2%) that they are not able at all to do that. 3 respondents (16,7%) believe the institutions are moderately able to guarantee equity and diversity and 5 (27,8%) affirm instead they are definitely able to do so. Interestingly, nobody states the institutions are very definitely able to support equity and diversity.
The replies show a general negative view on the role the institutions have when it comes to matters such as equity and diversity, with more than a half of negative answers.

Question 9: Do you have any relevant relationship with one or more institutions?

12 respondents (66,6%) reply with a negative answer, while 6 (33,3%) with a positive one. This means that institutions are not considered able to engage young people with meaningful activities.

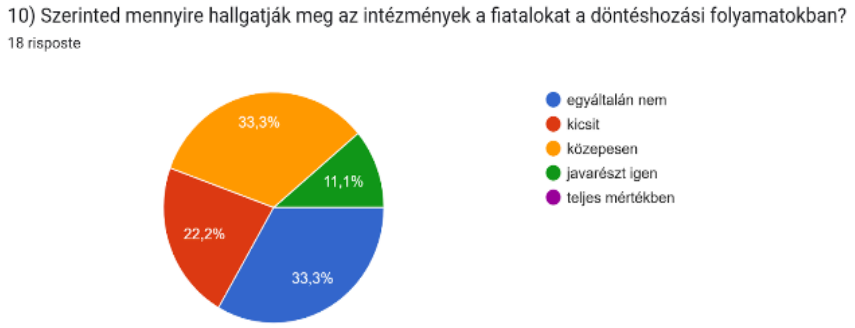
Question 9b: If yes, can you briefly describe it?

Responses here report on relationships and interaction with several NGOs, schools, and KRE. Some participants are part of student associations.

The data reveals a widespread disillusionment with institutions, particularly concerning the diversity and heterogeneity of their own city. The majority of young people interviewed have limited or no interaction with public institutions, and those who do engage primarily do so through schools or social organisations.

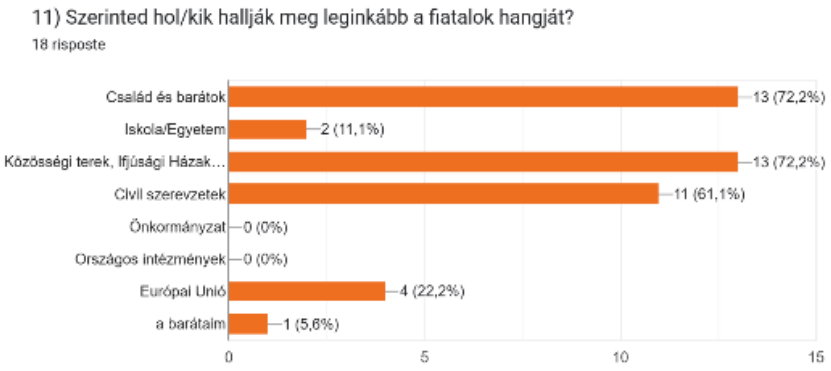
This situation highlights a significant gap between young people and institutions, suggesting a lack of institutional spaces or initiatives dedicated to them. Furthermore, the absence of references to youth centers or neighbourhood hubs strengthens the idea that opportunities for socializing and participation are limited, with many youth activities being self-organised rather than supported by public entities.

Question 10: How much do you think young people's voices are heard by institutions in decision-making processes?



Here, the majority of answers are negative, with 6 participants (33,3%) stating young people's voices are not listened to at all, and 4 (22,2%) saying they are slightly heard. 6 participants (33,3%) have a moderate opinion, while only 2 (11,1%) think their voices are definitely heard. No respondent replies "very definitely".
The answers to this question demonstrate an overall negative opinion, a widespread lack of trust in the institutions and a negative perception about youth's own agency.

Question 11: Who do you feel hears the youngsters' voice the most?



13 respondents (72,2%) say they feel they are heard by families and friends, and by social centers, cultural centers, and youth centers, respectively. 11 participants (61,1%) reply with NGOs and grassroots associations. 4 respondents (22,2%) believe the European Union is able to listen to young people's voices, while 2 (11,1%) mention schools and universities. Nobody replies with municipalities and national institutions.

The replies here show that our sample trusts social and cultural centers, and NGOs as much as they trust their closer relationships such as relatives and friends. Furthermore, data show a complete lack of trust in national and local institutions opposed to a higher trust in the EU. Once again, the responses once again highlight a gap between young people and public institutions. Youth centers emerge as one of the primary places for listening, alongside family and friends. Compared to previous responses, this suggests that youth centers are indeed present as gathering spaces, but they receive little support from local administrations and the state.

Question 12: What does participation mean to you?

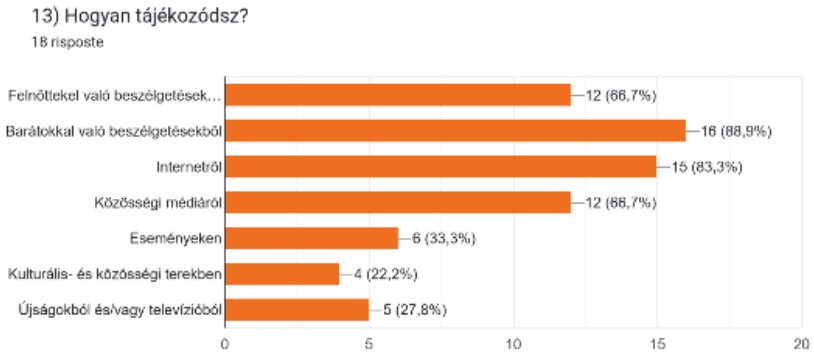
Based on the answer provided by the participants, we created different clusters of definition, which we summarize in the following list (ordered by number of answer):

1. **Be committed**: 9 replies (50%).
2. **Express yourself**: 4 replies (22,2%).
3. **Be present**: 4 replies (1,9%).
4. **Be involved** (more or less active): 2 replies (11,1%).
5. **Provide help**: 1 reply (5,5%).
6. **Collaborate**: 1 reply (5,5%).
7. **Create**: 1 reply (5,5%).

The responses show that participation is primarily seen as a personal commitment, something that goes beyond mere presence or passive support. Many seem to associate participation with an active process, where the opportunity to express oneself plays an important role. This implies that young people do not view participation as an action limited to a social context, but as a way to engage and have an impact. More marginally, some mention collaboration or creation as key aspects, suggesting that for them, the true meaning of participation is realized in collective work and the achievement of common goals. Overall, these responses reflect an action-oriented approach and individual responsibility, but also a willingness to collaborate when opportunities arise to do something meaningful together.

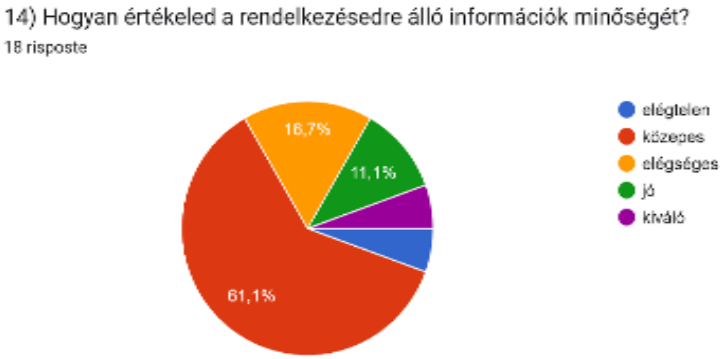
Section 3: Getting informed and participating

Question 13: In what way do you get informed?



Engaging in conversations with peers (16 replies, 88,9%) is the main medium mentioned to get informed, followed by the web (15 replies, 83,2%), social media (12 replies, 66,6%), and having conversation with adults (12 replies, 66,6%). 6 participants (33,3%) reply they get informed by participating in events, while 5 (27,8%) through journals and TV, and 4 (22,2%) attend social and cultural spaces.

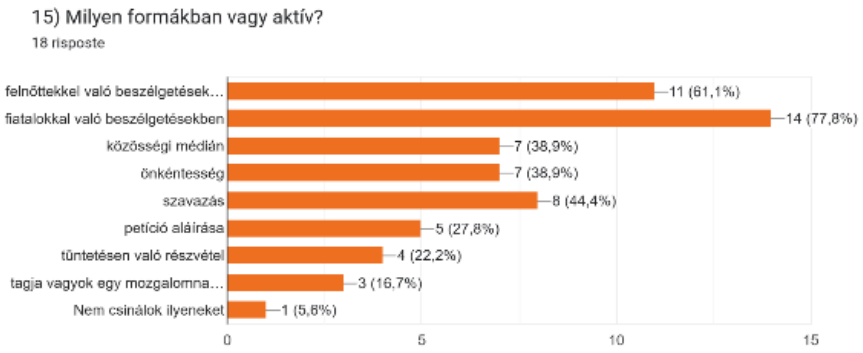
Question 14: How do you rate the information you have access to?



12 participants have a negative opinion, with 1 (5,5%) considering it to be insufficient and 11 (61,1%) mediocre. On the other hand, 2 (11,1%) participants believe the information they access to are good in terms of quality, while 1 (5,5%) considers it to be excellent. Lastly, 3 respondents (16,7%) say it is sufficient.

This means that almost two third of the participants don't trust the sources they rely on to get informed, while only around 15% of them have a good or moderate opinion on their validity. This data is significant because it not only pertains to online news, which can be easily falsified and filtered, but also highlights a widespread distrust in official sources. The fact that most young people primarily gather information through conversations with peers and adults points to a perception of the unreliability of available information, revealing an awareness of the lack of adequate and truthful news.

Question 15: In what ways do you participate or activate?

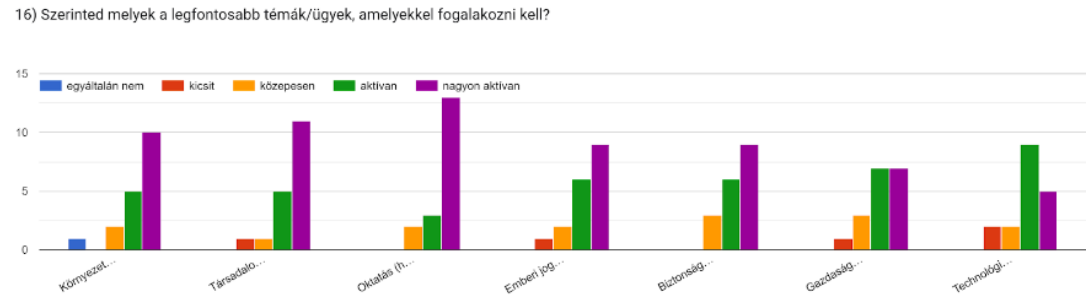


Conversations with friends and peers (10 replies, 55,5%) are reported to be the main ways to participate or be active, followed by conversations with adults (9 replies, 50%), and voting (7 replies, 38,9%). Social media and volunteering receive 5 answers each (27,8%), while signing petitions, participating in demonstrations and events, and being involved in socio-political movements, groups, or associations are mentioned 3 times each (16,7%).

Question 15b: If you actively participate in movements, associations, groups or political parties, what kind are they and in what areas do they operate?

The participants here mentioned volunteering associations (rights organisations and alumni associations).

Question 16: How relevant is it to address the following themes (environment - society - education - security - economy - technology)?



We order the themes considering the overall positive reply (definitely important and very important), which result in the following list:

1. **Education**: 16 positive answers (13 very definitely important and 3 definitely important). This theme also receives 2 moderate replies.
2. **Society**: 16 positive answers (11 very definitely important and 5 definitely important). This theme receives 1 negative answer (slightly important), and 1 moderately important answer.
3. **Security**: 15 positive answers (9 very definitely important and 6 definitely important). 3 participants believe it is a moderately relevant theme to address.
4. **Environment**: 15 positive answers (10 very definitely important and 5 definitely important). This theme receives 1 negative answer (not important at all), and 2 moderately important answers.
5. **Human rights**: 15 positive answers (9 very definitely important and 6 definitely important). Human rights receives 1 negative answer (slightly important), and 2 moderately important answers.
6. **Economy**: 14 positive answers (7 very definitely important and 7 definitely important). This theme receives 1 negative answer (slightly important), and 3 moderately important answers.
7. **Technology**: 14 positive answers (5 very definitely important and 9 definitely important). This theme receives 2 negative answers (slightly important), and 2 moderately important answers.

The data suggests a strong interest among participants in issues related to improving society, with particular emphasis on education, society, and human rights. The prevalence of “very important” responses compared to other options reflects a collective awareness of the need to address topics related to social equity and quality of life.

Education emerges as a central priority, followed by the importance of addressing issues related to security and human rights, confirming that these topics are considered fundamental for both individual and collective well-being.
While the environment and economy also receive positive responses, there are some more moderate responses regarding these themes, suggesting that, although recognised as relevant, they may not be perceived with the same urgency as other social issues. Finally, the topic of technology receives fairly balanced interest, but with a certain focus on the challenges and implications it brings. Overall, the data reflects a concern for the future and a strong desire to contribute to positive change, particularly in the social and educational sectors.

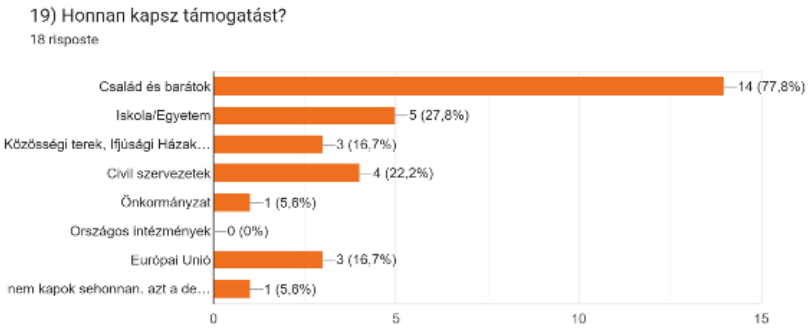
Question 17: Do you think that your actions can contribute to change?

8 participants believe they can actively contribute to change, with 1 (5,5%) saying they very definitely think they have this possibility and 7 (38,9%) they can definitely contribute to change. On the other hand, 6 (33,3%) participants think they can slightly contribute to change, and 1 (5,5%) they are not able at all to be actors in processes of change. Lastly, 3 (16,7%) participants have a moderate opinion. This data shows a balance between positive and negative opinions.

Question 18: How supported do you feel in the activities you do?

The majority of participants have a negative opinion, with 7 (38,9%) saying they feel slightly supported in their activities, and 1 (5,5%) they don't feel supported at all. 5 (27,8%) participants state they feel moderately supported in their activities, while 3 (16,7%) think they are definitely supported and 2 (11,1%) very definitely.
Here, there is a slightly predominance of negative responses over moderate and positive ones. What can be read is an overall negative perception of young people in terms of trust they have toward others' support (people and institutions).

Question 19: Who do you get support from?



Our participants report to be mostly supported by friends and families (14 replies, 77,8%). 5 of them (27,8%) say they receive support from schools and universities, followed by NGOs and grassroots associations (4 replies, 22,2%). 3 participants (16,7%) answer youth, cultural, and social centers, and the European Union, respectively. Only 1 participant (5,5%) replies with municipality, while nobody mentions national institutions.
Reading this question together with the previous one, we can note that most of the participants receive partial support from their families and friends, and from schools, universities, and grassroots associations or centers.

Section 4: Tell us more about it

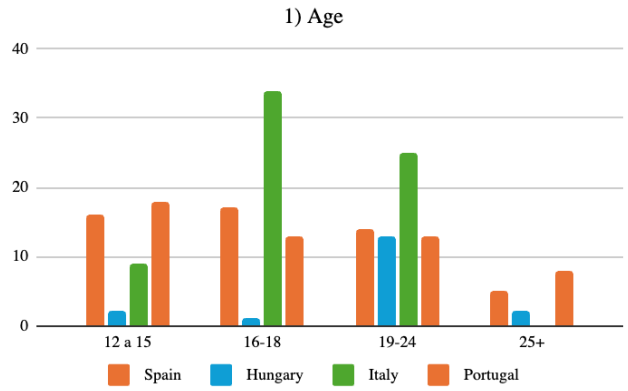
Question 20: Are you interested in other themes?
Further topics of interest for young people that emerged from our survey are the following:

1. **Rights & Justice**.
2. **Diversity & Inclusion**.
3. **Culture & Arts**.
4. **Society & Economy**.
5. **Politics**.
6. **(Mental) health**.
7. **Volunteering**.
8. **Job market & Entrepreneurship**.
9. **Pop culture**.
10. **Sports**.

COMPARISON OF RESULTS

Section 1: Demographic and contextual information

Question 1: Age



Overall, the most represented age groups are 16-18 (65 replies, 34,2%) and 19-24 (65 replies, 34,2%), followed by 12-15 (45 replies, 23,7%) and 25+ (15 replies, 7,9%).
Spanish participants are the youngest with 63,5% of them being aged between 12 and 18 years, followed by Italians (63,2%), Portugueses (59,6%), and Hungarians (16,7%).
Hungarians are the oldest with 83,3% of them older than 19, followed by Portugal (40,4%), Italy (36,8%), and Spain (36,5%).

Question 2: Gender

Overall, our sample is mostly female (107 out of 190 respondents, 57,4%) with 41,6% (79) of male. Lastly, 4 respondents (2,1%) are non-binary. Interestingly, only Italian respondents are mostly young men.

Question 3: What is your main occupation?

Italy has the highest percentage of students (83.8%), followed by Spain (69.1%), Hungary (61.1%), and Portugal (55.8%), while Portugal has the highest percentage of working respondents (38.8%), followed by Hungary (27.8%), Spain (17.2%), and Italy (8.8%).
Hungary has the highest percentage of respondents who are unemployed or not studying (16.7%), followed by Spain (9.5%), Portugal (7.7%), and Italy (7.4%).
Lastly, doing sports has been mentioned only in Portugal (7.7%) and Spain (1.8%).

Question 4: What do you do in your free time?

Social relationships are the highest in Spain (36.4%) and Italy (35.3%) with many seeing friends. Portugal has a slightly lower proportion (23.1%), with a notable number also spending time with family (11.4%).
Hungary has the highest percentage (55.5%) practicing sports, with a focus on dance.
Italy, Spain, and Portugal all have around 33-36% practicing sports, with Italy and Portugal having team sports (basketball, football) and Spain favouring dance.
Spain stands out with the highest proportion of respondents engaging in reading (28.7%) and drawing/painting (13.5%). Portugal has a significant proportion (15.2%) engaging in music-related activities. Italy and Hungary have respondents interested in music and reading (14.7% and 27.8%, respectively).
Portugal has a notable group (13.5%) playing videogames and 11.4% watching movies/TV.
Spain has a smaller percentage engaging in digital media (11.4% for movies/TV, 3.7% for videogames/social media). Hungary has the least interest in media activities, with only 5.5% watching TV and 11.1% using social media or playing games.
Spain (13.5%) and Italy (5.9%) report the most time spent outdoors, with Spain also mentioning a preference for walking.
Italy (8.7%) and Portugal (3.7%) have noticeable participation in volunteer work and activism, but this is less emphasized in Spain and Hungary.
Lastly, Italy and Portugal mention resting or doing nothing more than Spain and Hungary.
Across the countries, social relationships and sports are prominent, especially team sports like basketball and football in Italy and Portugal. Cultural activities like reading, music, and painting are also widely enjoyed, especially in Spain and Italy. Nature is important in Spain, while media consumption plays a significant role in Portugal, but is less so in Hungary. Finally, activism and volunteering appear mostly in Italy and Portugal.

Question 5: What are your dreams?

The trends revealed through the dreams and aspirations of young people across Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary paint a vivid picture of a generation facing both unprecedented challenges and boundless opportunities. At the heart of their dreams is a deep desire for personal fulfilment, both in terms of career success and personal growth. This focus on achievement underscores a collective drive to carve out meaningful lives in a rapidly changing world, where the conventional pathways to success are often unclear or inaccessible. Young people are not simply looking to find a job; they are seeking a profession that aligns with their passions, values, and the desire to contribute to something greater than themselves.

This drive for professional success reflects broader shifts in societal expectations, where fulfilment is increasingly seen as a key component of a successful life, alongside financial stability.

Yet, as much as career development and personal growth dominate their dreams, young people's relationships and family remain central to their sense of well-being. The deep emotional connections they seek with family, friends, and loved ones are crucial for providing a support system amidst the challenges of an uncertain future. While romantic or familial aspirations might not always be the top priority, the need for meaningful, understanding relationships remains a foundation upon which many other dreams are built. In fact, these relationships are often perceived as the anchor that holds young people steady in the face of personal and societal turbulence.

In addition to the search for emotional fulfilment, there is a clear desire for experiences and exploration – particularly through travel. For many, the dream of voyaging reflects not just a desire to break free from routine but also to expand their understanding of the world, gain new perspectives, and challenge their preconceived notions. In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, travel is viewed as a means of growth, discovery, and connection. It allows young people to transcend the limitations of their local environments, whether those limitations are cultural, economic, or societal, and to experience the richness of human diversity.

However, even amidst these more idealistic dreams, there is an underlying recognition of the need for security and stability. Young people's aspirations are not solely based on abstract ideals of happiness and success; they are also grounded in practical concerns for economic safety and financial independence. The desire for financial stability, homeownership, and the ability to provide for oneself and one's loved ones is a clear response to the economic uncertainty many faces. The landscape of work has dramatically shifted in recent years, and for many, the traditional markers of success – such as homeownership and long-term job security – feel increasingly out of reach. In this context, wealth is not just a material goal; it is a means to ensure peace of mind and the freedom to pursue other dreams.

The intersection of these dreams – career success, personal growth, emotional fulfilment, exploration, and financial stability – reveals a generation at a crossroads. They are simultaneously seeking to challenge and redefine traditional norms while trying to navigate a world that feels increasingly unstable and precarious. These young people are not simply passive recipients of societal trends; they are active agents shaping their futures, guided by a desire for meaningful lives that balance personal aspirations with broader societal values. They are not only concerned with individual success but with contributing to a more connected, supportive, and inclusive world.

Ultimately, these dreams reflect a generation's call for empowerment. They need opportunities, support systems, and societal structures that enable them to thrive. They seek not only the freedom to pursue their passions but also the security to live out these dreams without the burden of uncertainty. As such, the challenges they face in realizing these dreams cannot be ignored. Whether through educational opportunities, policies that address economic instability, or the creation of spaces for emotional and personal growth, there is a clear need for systemic changes that align with the aspirations of young people.
In conclusion, these dreams are not just individual goals but collective desires that reflect a broader need for change in the structures that shape their lives. To truly support this generation, society must listen to these dreams and provide the resources, opportunities, and environments that allow them to turn their aspirations into reality.

Question 6: What are your fears?

Across the four countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary), several common patterns and trends emerge from the responses to the question about fears. These trends not only reflect the shared anxieties of young people but also provide insight into the overarching concerns shaping their outlook on the future.
Uncertainty about the future is a pervasive concern across all countries, highlighting a widespread feeling of insecurity among young people. Many participants expressed fear of not being able to achieve their dreams or find a clear path in life. This fear is linked to broader societal instability, including economic uncertainty, job insecurity, and an inability to foresee a stable and fulfilling future. The instability of current social, economic, and political systems seems to weigh heavily on young people, contributing to a sense of powerlessness and anxiety about their prospects.
Across all countries, work and study are the most prominent sources of fear, reflecting a high level of pressure on young people to succeed academically and professionally. Many expressed concerns about the difficulty of achieving academic success, finding a satisfying job, and securing financial independence. The fear of unemployment and dissatisfaction with career choices also feature heavily in the responses. This suggests that, for many young people, academic and career success is seen as a gateway to personal fulfilment and economic security. These fears are particularly pronounced in countries with younger participants, such as Spain and Portugal, where the transition from education to the workforce is a major concern.
Relationships and social expectations emerge as significant sources of concern. Young people across all countries fear losing important relationships with family and friends, experiencing social exclusion, and failing to meet societal expectations.

The desire for social recognition and emotional support from peers and family members is evident, with many respondents voicing concerns about not being understood or accepted. This trend points to the critical role of social connections in the emotional well-being of young people, as well as the pressures they face to conform to social norms and expectations.

A notable trend across all countries is the awareness of broader societal and global issues, including economic crises, climate change, political instability, and violence. Many participants expressed concern about global challenges, indicating a strong sense of responsibility and sensitivity to the state of the world. This trend suggests that young people are not only worried about their own futures but are also highly attuned to the larger systemic problems that shape their environment. Concerns about social inequality, discrimination, and government policies further highlight a growing awareness of the structural issues that affect their lives and the world around them.

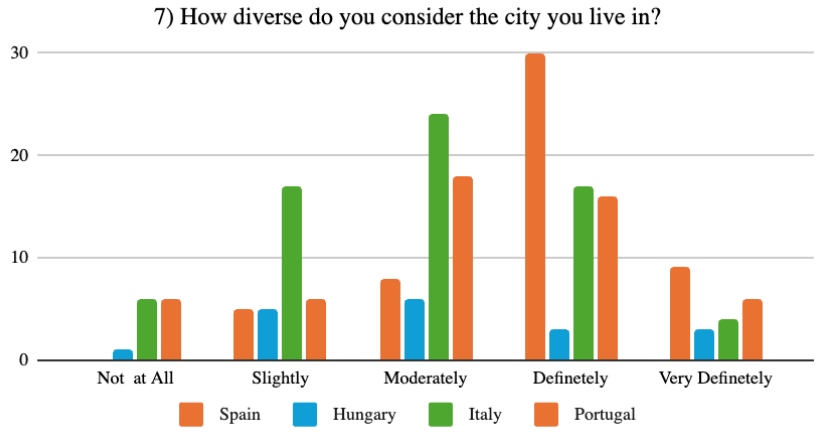
While less frequent, health and personal well-being also emerged as important concerns, particularly mental health. A significant number of young people expressed fear about death, illness, and the mental health of themselves or their loved ones. This reflects the increasing awareness of psychological health as a crucial aspect of overall well-being. The rising prevalence of mental health issues among young people, particularly in relation to academic pressures and social expectations, is becoming a major concern in all four countries.

The overall trend that unites these fears is a sense of generational insecurity. Young people are facing a complex and unstable world, with limited opportunities and numerous challenges that make their future seem uncertain. The combination of economic instability, academic pressures, and societal expectations creates a perfect storm of anxiety, making it harder for young people to envision a future that is both fulfilling and secure. At the same time, awareness of global issues and the inability to affect systemic change contribute to feelings of powerlessness and helplessness.

The fears expressed by young people across these four countries highlight a generation facing significant challenges and anxieties. These concerns are deeply intertwined with uncertainty about the future, pressure to succeed academically and professionally, the desire for social recognition and emotional support, and an increasing awareness of global issues. The mental health of young people is also an emerging concern, underscoring the need for greater support systems to help them navigate these complex and stressful realities. Addressing these fears requires creating opportunities for stability, empowerment, and mental well-being, as well as fostering a greater sense of agency in shaping their future.

Section 2: Inclusion and belonging

Question 7: How diverse do you consider the city you live in (in terms of: culture, ethnicity, language, social background, religion)?



The perceptions of diversity in participants' cities vary significantly across the four countries, reflecting different social and cultural contexts.

Diversity perception in Spain stands out, with more than half of the respondents perceiving their city as definitely diverse and a considerable portion viewing it as very definitely diverse. This contrasts with the other countries, where perceptions of diversity tend to be more evenly distributed across different categories.

Moderate diversity emerges as the most common perception in Italy and Hungary, with these countries exhibiting a more varied distribution of responses than Spain or Portugal. In Italy, this perception likely reflects differing experiences based on neighbourhoods, while in Hungary, the generally lower perception of diversity is notable.

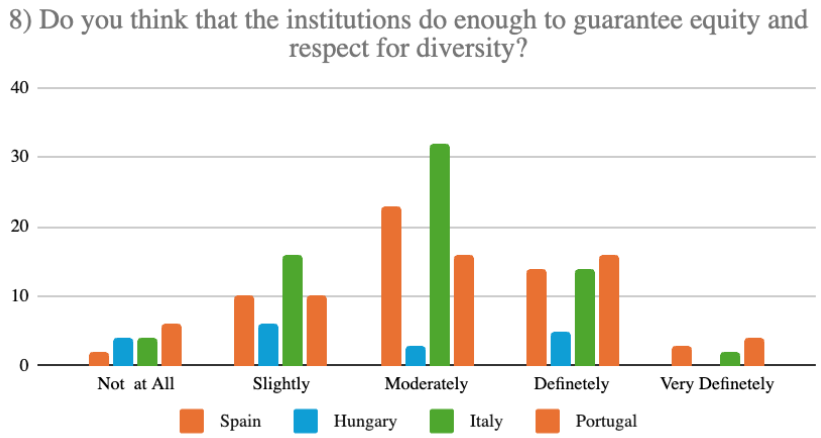
Portugal shows a relatively balanced view, with a significant portion (30.8%) perceiving their city as definitely diverse and an even larger portion (34.6%) seeing it as moderately diverse. The absence of a strong consensus around very diverse or not diverse at all points to a more middle-ground view of diversity in Portugal compared to the extremes seen in Spain or Hungary.

Hungary shows the least perception of diversity, with significant numbers of respondents feeling their city is slightly diverse or even not diverse at all. This suggests a less multicultural atmosphere, especially when compared to the more positive responses from Spain and Portugal.

The data suggests significant regional variation in how young people perceive the diversity of their cities. Spain stands out with overwhelmingly positive perceptions, while Italy, Portugal, and Hungary display a wider range of responses, with a noticeable percentage perceiving their cities as less diverse.

These variations likely reflect not only the local demographics but also the socio-political and cultural environments that shape perceptions of diversity.

Question 8: Do you think that the institutions (municipalities, schools, national government, European institutions) do enough to guarantee equity and respect for diversity?



Spain stands out with a more positive view of institutional support for equity and diversity, particularly in comparison to the other countries. Despite the positive feedback, the role of grassroots initiatives remains essential in fostering diversity, indicating that institutions have room to strengthen their efforts.

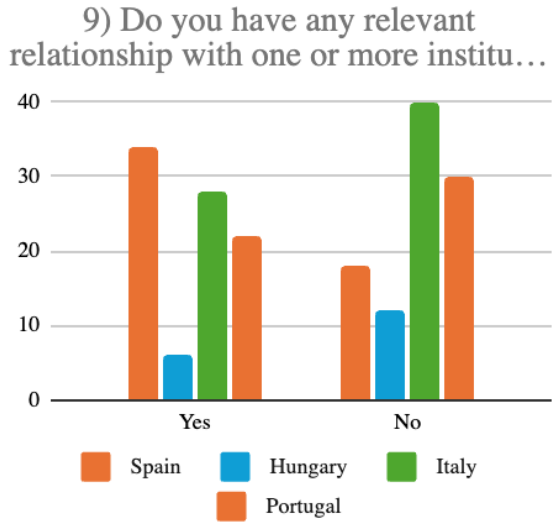
Italy shows a critical attitude, with many respondents perceiving institutional efforts as partial or inadequate. The underlying tone of dissatisfaction suggests that there is a need for more effective and comprehensive policies.

Portugal presents a mixed view, where positive and negative perceptions of institutional effectiveness are balanced. This reflects a country where institutions are recognised for their efforts, but there is a need for more consistent action to ensure equity and diversity across all sectors of society.

Hungary exhibits the most negative view of institutional support, with more than half of respondents perceiving institutions as either slightly able or not able at all to guarantee equity and diversity. This signals significant institutional shortcomings and a high level of scepticism regarding the government's role in supporting diversity and inclusion.
The data reflects diverse perspectives on institutional support for equity and diversity across the four countries, with Spain showing the most optimism and Hungary the most scepticism. While there is a general recognition of the role institutions play, many young people believe that their efforts are insufficient, with significant gaps in the implementation of effective, inclusive policies.

The importance of grassroots initiatives in fostering diversity underscores the need for institutions to not only support these efforts but also take more decisive action to ensure that equity and diversity are guaranteed for all citizens.

Question 9: Do you have any relevant relationship with one or more institutions?



Overall, the data indicates that there is a general lack of trust and confidence in institutions' ability to engage young people with meaningful activities. The majority of participants in Italy, Portugal, and Hungary responded negatively, suggesting that institutions are not fulfilling this role effectively. This trend points to a potential disconnect between the efforts made by institutions and the needs or expectations of the youth population.

In contrast, Spain shows a more favourable view, with a majority of respondents indicating that institutions are successful in engaging young people with meaningful activities. This suggests that in Spain, there might be more effective initiatives or better engagement strategies in place, allowing for more positive outcomes. However, even in Spain, a significant proportion of participants responded negatively, pointing to room for improvement in inclusivity and engagement. The results suggest that institutions may need to reassess their approaches and work to create more relevant, accessible, and impactful opportunities for young people.

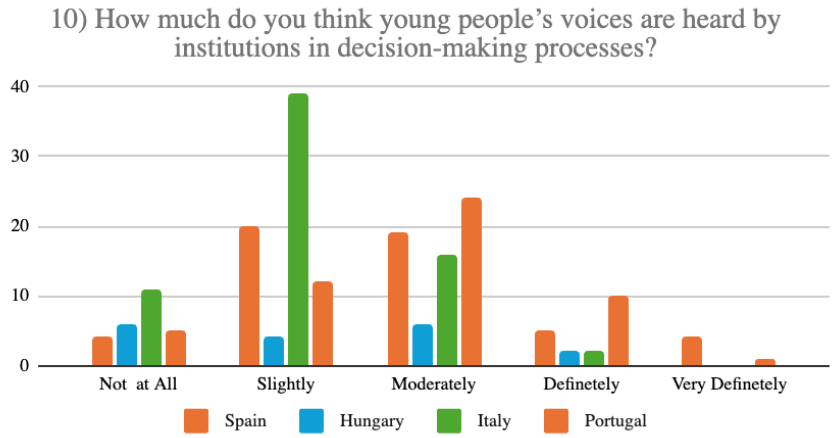
Question 9b: If yes, can you briefly describe it?

Overall, the data suggests a recurring theme of limited engagement and interaction between young people and institutions across the four countries.

While there are some positive examples of participation in local initiatives, youth organisations, and educational settings, the general trend points to a sense of detachment or indifference toward institutions.
In Italy, most young people report interacting primarily with schools and universities, with only a small minority engaging in other institutional activities, such as collaborations with the municipality or participation in local projects.
This points to a distance between young people and institutions, with the educational sector serving as the primary point of contact but often perceived as transactional rather than a space for meaningful engagement. The overall lack of significant ties to institutions suggests a need for more accessible and inclusive opportunities for youth participation.
Spain stands out with a higher level of engagement, with respondents reporting interactions with city councils, NGOs, sports associations, and various volunteering or organisational activities. Despite this, the data still highlights that engagement remains limited, with only a fraction of the youth population actively involved in these initiatives. This points to the importance of making opportunities more widespread and ensuring that institutions cater to the diverse needs of young people.
Portugal's responses show similar trends, with a focus on local-level engagement through city councils, associations, and youth organisations. Like Italy, there seems to be a general sense of distance from higher-level institutions, suggesting a gap in communication and accessibility.
Hungary presents a more disillusioned view, with many young people reporting minimal or no interaction with public institutions. Engagement is primarily through schools and social organisations, further underscoring the perception that institutional opportunities for young people are limited or largely inaccessible. This lack of institutional support and connection could be contributing to the growing sense of disillusionment among youth in Hungary.

In conclusion, the data across these four countries indicate a widespread disconnect between young people and institutions. While there are notable examples of positive engagement, these remain the exception rather than the rule. Institutions must work to bridge this gap by creating more inclusive, visible, and accessible opportunities for young people to participate, particularly at higher levels, where interaction is more limited. Strengthening local networks, improving communication, and ensuring that youth-centered initiatives are well-supported could help foster a stronger sense of connection between young people and the institutions that serve them.

Question 10: How much do you think young people's voices are heard by institutions in decision-making processes?



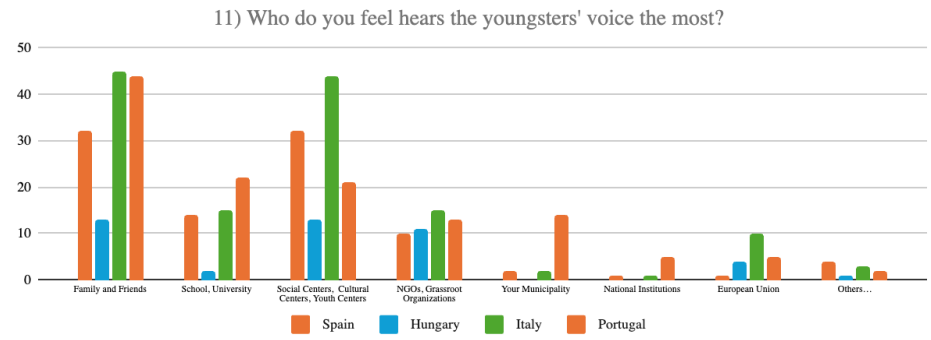
Across the four countries, there is a clear pattern of disconnection between young people and institutions when it comes to youth representation. A significant number of respondents across all countries feel excluded from decision-making processes, which fosters a sense of mistrust and frustration. While there are some respondents who report a positive or moderate level of responsiveness from institutions, these voices are in the minority, and the overall perception is one of disengagement and indifference.

In Italy, young people feel especially abandoned by institutions, with many expressing that their voices are barely heard or completely ignored. This lack of responsiveness fuels a deep sense of disillusionment and calls into question the effectiveness of current efforts to engage youth meaningfully. Similarly, in Hungary, the overwhelming sentiment is one of exclusion, with many respondents feeling that their voices hold little weight in institutional processes.

In Spain and Portugal, while the general sentiment is somewhat more positive, a significant portion of young people still feels disconnected from decision-making processes. In Spain, the gap between young people and institutions is particularly evident in the sense that, despite some levels of engagement, youth still feel that they are largely excluded from meaningful decisions. Portugal shows a slightly more balanced distribution of responses, but the majority still perceives a degree of disengagement.
The common thread throughout these responses is a perceived lack of agency and opportunity for young people to influence the decisions that affect their lives. This widespread feeling of exclusion underscores the need for institutions to reassess their approach to youth engagement. To build trust and foster greater participation, institutions must create more accessible and inclusive channels for youth to express their views and have a tangible impact on decision-making.

Whether through strengthening local youth representation or expanding participation at regional and national levels, the emphasis must be on providing genuine opportunities for young people to shape the policies and initiatives that will define their future.

Question 11: Who do you feel hears the youngsters' voice the most?



Across the four countries, there is a common theme of young people feeling heard by informal networks or local, grassroots institutions but experiencing a significant disconnect from national and local governmental structures.
In Italy, youth report feeling most listened to by families, friends, and local institutions like social centers, cultural centers, and youth centers. These spaces allow young people to feel a sense of inclusion and agency, as they can engage with people they trust and exercise some level of influence. Interestingly, the European Union emerges as a more trusted institution than national or local bodies, suggesting that young people view the EU as more responsive to their needs.

In Spain, while there is some level of engagement with institutions, many young people feel excluded from decision-making processes. The response data points to a general lack of trust in institutions, despite some degree of interaction. The European Youth Forum is a positive example of youth representation at the EU level, highlighting the potential for increasing youth involvement in broader, more influential initiatives.
In Portugal, the data shows that youth perceptions are fairly moderate, with a significant portion still feeling disconnected or slightly heard by institutions. The majority seems to view institutions as distant, reinforcing the notion that only a small portion of young people are actively engaged in meaningful ways.
Hungary presents an even starker picture, with a notable trust in family, friends, and social organisations such as youth centers and NGOs, but a complete lack of faith in national and local institutions. This reinforces the idea that young people see local and grassroots organisations as vital for providing spaces where their voices can be heard, but without support from public institutions.

Across all countries, proximity and trust emerge as key factors in determining whether young people feel heard. While family and local community structures play an essential role in providing a sense of inclusion, there is a clear gap in institutional trust, particularly at the national and local government levels. The European Union, however, emerges as a more trusted entity, suggesting that there may be opportunities to increase youth engagement at higher levels through mechanisms like the European Youth Forum. For more meaningful change, though, institutions must work to bridge this gap and provide young people with platforms that allow them to shape decisions in ways that feel impactful and genuine.

Question 12: What does participation mean to you?

In all four countries, young people tend to view participation as an active, individual, and meaningful process, with a focus on personal commitment, self-expression, and tangible contributions to society. However, the specifics of how participation is conceptualized and prioritized vary.
In Italy, the most common definitions of participation emphasize varying degrees of engagement, from passive presence to active involvement. The concept of participation is closely tied to social identity, inclusion, and a sense of responsibility. Many respondents suggest that participation is not merely about action, but about being aware of one's role in a collective effort. The answers reflect a desire for participation to be both active and socially embedded, though some responses point to a need for greater agency and a sense of importance.

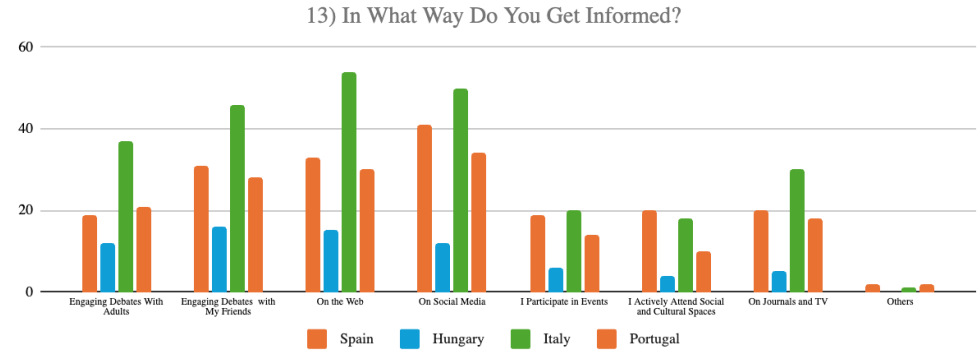
In Spain, the idea of participation is more strongly tied to personal initiative and proactive engagement. Youth see participation as a means of expressing themselves, contributing help, and being committed to causes. These definitions point to an active form of participation where young people want to take concrete steps in shaping their environment and making a visible impact. The less emphasized definitions, such as merely belonging to a group, suggest that young people in Spain value personal agency and a clear, actionable role in their communities.
In Portugal, responses also highlight active forms of participation, with an emphasis on self-expression, commitment, and helping others. Similar to Spain, youth in Portugal appear to prioritize direct action, with a clear preference for making tangible contributions to social change. The inclusion of more passive forms of participation, such as merely belonging or mingling, suggests that a small portion of respondents see participation in a more community-oriented, less action-driven way.

Hungary's responses emphasize personal commitment, with many participants viewing participation as a direct way to express oneself and engage actively with society. While a few mentioned passive forms like being present or collaborating, the majority of responses pointed to the need for individual responsibility and engagement in meaningful actions.

The marginal responses about collaboration and creation suggest that youth in Hungary see participation as a shared effort, where working together towards common goals is also a crucial aspect.
Across all four countries, there is a strong preference for active participation, where youth want to be involved, express themselves, and contribute directly to change. The responses show that young people do not see participation as a passive or superficial act, but rather as a way to assert their voice and make a real difference. The desire for personal initiative and tangible impact underscores a broader need for more spaces where young people can exercise their agency and be recognised for their contributions.

Section 3: Getting informed and participating

Question 13: In what way do you get informed?



Across the four countries, the ways in which young people access information reflect the prevalence of digital platforms and the importance of social connections, though the specifics vary by country.

In Italy, the most common sources of information are internet and social media, with a significant portion of respondents relying on peer information sharing and conversations with adults. This highlights the centrality of both online platforms and informal, personal networks in shaping how youth engage with the world. Traditional media like journals and TV also play a role, but to a lesser extent, and the attendance at cultural and social centers, while notable, is still less commonly mentioned.

The minimal mention of books as a source of information further suggests the dominant influence of digital media over traditional forms of learning.

In Spain, social media and the internet also dominate as primary sources of information, similar to Italy. Peer sharing continues to be an important method, and the presence of cultural and social centers, as well as traditional media, remains relevant but not as central.

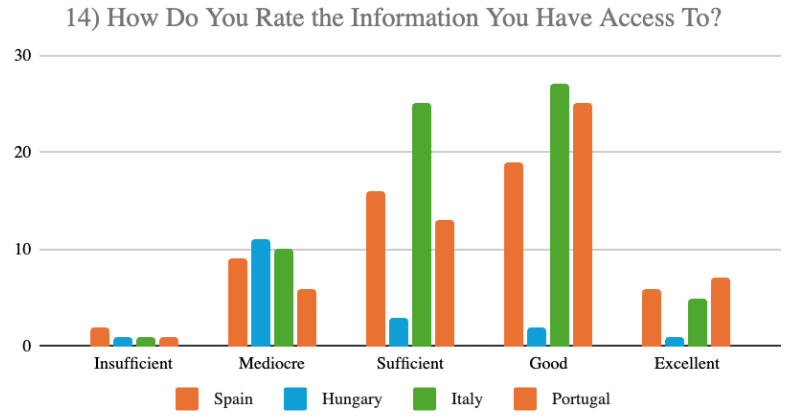
Conversations with adults and participation in events round out the ways youth access information, pointing to the ongoing importance of real-world interactions alongside digital sources.

In Portugal, digital media once again lead the way, with social media and the internet being the top sources of information. Peer sharing and adult conversations follow, showing a blend of online and offline strategies for staying informed. Interestingly, participation in events is more frequently mentioned in Portugal than in Spain or Italy, suggesting that youth in Portugal may still engage more with community-based activities for information. Cultural and social center attendance also emerges as a notable source, though it remains less significant compared to digital media.

In Hungary, peer conversations are by far the most frequently mentioned source of information, with the internet and social media also playing a key role. Traditional media and attending events are less frequently mentioned, and there is less emphasis on attending social and cultural centers. This suggests that Hungarian youth may prioritize personal, face-to-face exchanges as their primary mode of information gathering, followed by digital platforms.

Overall, the trend across all four countries reflects the prominence of the internet and social media as primary sources of information, complemented by peer exchanges and conversations with adults. While traditional media like journals and TV still hold some relevance, they play a much smaller role compared to digital platforms and social interactions. The presence of community-based spaces such as cultural and social centers is more significant in some countries than others, suggesting different levels of engagement with these forms of information-sharing.

Question 14: How do you rate the information you have access to?



The survey responses from Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary reveal varying degrees of trust in the quality of the information young people access, particularly when it comes to digital sources like the internet and social media.

In Italy, almost half of the participants express a positive view of the quality of information they access, with a larger proportion finding it to be good rather than excellent. However, about one-third of participants hold a more moderate opinion, and a small group sees the information quality as mediocre or insufficient. This trend suggests a relatively high level of trust in digital sources, though the challenge of fake news remains. The results indicate that while many young people have faith in the reliability of these sources, there is still a need to strengthen their ability to critically evaluate information, especially when navigating online content.

In Spain, a similar pattern emerges, with roughly half of the participants considering the information quality to be good or sufficient, while around 20% express a negative opinion. Like Italy, digital platforms such as social media and the internet are prevalent, but they are also subject to the issue of fake news. The trust in these platforms among Spanish youth, despite this challenge, mirrors Italy's findings, underscoring the importance of fostering critical thinking skills and media literacy to help young people better assess the veracity of the information they encounter.

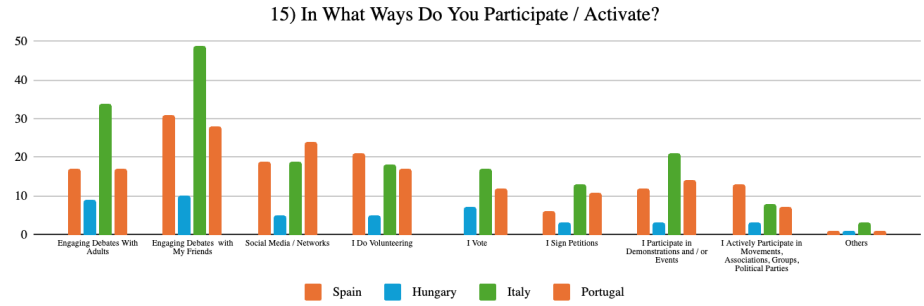
In Portugal, the responses are particularly positive, with nearly two-thirds of participants trusting the information they access. The higher percentage of "good" quality responses suggests that Portuguese youth may approach information sources more critically, likely influenced by their older age. This heightened awareness reflects a stronger inclination toward media literacy, signalling a more careful evaluation of information. This trend could be a positive sign for the overall media landscape, as critical thinking and source verification become increasingly important in an age of digital information overload.

In Hungary, the responses are notably more negative, with a majority of participants expressing dissatisfaction with the quality of the information they have access to. Most respondents consider the information to be either mediocre or insufficient, revealing a deep sense of distrust in digital sources and even in official channels. This scepticism may point to a broader recognition of the unreliability of the information available, particularly in the context of peer conversations and alternative sources. These results highlight a need for better information and education regarding trustworthy news sources, as young people seem to be more aware of the pitfalls of false or misleading content.

Overall, these findings suggest that while there is considerable trust in digital sources, particularly in social media and the internet, there is also an ongoing need to develop critical thinking skills and media literacy.

The younger generations' awareness of the challenges posed by fake news and unreliable sources varies by country, but the common theme is the need for further education and initiatives to help young people better navigate the complex information landscape.

Question 15: In what ways do you participate or activate?



The data from Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary highlight similarities and differences in how young people engage in social and political participation. Across all four countries, conversations with friends and peers emerge as the most common means of engagement, reflecting the importance of interpersonal dialogue in shaping awareness and critical thinking. However, there are key differences in how other forms of participation are perceived and practiced.

Italy and Hungary show a strong preference for informal participation (talking with peers and adults), but Italy has more engagement in demonstrations (30.9%) and volunteering (26.5%), while Hungary has a higher percentage of young people mentioning voting (38.9%).

Spain and Portugal present a more balanced engagement, with volunteering playing a significant role (Spain: 40.4%, Portugal: 32.7%). Additionally, Spain has a notable share of young people involved in movements, associations, and political parties (25%), a percentage much higher than Italy (11.8%), Portugal (13.5%), and Hungary (16.7%).

Hungary stands out with the highest percentage of young people mentioning voting (38.9%), while Spain is the only country where no one mentioned voting at all.

Portugal (23.1%) and Italy (19.1%) show moderate engagement in signing petitions, whereas Spain (11.5%) and Hungary (16.7%) have lower figures.

Portugal has the highest percentage of young people using social media for participation (46.2%), followed by Spain (36.5%) and Italy (27.9%), while Hungary (27.8%) is slightly lower.

The reliance on social media for activism suggests a preference for accessible and digital forms of engagement but also highlights the need for critical thinking regarding the reliability of online sources.

Italy reports the highest participation in demonstrations and events (30.9%), followed by Portugal (26.9%) and Spain (23.1%), whereas Hungary (16.7%) shows the lowest involvement.
This suggests that political or civic engagement through physical presence varies across countries, potentially due to cultural, political, or historical factors.
To conclude, social dialogue is the primary form of engagement in all four countries, with young people relying on peer-to-peer conversations to shape their views.
Volunteering plays a crucial role in Spain and Portugal, suggesting a strong sense of community-driven activism. Institutionalized participation, such as voting, is higher in Hungary but almost absent in Spain, raising questions about political trust and civic education. Italy shows a significant gap between informal engagement and institutionalized participation, indicating a potential need for stronger civic engagement initiatives.
Social media is an important tool for activism, particularly in Portugal and Spain, but its role in meaningful participation remains debatable.
Overall, while young people across these countries are actively engaging in different ways, there is a noticeable contrast between those who participate in more structured activities (volunteering, voting, petitions) and those who engage primarily through informal conversations and digital platforms.

Question 15b: If you actively participate in movements, associations, groups or political parties, what kind are they and in what areas do they operate?

The responses from Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary reveal both commonalities and distinctions in the types of organisations young people engage with.
Youth groups/parties and volunteering associations are mentioned in all four countries, indicating that young people across these regions see structured social and political organisations as viable avenues for engagement.
Volunteering associations are a consistent presence, suggesting a strong inclination toward civic participation through social or humanitarian work rather than direct political involvement.
Portugal stands out as the only country where political parties are explicitly mentioned, alongside youth groups/parties and volunteering associations. This suggests that Portuguese youth may be more directly engaged in formal political structures.

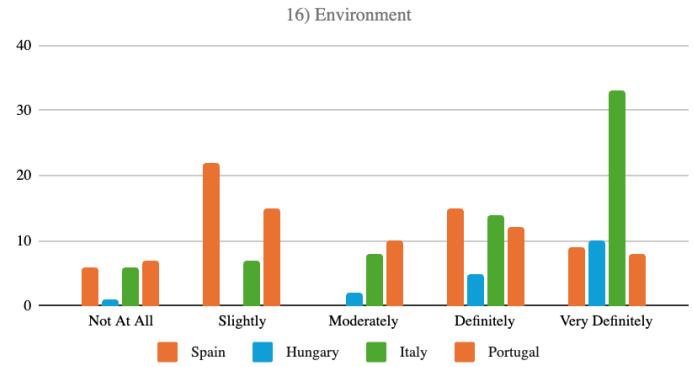
Hungary's engagement is mostly centered on volunteering associations, specifically rights organisations and alumni associations, indicating a preference for issue-based activism rather than political structures. Portugal is also unique in mentioning the "youth mayor project," which could indicate a structured initiative for youth civic participation that is less visible in the other countries.

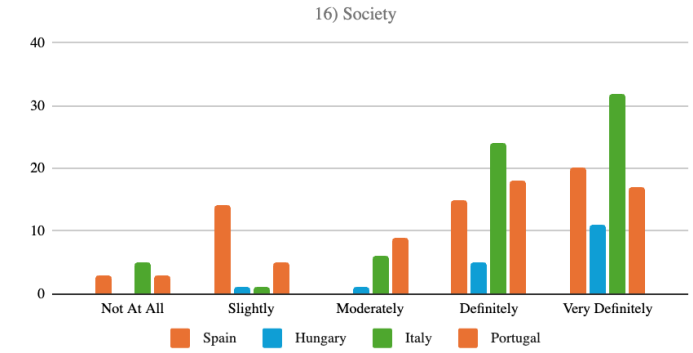
Italy and Spain show identical patterns, with young people engaging primarily in youth groups/parties and volunteering associations. Portugal exhibits the highest level of political engagement, as seen in mentions of political parties and formal youth governance initiatives.

Hungary leans toward issue-based activism, with young people engaging in organisations focused on rights and alumni networks rather than mainstream political structures.

Overall, while all four countries demonstrate youth involvement in structured groups, Portugal appears to have the strongest political engagement, while Hungary's focus on rights organisations suggests a different, more advocacy-driven approach. Italy and Spain align closely, with engagement centered around youth groups and volunteering.

Question 16: How relevant is it to address the following themes (environment - society - education - security - economy - technology)?




16) Society
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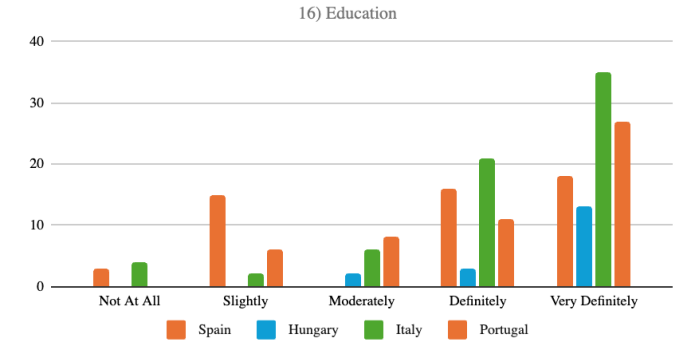
Very Definitely
Spain
Hungary
Italy
Portugal


16) Education
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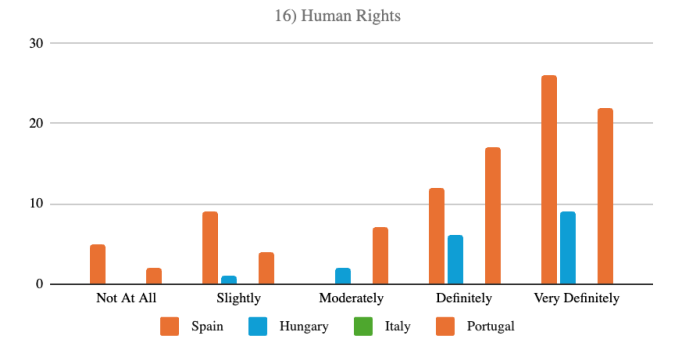
16) Human Rights
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Very Definitely
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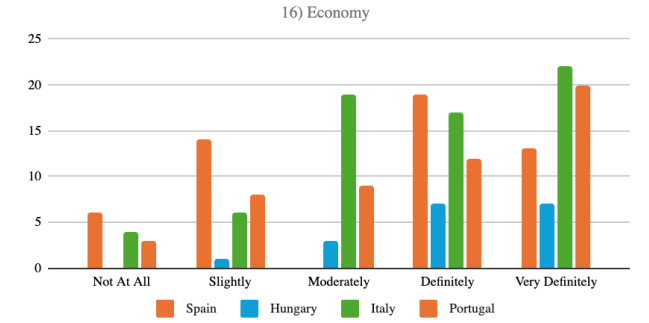
Hungary
Italy
Portugal


16) Economy
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Spain
Hungary
Italy
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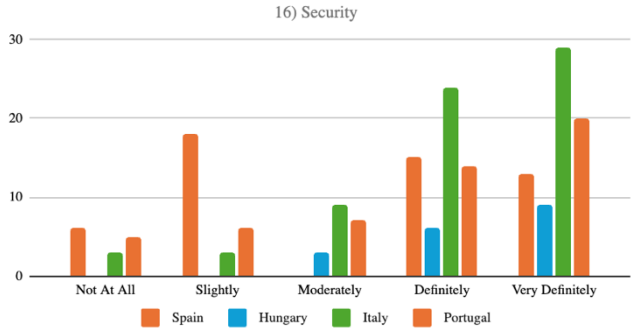
16) Security
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Hungary
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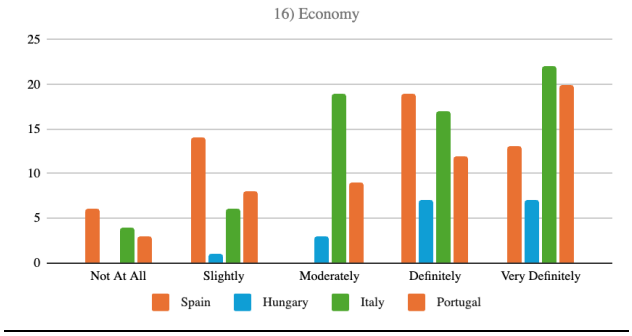
16) Economy
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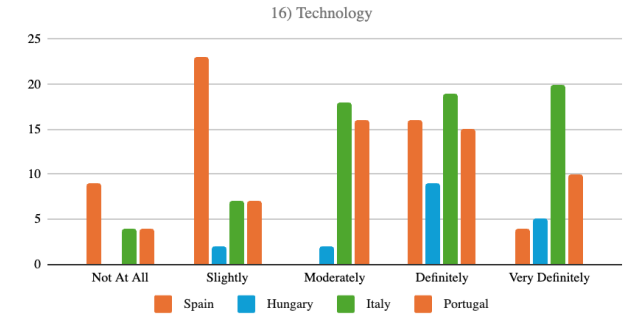
16) Technology
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Not At All
Slightly
Moderately
Definitely
Very Definitely
Spain
Hungary
Italy
Portugal

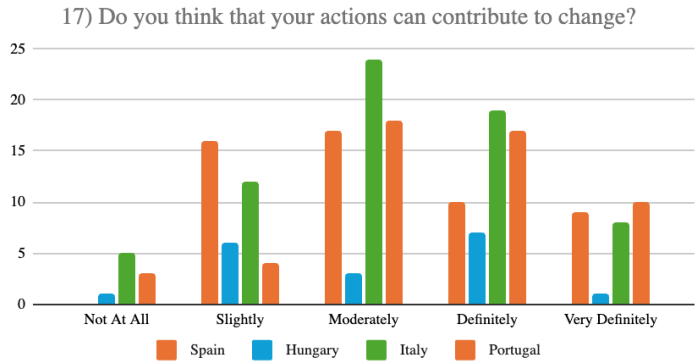
The responses from Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary highlight regional differences and commonalities in how young people perceive the importance of key societal themes.
Education and Society consistently rank as top priorities, showing that young people recognize the importance of knowledge and social well-being in shaping the future.
Human Rights receive strong support in Spain, Portugal, and Hungary, but are notably absent in Italy, suggesting a significant regional difference in how fundamental rights are prioritized.
Security and Economy receive mixed reactions, with some participants rating them as crucial while others consider them less relevant to their immediate concerns. Technology and the Environment rank lower in all countries, with a notable number of participants considering them unimportant or only moderately relevant.

Notably, Italy and Hungary prioritize Education and Society the most, while Spain and Portugal emphasize Human Rights. Spain and Portugal show lower concern for the Environment and Technology, whereas Hungary gives the Environment more weight.
Security ranks high in Italy but lower in Spain and Portugal, possibly reflecting different national concerns. The lack of Human Rights as a priority in Italy stands out as a major difference from other countries.

While young people across these four countries generally prioritize education, societal well-being, and human rights (except in Italy), there are notable differences in their concerns about security, technology, and the environment.

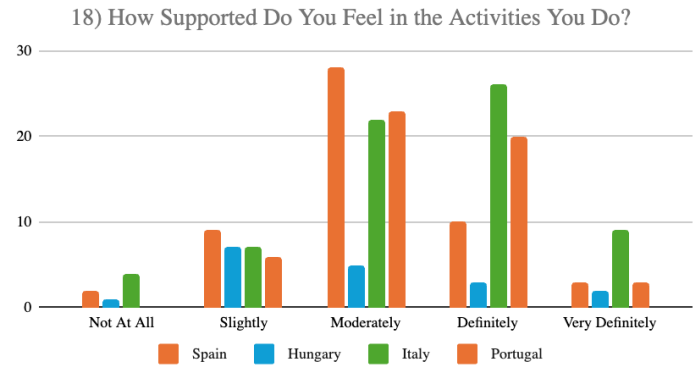
These findings suggest that engagement strategies should be tailored to regional contexts, ensuring that underrepresented topics receive attention where needed.

Question 17: Do you think that your actions can contribute to change?



When comparing the data across the four countries, some interesting patterns emerge regarding young people's perceptions of their ability to contribute to change.
Portugal stands out as the most optimistic, with 51.9% of respondents believing they can actively contribute to change. This suggests a strong sense of agency, possibly linked to an awareness of their role as emerging professionals and citizens who can shape the future.
Italy and Spain show similar levels of belief in the ability to create change (39.7% and 36.5%, respectively). However, Spain has a significantly higher percentage of negative responses (30.8% vs. Italy's 19.2%), suggesting that Spanish youth might face more barriers or scepticism about their ability to make a difference.
Hungary presents the lowest figures, with only 8 participants believing they can actively contribute to change. However, the sample size appears small, making it harder to draw direct comparisons with other countries. Still, the balance between positive and negative opinions suggests a more sceptical or uncertain view of personal impact.
Portugal's high optimism could be attributed to cultural factors, educational experiences, or institutional support for youth engagement. Spain's significant number of negative responses (almost one-third of participants) indicates a notable level of disillusionment, possibly tied to economic challenges, political instability, or a lack of trust in institutions. Italy has a more balanced perception, with a reassuring level of hope among youth, though still lower than Portugal. Hungary's lower engagement suggests a weaker perception of agency, which could stem from political, social, or historical contexts that make young people feel less empowered.
Portugal's optimism might be linked to programs that actively involve youth in change-making processes. In Spain and Hungary, lower optimism may reflect a sense of systemic barriers or disillusionment with current societal structures.
Some countries may foster a more collective vision of change, whereas others might emphasize individual agency or see change as something external to personal efforts.
Countries with lower optimism (Spain and Hungary) might benefit from targeted youth engagement programs, ensuring young people see tangible results from their participation.
Portugal's model could be explored to understand what fosters a stronger sense of agency.
Italy's moderate optimism suggests a solid foundation that could be reinforced with further youth-driven initiatives.
Overall, the data reveals varying degrees of belief in youth agency across different contexts, highlighting both opportunities and challenges in fostering a generation that feels empowered to shape its future.

Question 18: How supported do you feel in the activities you do?

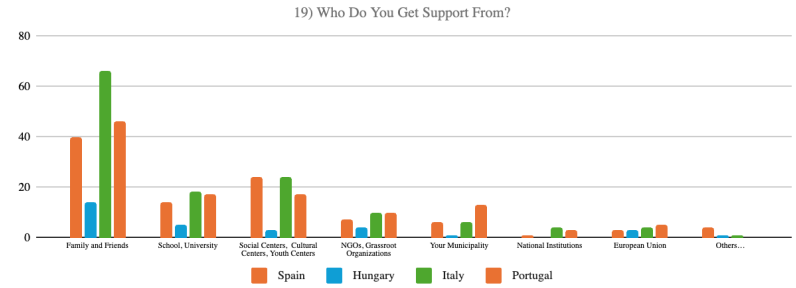


When comparing young people's perceptions of the support they receive in their activities across Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary, some clear trends emerge.
Portugal's high level of positive responses suggests strong institutional or social structures that provide visible support to young people. Italy's data reveals a moderate-to-positive perception, indicating that while many feel supported, there is still a significant portion who do not. Spain's results suggest a mixed outlook, with most feeling somewhat supported but a notable number perceiving a lack of backing. Hungary's results reveal a predominantly negative perception, suggesting that young people feel largely unsupported in their activities, whether due to institutional shortcomings or societal attitudes.
Countries where youth perceive stronger support may have better policies, educational structures, or youth engagement programs. Portugal and Italy's stronger positive perceptions may stem from family and community support networks, while Spain's balance and Hungary's negative results could indicate weaker support systems. Countries where youth feel less supported may be experiencing political instability, economic difficulties, or a lack of youth-oriented initiatives.

Portugal's strong support perception could serve as a model for youth engagement strategies. Italy's moderately positive perception suggests that efforts to reinforce youth support structures could be beneficial. Spain's division between moderate and negative responses indicates a need for initiatives that increase trust in institutions and support networks. Hungary's results highlight a need for urgent interventions, whether through government policies, educational programs, or youth organisations, to strengthen young people's perception of being supported.

Overall, Portugal and Italy demonstrate more optimistic perceptions of support, Spain is in a middle ground, and Hungary presents the most concerning results, emphasizing the importance of targeted interventions to improve youth support systems.

Question 19: Who do you get support from?



When analysing the sources of support young people rely on in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary, a clear pattern emerges: friends and family are the primary sources of support, while institutional support is significantly less present in all cases. However, the extent to which other entities, such as schools, cultural centers, NGOs, and governmental institutions, play a role varies across countries.

Friends and family dominate as the main support system across all four countries, with response rates ranging from 77.8% (Hungary) to 97.1% (Italy). This suggests that personal networks remain the strongest source of emotional and practical support for young people.

Youth, cultural, and social centers emerge as significant sources of support, particularly in Spain (46.2%) and Italy (35.3%), while they play a smaller role in Hungary (16.7%) and Portugal (32.7%). Schools and universities provide support in a secondary capacity, being particularly relevant in Portugal (32.7%) and Italy (26.5%), while having less prominence in Spain (26.9%) and Hungary (27.8%). NGOs and grassroots associations play a marginal but meaningful role, ranging from 22.2% (Hungary) to 19.2% (Portugal), 14.7% (Italy), and 13.5% (Spain). Governmental institutions – whether local (municipalities), national, or European – are consistently seen as the least relevant sources of support.

In all four countries, these institutions receive minimal mentions, with Hungary standing out as the country where national institutions were not cited at all.
To conclude, governments and larger institutions must work to bridge the gap between formal support structures and young people's needs. This could involve creating more youth-targeted initiatives or improving youth engagement and outreach strategies.
Community-based organisations (such as youth and cultural centers) should be further strengthened, particularly in countries where they already play a significant role (Spain and Italy). Hungary requires the most urgent intervention, as youth there appear to lack both strong personal and institutional support. Portugal's relatively higher reliance on municipalities suggests that localized initiatives could be an effective model for improving youth support elsewhere.
Overall, while informal networks remain the backbone of youth support, stronger institutional engagement is necessary to create more reliable and sustainable support systems for young people across all four countries.

Section 4: Tell us more about it

Question 20: Are you interested in other themes?
When analysing the topics of interest among young people in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary, a few key patterns emerge. While some topics are universally relevant, such as Diversity & Inclusion, Culture & Arts, and Rights & Justice, others appear to be country-specific, reflecting national concerns and priorities.

- **Diversity & Inclusion**: This topic appears in all four countries, often paired with justice, rights, or discrimination, highlighting that equity and representation remain major concerns for young people.
- **Culture & Arts**: The consistent presence of this topic suggests that youth across Europe view cultural expression as an important aspect of their identity and engagement with society.
- **Rights & Justice**: Present in Spain, Portugal, and Hungary, this topic signifies a widespread interest in social justice, fairness, and legal protections.
- **Sports**: A recurring interest, albeit less dominant, showing that physical activity remains relevant across different national contexts.

Social justice and inclusion are central concerns across all four countries, though Spain's focus is more explicitly political, and Italy uniquely includes neurodivergence and disabilities.
Spain stands out for its strong interest in democracy, feminism, and mental health, indicating an active engagement in social and political movements. Portugal is the most economy- and technology-focused, reflecting a youth demographic that prioritizes future career opportunities and innovation. Hungary's youth exhibit a strong interest in job markets, mental health, and pop culture, suggesting a mix of career concerns and entertainment-driven engagement. Italy's focus on the future, housing crisis, and volunteering highlights different socio-economic challenges compared to the other countries.

Governments and institutions should address country-specific concerns while recognizing common themes such as inclusion, justice, and economic stability. Spain and Hungary's emphasis on mental health should be met with targeted initiatives, such as better psychological support systems. Portugal's focus on the job market suggests a need for more career development programs and entrepreneurship incentives for young people.
Italy's concern with housing highlights a pressing issue that policymakers should prioritize, given its absence from the other countries' responses.
Overall, youth interests reflect both universal concerns and national priorities, indicating a need for localized yet interconnected approaches to youth engagement and policy making.

Chapter 3: Survey for Youth workers

* The percentages of the categories are calculated each time relative to the total number of participants because, often, the responses took into consideration multiple categories identified for clustering.

Participants/Sample

Youth workers
Italy: 48 respondents (39,3%)
Spain: 37 respondents (30,3%)
Portugal: 24 respondents (19,7%)
Hungary: 13 respondents (10,6%)

Total: 122 respondents (100%)

1. ITALY

Question 7: From your experience, what makes participation important?

1. **Social Innovation**: 20 replies (41,7%)
   Social innovation emerges as the most frequently cited reason for the importance of participation. Respondents highlight the transformative potential of participation, emphasizing its ability to bring renewal, generate new ideas, and bridge generational gaps. Practical applications of participation, such as bottom-up project development and long-term impact assessment, are also valued. This suggests that participants see social innovation practices as a tool for continuous societal regeneration and a means to influence current structures.
2. **Comprehension & Be Heard**: 14 replies (29,2%)
   A significant portion of responses underscores the importance of feeling heard and understood. Participation provides young people with a platform to express their ideas, be taken seriously by adults, and bridge the gap between generations. The need for active listening and support systems also emerges, reinforcing the idea that participation fosters both individual and collective understanding.

3. **Engagement**: 13 replies (27,1%)
   Active involvement is another key theme, as participation is seen as a means for young people to express themselves, gain experience, and take on proactive roles in society. Respondents emphasize the value of structured engagement through educators, mentors, and professionals who can guide and inspire. This suggests that the presence of role models and structured opportunities strengthens participation.
4. **Awareness & Critical Thinking**: 11 replies (22,9%)
   Participation is viewed as a pathway to developing awareness and critical thinking. It encourages young people to move beyond individualism, understand their impact on communities, and recognize their capacity for change. The ability to innovate, assess long-term consequences, and cultivate collective responsibility are frequently mentioned. This highlights the role of participation in fostering a more socially conscious and forward-thinking youth.
5. **Education & Learning**: 10 replies (20,8%)
   Participation is also linked to education and learning. Responses suggest that participation blends learning with enjoyment, helping young people develop several skills. The presence of competent educators is seen as crucial, reinforcing the role of participation in lifelong learning and professional preparation.
6. **Belonging & Inclusion**: 7 replies (14,6%)
   The theme of belonging and social inclusion is central to participation. It fosters integration, strengthens social bonds, and enhances empathy. Respondents highlight the importance of creating connections among young people and adults, indicating that participation nurtures a sense of community and inclusion.
7. **Responsibility**: 3 replies (6,2%)
   Some responses emphasize the importance of participation in developing responsibility. It instils accountability in young people, encouraging them to take ownership of their decisions and contribute to the broader society.
8. **Diversity**: 3 replies (6,2%)
   Participation is valued for promoting diversity, both in terms of ideas and individual expression. Respondents recognize that engagement allows for varied perspectives and encourages personal activation within a group setting.
9. **Rights**: 2 replies (4,2%)
   A smaller cluster of responses links participation to fundamental rights, such as personal freedom, socio-cultural equity, and the right to dissent. This highlights participation as a means to uphold dignity and combat systemic disadvantages.

Question 10: Have you ever implemented activities to promote the participation of young people within the scope of your duties?

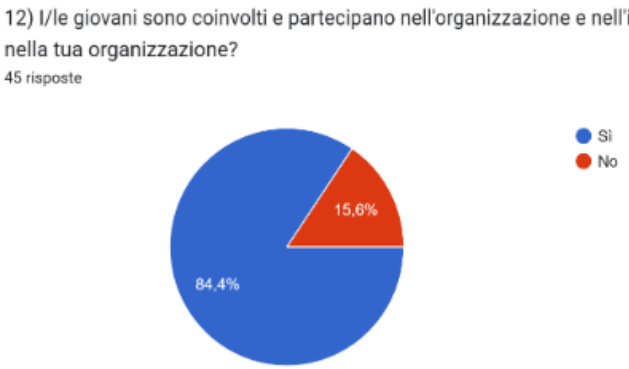
37 participants (77,1%) reply with a positive answer, while 11 (22,9%) with a negative one. The majority of respondents have actively participated in event promotion efforts designed to engage a larger number of young people in activities that foster youth participation.

Question 10b: If YES, please give us more information about the activity(ies): which ones, how they were carried out, what the impacts were…

1. **Education**: 17 replies (35,4%).
   A significant portion of activities focus on educational programs, highlighting their role in fostering knowledge, awareness, and engagement. Initiatives include PCTO programs in secondary schools, thematic courses (e.g., cinema and citizenship), civic education on elections, cultural walks, and study support. Education extends beyond traditional classroom settings, with experiential learning opportunities like camps, workshops, and intercultural training. Participants gain new skills, broaden their perspectives, and develop a sense of responsibility towards their communities.
2. **Multi-stakeholder projects**: 16 replies (33,3%).
   Many initiatives involve collaboration between institutions, NGOs, and local governments. Projects like Divercities, GeO, and anti-rumours campaigns provide structured participation opportunities, often integrating youth perspectives into policy-making. Activities range from mural painting with Palestinian artists to co-creation sessions and needs analyses for policy development. Young people are empowered to engage in civic activism, influence public policy, and address local issues.

3. **Workshops & Game-based method**s: 14 replies (29,2%).
   Interactive and engaging methodologies such as role-playing, gaming, and artistic collaboration (e.g., mural workshops) effectively involve youth. Sessions on mental strength, social issues, and key skills (e.g., serigraphy) encourage hands-on learning. The impacts of these activities are Increased participation, active learning, and a stronger sense of ownership over social issues.
4. **Local associations & Volunteering**: 9 replies (18,7%).
   Activities include third-sector volunteering, public awareness campaigns (e.g., safe sex, gender identity), and social activism within cooperatives. Opportunities for civic engagement through structured programs, community involvement, and accompaniment to public events. The impacts of local associations and volunteering are strengthened community ties, social responsibility, and deeper engagement in civic life.
5. **Debates & Assemblies**: 8 replies (16,7%).
   Activities include organised youth assemblies, thematic debates on current events, and structured discussion spaces (e.g., circle time). Platforms for dialogue enable youth to express concerns, develop critical thinking, and propose solutions. These activities encourage active citizenship, democratic participation, and collective problem-solving.
6. **Demonstrations**: 1 reply (2,1%).
   Public protests or advocacy events serve as a direct means for youth to express their concerns and demands. They raise public awareness and pressure institutions to address key social issues.

Question 12: Do young people get involved/participate in the management or implementation of your organisation's activities?



41 participants (84,4%) reply with a positive answer, while 7 (15,6%) with a negative one.

The respondents answered overwhelmingly in a positive manner, indicating a genuine desire for participation among young people, who not only take part but also actively work to organise and expand the range of activities offered to their peers.

Question 12b: If YES, in which activities? How is their involvement promoted and supported? What are the effects on the young people themselves, their peers, education professionals and the community?

Managerial and practical responsibility: 26 replies (54,2%).

Young people take on active roles in organizing and managing initiatives. Their contributions range from executing tasks to proposing and shaping projects. Some take on leadership positions, such as vice-presidency roles or administrative support, while others engage in event planning and policy discussions. The involvement is not symbolic; it ensures meaningful engagement with real-world impact.

These can bring to a development of leadership and project management skills, increased confidence, and clearer career aspirations, while for educators they can become motivations to trust young participants, leading to more collaborative educational environments.

Engagement through events, workshops, and social media: 24 replies (50%).
Participation is encouraged through workshops, social initiatives, and collaborative projects that align with young people's interests. Activities include sexuality education, social and cultural events, and partnerships with local collectives. These efforts are backed by local institutions that provide logistical and structural support, ensuring accessibility. Social media and peer networks play a key role in outreach, leveraging existing relationships to expand participation.
For young people these activities can expand social networks, be opportunities beyond work and education, and enhance self-expression. On the other hand, for educators they can be a continuous source of insights into youth needs and expectations, fostering adaptable and responsive teaching strategies.
Volunteering: 6 replies (12,5%).
Volunteering opportunities include assisting educators in workshops, contributing to cultural and recreational activities, and participating in civil service initiatives. Some young people engage continuously, integrating volunteering into their daily lives rather than as occasional efforts.
For young people these activities can strengthen a sense of purpose and civic engagement, and exposure to diverse social contexts. For educators, they can act as a support system for managing activities while nurturing mentorship relationships.

Education & Orienteering: 3 replies (6,2%)
Activities focus on active citizenship, training, and advocacy, guided by educators who provide direction and support. These programs help young people navigate their educational and professional paths while fostering critical thinking and civic responsibility.
They can expand awareness of youth rights, career paths, and opportunities for advocacy, and be an improved tool for mentoring and guiding youth through key life decisions.

Question 13: What do young people need to participate more? What works best to promote youth participation?

1. **Engagement, agency, and opportunities**: 23 replies (47,9%).
   Participation thrives when young people have real agency and feel like active contributors rather than passive recipients. They need engaging topics, the freedom to experiment, and access to projects that give them a sense of ownership. They value being supported by adults without being controlled.

What could work is:

- Offering platforms where young people can shape and lead initiatives.
- Creating connections with national and international realities to expand their perspectives.
- Ensuring institutions engage meaningfully with youth-driven ideas.

2. **Motivations, dreams, and goals**: 21 replies (43,7%).
   Young people need strong motivation and clear goals to actively engage. They seek meaningful projects, tangible opportunities, and personal growth that help them build a solid vision of the world. Many express the desire for a better life and the push to explore beyond their immediate surroundings.
   What could work is:
   - Creating stimulating and ambitious projects that align with their aspirations.
   - Providing concrete pathways for personal and professional development.
   - Offering opportunities to explore new regions and experiences.
3. **Be heard, support, and safe spaces**: 18 replies (37,5%).
   Feeling heard and having access to safe, informal spaces is crucial. Economic barriers often limit participation, making financial support an essential factor. Young people want adults who listen, respect their ideas, and create conditions for genuine participation without imposing control.

   What could work is:
   - Establishing informal and accessible spaces where young people feel safe to express themselves.
   - Providing financial assistance to remove economic barriers to participation.
   - Ensuring that youth voices are not just acknowledged but also translated into action.

4. **Role models, discovery, education, and knowledge**: 15 replies (31,2%).
   Young people benefit from role models – both peers and adults – who embody active participation. Exposure to new experiences, educational guidance, and access to reliable information empower them to engage more confidently. Trustworthy and consistent adult figures play a key role in fostering long-term commitment.

What could work is:

- Promoting peer mentorship programs where engaged youth inspire others.
- Expanding access to educational resources and information on participation opportunities.
- Ensuring consistency and coherence from adult mentors and educators.

5. **Problem-Solving, organisation, and trust**: 3 replies (6,2%).
   Trust in institutions and organisations is a key factor in sustained participation. Young people need to see that problems are addressed efficiently and that structures are in place to support their involvement.
   What could work is:
   - Ensuring transparent decision-making and follow-through on youth-driven initiatives.
   - Building organisational structures that are responsive and youth-friendly.
   - Demonstrating trust in young people's capabilities by giving them real responsibilities.
6. **Entertainment**: 1 reply (2,1%).
   Enjoyment is a crucial entry point for engagement. If activities are fun and engaging, young people are more likely to participate and absorb meaningful messages.
   What could work is:
   - Integrating entertainment elements into participatory initiatives to make engagement enjoyable.
   - Using creative and playful approaches to introduce complex topics.

2. SPAIN

Question 7: From your experience, what makes participation important?

1. **Belonging & Inclusion:** 14 replies (37,8%).
   Participation is seen as a way for young people to feel like an integral part of society and to build support networks. It is viewed as an opportunity to contribute to social change and develop a sense of community. Some respondents emphasize the importance of actively involving young people not only in discussions but also in organizing and implementing activities that foster inclusion.
2. **Comprehension & Be Heard:** 13 replies (35,1%).
   Many responses highlight young people's need to be heard and to actively participate in decisions that affect them. Some stress the risk of older generations making decisions without considering their experiences and perspectives. Participation is also seen as a fundamental right, essential for building a fairer and more representative system.
3. **Social Innovation:** 12 replies (32,4%).
   Youth participation is perceived as a catalyst for new ideas and social transformation. Respondents highlight how involving young people can lead to innovative solutions for social and environmental challenges. Some also stress the importance of ensuring an inclusive democratic system through the contributions of younger generations.
4. **Engagement:** 11 replies (29,7%).
   Active involvement of young people is considered essential to support their participation in community projects and initiatives. Some respondents see participation as a way to enrich their social life, develop skills, and directly contribute to improving their environment.
5. **Awareness & Critical Thinking:** 10 replies (27,0%).
   Participation is seen as an opportunity to develop awareness and critical thinking about social dynamics. Some highlight how participation fosters creativity, allowing young people to express innovative perspectives. It is also viewed as a chance to better understand society and define their role within it.
6. **Responsibility:** 5 replies (13,5%).
   Participation is linked to the development of active and responsible citizenship. Some respondents emphasize that youth involvement is essential for creating a more engaged and transformative society. It is also associated with democratic values and the need to prepare young people to make informed decisions for the future.

7. **Rights:** 4 replies (10,8%).
   Participation is considered a right that enables young people to influence both their present and future. Respondents highlight how a lack of involvement can lead to decisions that do not reflect young people's actual needs.
8. **Diversity:** 2 replies (5,4%).
   Some respondents stress how engaging young people from diverse backgrounds enriches discussions and leads to new solutions. Diversity is seen as an added value that can help address complex issues through innovative approaches.

Question 10: Have you ever implemented activities to promote the participation of young people within the scope of your duties?

31 participants (83,8%) reply with a positive answer, while 6 (16,2%) with a negative one. The majority of respondents have actively participated in event promotion efforts designed to engage a larger number of young people in activities that foster youth participation.

Question 10b: If YES, please give us more information about the activity(ies): which ones, how they were carried out, what the impacts were…

1. **Workshops & Game-based methods**: 11 replies (%).
   Several workshops and activities were designed to equip young people with the tools to engage in decision-making processes in their communities. These workshops were rooted in the interests and needs of young people, ensuring that activities were dynamic and relevant. Through tailored designs based on surveys and group meetings, the initiatives provided youth with the skills to execute their ideas and proposals. While initially challenging, the activities led to greater youth engagement and participation. The impact of these workshops was also visible in the creation of spaces where youth could both design and execute activities, contributing to their sense of empowerment.

2. **Debates & Assemblies**: 10 replies (%).
   Debates, forums, and assemblies provided a platform for young people to voice their concerns and suggestions on various topics. Creative summits addressing youth leisure and housing issues were organised, allowing young people to contribute their ideas for addressing these topics. The assemblies were a crucial tool for participatory decision-making, where youth gathered to decide on activities and provide feedback on previously held events. This participatory approach was essential for ensuring that the activities aligned with the interests and needs of the youth, leading to greater ownership and engagement.
3. **Local associations & Volunteering**: 7 replies (%).
   Youth associations and volunteer initiatives formed a critical part of community engagement. One such initiative was the Fuenlactívate teenage leisure groups, where youth gathered to engage in activities like sketch, playing video games, and volunteering. Volunteerism was promoted as a means to foster community spirit and contribute to local causes. Municipal spaces focused on youth and the cultural and creative industries also encouraged young people to contribute their ideas, with feedback being integrated into the planning process for future activities.
4. **Education**: 6 replies (%).
   Various education-oriented initiatives aimed at empowering youth have been mentioned. These include the Human Rights training program in Geneva (Switzerland), international scholarships, and promoting youth associations through support, guidance, and mentoring. Notably, individualized mentoring and the development of professionalization programs for young creatives were key components. Additionally, the Anti-Rumour Agents project in Castellón City Council had significant impacts at the educational level in secondary schools from 2016-2018. These activities were carried out with a focus on providing youths with skills and opportunities for personal growth, fostering educational empowerment.
5. **Technology**: 3 replies (%).
   The use of technology sometimes played a role in the engagement and feedback processes. Regular use of social media platforms helped reach a wider audience, encouraging youth participation in activities. Interactive surveys, chats, and groups facilitated communication and feedback from participants. For evaluations, the introduction of anonymous and more direct methods like brief telephone surveys improved response rates, showcasing the effectiveness of using technology in gathering youth insights and enhancing participation.

6. **Multi-stakeholder projects**: 2 replies (%).
   Participation in European projects provided extra training to young people, particularly through small workshops designed to help youth share their newfound knowledge with peers. One major initiative was the Anti-Rumours project, where youth groups, aware of social inequalities, took proactive actions in their neighbourhoods. They met weekly and participated in local decision-making processes, contributing to city council decisions. Youth participation projects allowed for direct involvement in the design of local government budgets and the transformation of cities, further strengthening the voices of youth in governance and policy-making.

Question 12: Do young people get involved/participate in the management or implementation of your organisation's activities?

28 participants (75,7%) reply with a positive answer, while 9 (24,3%) with a negative one. The respondents answered overwhelmingly in a positive manner, indicating a genuine desire for participation among young people, who not only take part but also actively work to organise and expand the range of activities offered to their peers.

Question 12b: If YES, in which activities? How is their involvement promoted and supported? What are the effects on the young people themselves, their peers, education professionals and the community?

1. **Managerial and practical responsibility:** 18 replies (48,6%).
   Many responses highlight the importance of giving young people decision-making power and allowing them to take ownership of projects. Whether through participatory budgeting, designing educational programs, or leading youth associations, these initiatives promote responsibility and autonomy.
2. The importance of providing space for youth to express their needs and interests is also emphasized in the anti-rumour activities, reinforcing the value of listening and creating a supportive, inclusive space for them. Moreover, some youths are given managerial responsibilities, such as managing board games tournaments, and some even participate as jurors in programs, receiving stipends for their involvement. This helps develop a sense of ownership, responsibility, and a deeper understanding of how to manage projects, which is crucial for their personal and professional growth.
3. **Engagement through events, workshops, and social media:** 16 replies (43,2%).
   Events, creative summits, training sessions, and interactive activities are common ways to involve young people. Social media also plays a crucial role in engaging them, making participation more accessible and aligned with their interests. Several respondents mention that while some young people are highly engaged, attracting others remains a challenge. However, those who participate gain a sense of belonging and commitment, reinforcing their motivation to stay involved. These activities are key to engaging youth, as they offer a platform for young people to actively contribute and express their views. The organisation of events or intercultural celebrations is an excellent example of how youth can take ownership, teaching their peers about different topics and cultures. This fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment.

4. **Education & Orienteering:** 8 replies (21,6%).
   Participation is often linked to education and guidance, with young people being encouraged to attend training sessions, receive mentorship, and take part in structured reflection processes. Some responses mention specific initiatives, such as tutoring and lessons, that help young people align their participation with their personal and professional goals. The long-term impact includes better decision-making, increased self-awareness, and a stronger sense of citizenship.

5. **Volunteering:** 6 replies (16,2%).
   Some responses emphasize that young people are actively involved in volunteering, supporting organisations in carrying out activities. This engagement helps them develop skills, build relationships, and contribute positively to their communities. In some cases, their volunteer work is linked to their education, adding value to their learning experiences.

Question 13: What do young people need to participate more? What works best to promote youth participation?

1. **Engagement, agency, and opportunities**: 16 replies (43,2%).
   Young people need clear opportunities for meaningful involvement, where they can see the outcomes of their contributions. The need for spaces and processes where their proposals have a tangible impact is frequently mentioned. There is also a desire for fewer barriers to participation, with a focus on providing clear paths for engagement and institutional support.
   What could work is:
   - Promote transparent participation processes that show young people that their contributions lead to concrete actions and outcomes.
   - Offer more opportunities for youth-led initiatives in decision-making, ensuring that their interests take precedence over political agendas.
   - Increase the availability of spaces for participation, ensuring they are well-managed and allow young people to freely express their concerns and ideas.

2. **Be heard, support, and safe spaces**: 12 replies (32,4%).
   Safety and support are central to youth participation. Young people need spaces where they feel heard, and where their opinions are valued and acted upon. They seek environments where they can express themselves freely and see that their ideas lead to real change. Institutional support is also crucial for maintaining these spaces.

What could work is:

- Ensure that young people's proposals are taken seriously and implemented, demonstrating that their input has real consequences.
- Provide institutional support for all forms of participation, ensuring that young people can access the resources they need to carry out their initiatives.
- Foster safe, inclusive spaces where young people can express themselves without fear of judgment or exclusion.

3. **Role models, discovery, education, and knowledge**: 7 replies (18,9%).
Education and mentorship are important for fostering youth participation. Young people need role models and guidance to help them navigate the challenges of participation. Opportunities to discover their potential through education, training, and leadership development are key to engaging youth.
4. What could work is:
    - Provide education for participation from an early age, including training that helps young people develop skills like project management, leadership, and teamwork.
    - Introduce mentorship programs where experienced individuals guide youth through the process of organizing and implementing projects.
5. **Problem-Solving, organisation, and trust**: 6 replies (16,2%).
Young people seek clear structures and support systems that allow them to overcome obstacles and organise their activities effectively. Trust in the processes and people involved in these initiatives is crucial for long-term engagement. Problem-solving and the ability to make decisions with real impact are important drivers of participation.

    What could work is:
    - Build trust through consistent and reliable support, ensuring that youth know they can depend on mentors and organisations to help them achieve their goals.
    - Offer more tools and resources to help young people organise and implement their projects effectively, making sure they have everything they need to succeed.

6. **Motivations, dreams, and goals**: 3 replies (8,1%).
   Young people want to feel motivated and empowered to act on their dreams and goals. They need opportunities to explore their interests and see that their projects can lead to meaningful change in their communities. Building trust through flexible spaces where young people can navigate their own rhythms is also essential to fostering motivation.
   What could work is:
   - Create spaces that allow young people to explore personal and collective interests, offering them the tools and support to bring their ideas to life.
   - Encourage young people to start with small, personal projects and gradually involve them in larger community initiatives, helping them see the impact of their work.

3. PORTUGAL

Question 7: From your experience, what makes participation important?

1. **Engagement**: 12 replies (50%).
   Youth participation fosters an active society where individuals contribute meaningfully to decision-making. It equips young people with skills to shape their life paths, reinforcing their role in determining their future. Active participation is a form of citizenship that empowers young people to take initiative in their communities and engage in decision-making processes. It thrives on dynamism, allowing youth to take an active role in designing, planning, and implementing initiatives that enhance their environment. Achieving true participation requires a balance between commitment and freedom, ensuring that young people feel ownership over the processes they engage in.
2. **Comprehension & Be Heard**: 7 replies (29,2%).
   Participation allows young people to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes, especially in shaping their futures. It is important for youth to be heard and to have the opportunity to express their thoughts, hopes, and concerns. Participation enables them to develop crucial life skills, equipping them to shape their own futures. Understanding their perspectives and expectations can guide programs, aligning them more closely with what young people truly need. Giving them the chance to make decisions is empowering, fostering confidence and autonomy.
3. **Learning**: 6 replies (25%).
   Participation is a key tool for youth to develop knowledge and skills necessary for leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving. It helps them understand the context in which they operate, ensuring that their involvement aligns with their educational and personal growth. By creating safe and inclusive spaces, adapting teaching methods, and providing adequate resources, participation can become a gradual yet effective process. Furthermore, it enhances social interaction and strengthens essential skills for future engagement.

4. **Belonging & Inclusion**: 5 replies (20,8%).
   Participation is critical because it creates a sense of belonging and inclusion, especially for young people. Effective participation throughout different stages of an initiative not only provides opportunities for input but also fosters a sense of accomplishment. When youth feel their voices are heard, it strengthens the democratic fabric of society, ensuring that diverse perspectives are valued.
   Moreover, participation goes beyond mere engagement; it incorporates moments of conviviality and leisure, offering a holistic experience that nurtures relationships and belonging.
5. **Awareness & Critical Thinking**: 4 replies (16,7%).
   Participation is a means of educating citizens, fostering critical thinking, and encouraging problem-solving. It enables young people to recognize their needs, voice their ideas, and feel empowered to enact change. By engaging in participatory processes, they not only develop creativity and analytical skills but also contribute to shaping initiatives that reflect their aspirations. This awareness strengthens their ability to make informed decisions about their future.
6. **Responsibility**: 2 replies (8,3%).
   Engaging in participatory activities instils a sense of responsibility, helping young people recognize their role in shaping their surroundings. It nurtures their capacity to contribute positively and support others in their communities.
7. **Social Innovation**: 1 reply (4,2%).
   Participation allows young people to bring fresh perspectives, energy, and enthusiasm, inspiring others to get involved. Their engagement fosters social innovation by introducing new ideas that challenge the status quo and drive change within communities.
8. **Rights & Equity**: 1 reply (4,2%).
   Youth participation is essential for fostering equity in educational environments. By ensuring that all voices are heard, participation creates fairer opportunities and promotes inclusive decision-making structures.

Question 10: Have you ever implemented activities to promote the participation of young people within the scope of your duties?

18 participants (75%) reply with a positive answer, while 6 (25%) with a negative one. The majority of respondents have actively participated in event promotion efforts designed to engage a larger number of young people in activities that foster youth participation.

Question 10b: If YES, please give us more information about the activity(ies): which ones, how they were carried out, what the impacts were…

1. **Workshops & Game-based methods:** 10 replies (41,7%).
   Workshops and educational games have been key tools to engage young people, especially during school breaks. They have been used to develop skills, promote teamwork, and offer new cultural and artistic experiences (music, theatre, painting, circus arts). Some initiatives included staging musicals, organizing traditional games for younger children, and holding participatory reflection and evaluation sessions to improve future events.
2. **Debates & Assemblies:** 10 replies (41,7%).
   Debates, youth assemblies, and consultations have been essential in fostering political participation and a sense of active citizenship. Examples include structured youth dialogue, assemblies discussing local projects, consultations on transport and municipal services, and activities promoting voting rights. A particular focus was placed on educating young people about democratic processes and actively listening to them to adapt initiatives to their needs.

3. **Multi-stakeholder projects:** 7 replies (29,2%).
   Multi-stakeholder projects have encouraged youth participation through collaborations between local governments, associations, and informal groups. Initiatives such as Youth Councils, mobility programs, structured youth dialogue, and municipal support programs have had a positive impact, fostering a sense of belonging, personal development, and active engagement in the community.
4. **Education:** 6 replies (25%).
   Education has been promoted through training activities, school projects, and awareness-raising initiatives. Workshops focused on soft skills, school mediation projects for NEET youth, and civic and political education programs were organised. The main goal was to provide young people with tools for personal growth and active participation.
5. **Local associations & Volunteering:** 5 replies (20,8%).
   Local associations and volunteering have enabled young people to engage in community and cultural projects, including the creation of informal youth associations, support for solidarity initiatives, and the promotion of art and music with municipal support. The main impact was the continued engagement of young people and the creation of new associative structures benefiting the community.
6. **Technology:** 1 reply (4,2%).
   Technology has been used to facilitate youth consultation through digital forms, anonymous feedback collection on public services, and online tools to involve young people in municipal decision-making.

Question 12: Do young people get involved/participate in the management or implementation of your organisation's activities?

21 participants (87,5%) reply with a positive answer, while 3 (12,5%) with a negative one. The respondents answered overwhelmingly in a positive manner, indicating a genuine desire for participation among young people, who not only take part but also actively work to organise and expand the range of activities offered to their peers.

Question 12b: If YES, in which activities? How is their involvement promoted and supported? What are the effects on the young people themselves, their peers, education professionals and the community?

1. **Managerial and practical responsibility:** 10 replies (41,7%).
   Young people take on active roles in managing and organizing activities, from planning to execution. They participate in decision-making processes, co-create projects, and support logistics. Many responses highlight municipal initiatives such as the Young Mayor program, the Municipal Youth Council, and the Youth Participatory Budget, which provide structured opportunities for youth leadership. Other examples include youth advisory groups, participatory budgeting, mentoring programs, and informal youth-led initiatives. This involvement fosters leadership skills, a sense of belonging, and stronger engagement in their communities.
2. **Engagement through events, workshops, and social media:** 9 replies (37,5%).
   Youth participation is encouraged through festivals, cultural events, workshops, and discussions. Social media is used to promote engagement and gather input. Initiatives like the SMF Youth Festival, Time Out activities, and Educa program provide spaces where young people can express themselves, contribute to event organisation, and take on active roles. These activities help strengthen youth networks and enhance collaboration between young people and institutions.

3. **Education & Orienteering:** 7 replies (29,2%).
   Education-focused initiatives aim to develop young people's skills, guide them in their future choices, and include them in decision-making.
   Programs like mentoring, advisory groups, and participatory education projects (e.g., Educa program) encourage active involvement in shaping learning experiences.
   These activities benefit both the young participants and education professionals, strengthening the connection between education and youth-led initiatives.
4. **Volunteering:** 1 reply (4,2%).
   Social volunteering includes supporting community and environmental causes, such as food distribution and social initiatives. This fosters personal development, cooperation among young people, and a positive impact on the local community.

Question 13: What do young people need to participate more? What works best to promote youth participation?

1. **Engagement, agency, and opportunities:** 12 replies (50%).Young people need spaces where they can play an active role, make decisions, and see tangible results from their ideas. Encouragement through word of mouth and peer-to-peer work with local youth leaders is effective. Involving them from the very beginning in planning activities and recognizing their skills helps maintain high engagement.
   What could work is:
   - Creating mentorship programs between experienced young people and new participants.
   - Implementing concrete incentives (scholarships, awards, official recognition).
   - Giving them access to interactive digital platforms to contribute to decision-making processes.
2. **Be heard, support, and safe spaces:** 7 replies (29,2%).
   Young people want to be heard and have safe spaces where they can express themselves freely without judgment. Trust and the availability of material and human resources are crucial. Even the simple act of letting them know that their voices matter and lead to concrete results is a strong incentive.
   What could work is:
   - Creating physical and digital spaces for open discussions where young people can express themselves without barriers.
   - Ensuring that the feedback they provide is transformed into real and visible actions.
   - Introducing structured listening sessions with reliable adult mentors.

3. **Role models, discovery, education, and knowledge:** 6 replies (25%).
   Seeing other young people or public figures actively participating boosts confidence and the desire to follow their example. Schools and educational institutions play a key role in raising awareness about available opportunities.
   What could work is:
   - Involving positive influencers and young leaders in awareness campaigns.
   - Integrating participation activities into school curricula.
   - Creating hands-on training programs on leadership, project design, and activity management.
4. **Problem-Solving, organisation, and trust:** 5 replies (20,8%).
   Trust, organisation, and structured support are essential for young people to feel engaged. A lack of continuity and consistent commitment is a challenge, so strategies are needed to maintain motivation.
   What could work is:
   - Giving young people full responsibility for managing certain projects with guided support.
   - Creating official recognition systems for demonstrated commitment.
   - Implementing local policies that permanently integrate youth participation.
5. **Motivations, dreams, and goals:** 4 replies (16,7%).
   Participation increases when young people see their ideas accepted and developed by institutions. Feeling part of something meaningful, with a clear purpose, motivates them to stay engaged. It is important to balance commitment and freedom to prevent them from feeling overwhelmed.

   What could work is:
   - Offering personalized growth paths that value individual passions.
   - Creating opportunities for them to express their dreams through concrete projects.
   - Including role models who have achieved similar goals to inspire and motivate.

4. HUNGARY

Question 7: From your experience, what makes participation important?

1. **Comprehension & Be Heard:** 6 replies (46,2%).
   Young people need to feel that they have a voice in the processes that affect them. Participation allows them to believe in their ability to influence decisions. Brainstorming ideas with them ensures that initiatives are relevant and meaningful. Personalization, trust, and encouragement are necessary to make them feel heard.
2. **Engagement:** 5 replies (38,5%).
   Participation is important because it fosters interaction and connection within the community. Good company, age-appropriate methods, and community cohesion help young people stay engaged. Feeling valued and receiving positive reinforcement are also crucial. The attitude of adults plays a key role in encouraging openness and active involvement.
3. **Social Innovation:** 4 replies (30,8%).
   Participation drives social innovation by empowering young people to shape the world around them. Providing them with the right tools and fostering a sense of agency encourages creative solutions to social challenges.
4. **Belonging & Inclusion:** 3 replies (23,1%).
   Participation strengthens social bonds and creates a sense of community. A structured framework with clear boundaries and trust-based relationships helps young people feel included. The connection between personal development and social engagement is essential.
5. **Responsibility:** 3 replies (23,1%).
   Participation teaches young people about responsibility, both individually and within the community. It helps them understand governance structures and the impact of their actions. Ensuring that initiatives are not superficial but truly relevant to them is key.
6. **Rights & Equity:** 3 replies (23,1%).
   Participation is fundamental for ensuring young people's rights are acknowledged. Addressing barriers—whether linguistic, digital, or structural—is necessary to create fair and meaningful opportunities for all.

7. **Learning:** 2 replies (15,4%).
   Participation helps young people develop an understanding of democracy, governance, and societal dynamics. Educational institutions and local governments play a key role in fostering active citizenship.
8. **Awareness & Critical Thinking:** 2 replies (15,4%).
   Being involved in decision-making processes encourages young people to think critically about their role in society. Discussions about issues that concern them should always include them.

Question 10: Have you ever implemented activities to promote the participation of young people within the scope of your duties?

12 participants (92,3%) reply with a positive answer, while 1 (7,7%) with a negative one. The majority of respondents have actively participated in event promotion efforts designed to engage a larger number of young people in activities that foster youth participation.

Question 10b: If YES, please give us more information about the activity(ies): which ones, how they were carried out, what the impacts were…

1. **Education & Consciousness:** 5 replies (38,5%).
   Education and consciousness-raising were central to the activities, with sessions based on critical pedagogy, self-evaluation, and cooperation. Decision-making simulations and role-playing games helped young people better understand decision-making processes and gain greater self-awareness and knowledge about the world around them.

2. **Workshops & Game-based methods:** 4 replies (30,8%).
   Game-based activities and workshops were used to engage young people on various topics, such as active citizenship and daily decision-making. Workshops were organised within student councils and local festivals, where young people actively participated in planning and implementing events.
3. **Local associations & Volunteering:** 4 replies (30,8%).
   Local associations and volunteering had a long-term positive impact.
   Some young people, initially marginalized, found a space for listening and support, which allowed them to build self-confidence. Monthly mentoring programs were also promoted for personal and professional development, and direct connections between young people and local decision-makers were established.
4. **Debates & Assemblies:** 3 replies (23,1%).
   Debates and assemblies were used to discuss concepts and real-life situations, fostering critical analysis and participation in school decision-making. Discussion clubs were initiated to support local groups and improve decision-making processes in schools.
5. **Multi-stakeholder projects:** 1 reply (7,7%).
   One specific action was to create connections between young people and local decision-makers, fostering dialogue among different stakeholders for more inclusive and structured participation.

Question 12: Do young people get involved/participate in the management or implementation of your organisation's activities?

11 participants (84,6%) reply with a positive answer, while 2 (15,4%) with a negative one. The respondents answered overwhelmingly in a positive manner, indicating a genuine desire for participation among young people, who not only take part but also actively work to organise and expand the range of activities offered to their peers.

Question 12b: If YES, in which activities? How is their involvement promoted and supported? What are the effects on the young people themselves, their peers, education professionals and the community?

1. **Managerial and practical responsibility:** 5 replies (38,5%).
   Young people are actively involved in planning and implementing community programs, including solidarity projects and broader initiatives. They take responsibility for organizing events, from brainstorming to execution, which helps them develop a sense of ownership and pride in their achievements.
2. **Education & Orienteering:** 4 replies (30,8%).
   Educational programs support young people in developing initiatives, offering mentoring, financial and legal support, and training in project management. Peer-helper training courses also provide constructive involvement opportunities, equipping young people with valuable skills and knowledge.

3. **Engagement through events, workshops, and social media:** 3 replies (23,1%). Participation is encouraged through interactive programs and events. Some young people who initially took part in activities return with friends because they find the experience enjoyable and meaningful. However, engaging a wider audience and maintaining long-term participation remains a challenge.

Question 13: What do young people need to participate more? What works best to promote youth participation?

1. **Engagement, agency, and opportunities:** 5 replies (38,5%). Young people highlighted the importance of clear and accessible information about the activities they can participate in, including details on how, where, and why these activities would benefit them. This information helps them feel more involved and motivated. Events, such as camps, were also mentioned as effective ways to engage youth. Additionally, it was stressed that opportunities should be perceived as personally beneficial to them, reinforcing their sense of agency. If they understand the value of their involvement, they are more likely to stay engaged and participate actively.
   What could work is:
   - Provide clear information on the benefits and details of opportunities.
   - Organise engaging events like camps to foster involvement.
   - Make sure young people feel their participation is valuable to them.
2. **Be heard, support, and safe spaces:** 5 replies (38,5%). The need for safe spaces where young people can be heard and supported was a recurring theme. They emphasized the importance of having places where they can freely express their thoughts without fear of judgment.
   A major part of this support comes from mentors and youth workers who actively integrate into young people's daily lives, providing both emotional and practical support. Additionally, creating an environment backed by institutional support was also seen as essential for youth to feel secure and valued in their participation.
   What could work is:
   - Offer mentoring schemes to provide support and guidance.
   - Create safe spaces for open expression, ensuring youth feel heard without judgment.

3. **Role models, discovery, education, and knowledge:** 3 replies (23,1%). Role models are an essential factor in inspiring youth participation. When young people see that their ideas can have a real impact, it motivates them to take action. Having access to educational initiatives that promote the development of knowledge and practical skills is also crucial. These initiatives help young people understand that the skills they acquire can be used to drive meaningful change in their communities, further fuelling their desire to participate.
   What could work is:
   - Present role models who have successfully contributed to community projects and decision-making.
   - Integrate educational programs that emphasize practical skills and knowledge applicable to their goals.
   - Provide personalized mentorship to address individual needs.
4. **Problem-Solving, organisation, and trust:** 2 replies (15,4%). Trust and personalization are fundamental in fostering youth participation. Young people need structures that provide them with the guidance and support they need to engage effectively. This support should be tailored to their individual needs, ensuring that they feel trusted and valued in the process. When they have a reliable support system, they are more likely to participate confidently in problem-solving and organisational efforts within their communities.
   What could work is:
   - Establish frameworks and supportive structures that foster trust.

COMPARISON OF RESULTS

Question 7: From your experience, what makes participation important?

Some themes that emerged are common across the respondents of all the countries, while, on the other hand, we note some distinct national peculiarities.
The following are common themes:

1. **Comprehension and Be Heard:**
   All four countries stress that young people want their ideas acknowledged and believe that feeling listened to is essential for genuine participation. In Italy and Hungary, for example, respondents emphasize that having their voices heard helps bridge generational gaps and builds trust – fostering an environment where youth feel empowered to influence decisions. In Spain, active listening is seen not only as a way to ensure that youth contributions are taken seriously but also as a means to protect their rights and represent their unique perspectives. Even in Portugal, where engagement is the foremost priority, the importance of being understood remains a key aspect of participation, as it provides the foundation for building effective support networks and responsive decision-making processes.
2. **Engagement:**
   Engagement is highly valued across all datasets as it not only empowers youth but also helps them build practical skills and strengthen community ties. In Portugal, respondents stress that genuine active involvement is a vital tool for shaping both personal trajectories and community futures. In Italy and Spain, engagement is closely linked with structured opportunities such as mentorship and guided projects, which are viewed as essential for personal development and driving social contributions. Meanwhile, Hungarian respondents note that when active participation is supported by age-appropriate methods and community reinforcement, it creates an environment where their contributions can lead to tangible improvements in their surroundings.
3. **Social innovation:**
   While the concept of social innovation appears in all datasets, its relevance varies, highlighting different local expectations for how it can foster participation. In Italy, social innovation is seen as a powerful transformative means – ranging from the generation of new ideas to the initiation of bottom-up projects that challenge established structures.

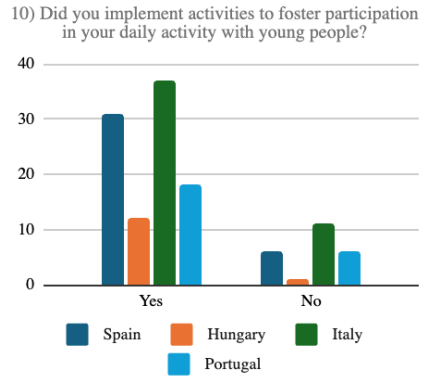
Spanish respondents also value social innovation as a catalyst for addressing social and environmental challenges, seeing it as a means to foster a more inclusive and representative democratic process. In Hungary, social innovation is recognised for its role in empowering young people to devise creative solutions, even as it coexists with a strong desire to be heard. In contrast, Portuguese participants assign relatively less weight to social innovation, suggesting that for them, the practical benefits of engagement – such as skill-building and direct community impact – are of greater immediate importance.

On the other hand, peculiar national emergent ideas are the following:

1. **Italy**:
   Italian youth workers highlight participation as a means to foster critical awareness and support educational growth. They stress that involving young people is key to developing their analytical abilities and learning skills, which in turn helps bridge generational gaps. While the sense of belonging is acknowledged, the focus is largely on empowering youth to reflect on and challenge existing social structures through learning and thoughtful deliberation.
2. **Spain**:
   In Spain, the emphasis is on cultivating a strong sense of belonging and inclusion. Youth workers here view participation as essential for integrating young people into community life, ensuring that they feel connected and valued within society. At the same time, they see the process as an opportunity to nurture critical thinking – helping youth understand social dynamics and contribute effectively to collective decision-making. Responsibility and the protection of young people's rights are also seen as integral to achieving a fair and representative system.
3. **Portugal**:
   Portuguese youth workers place great importance on learning and skill development through participation. They believe that practical, hands-on involvement is vital for personal growth and professional readiness, as it allows young people to acquire competencies with immediate real-world relevance. Although creating a sense of inclusion is part of the overall picture, the central narrative is one of experiential learning and the development of capabilities that empower youth to shape their future.
4. **Hungary**:
   Hungarian youth workers adopt a holistic view of participation by emphasizing the dual role of fostering responsibility and safeguarding young people's rights. They argue that participation should not only empower youth on a personal level but also ensure they have a real influence on decisions that affect their communities.

Alongside these priorities, there is a notable concern for creating environments where young people feel included and can cultivate critical awareness, thereby reinforcing their role as active, responsible citizens.

Question 10: Have you ever implemented activities to promote the participation of young people within the scope of your duties?



Overall, these findings suggest that promoting the participation of young people is a common and valued practice among youth workers across Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary.
Across all four countries, a clear majority of youth workers report having implemented activities to promote young people's participation as part of their professional duties. However, the degree of engagement varies somewhat between countries. Here, local contexts appear to shape the intensity and consistency of these efforts, for instance, with Hungary exhibiting the strongest overall engagement and Portugal presenting a more mixed picture.

Question 10b: If YES, please give us more information about the activity(ies): which ones, how they were carried out, what the impacts were…

The responses provide insight into the different approaches each country has taken to promote youth participation. By comparing the key categories of activities we can observe both shared strategies and unique methods used to engage young people in decision-making and community involvement.

1. **Education:**
   Education was a central theme in all countries' activities to promote youth participation. In Italy, there was a strong focus on educational initiatives, especially programs that went beyond traditional classroom settings, such as PCTO (pathways for transnational learning), civic education, and intercultural training. These programs provided experiential learning opportunities and aimed to foster both practical skills and a sense of civic responsibility.
   Spain, while also highlighting educational programs, placed particular emphasis on mentoring and professional development for young creatives, along with international scholarships and human rights training. Portugal's education-related activities included workshops that promoted soft skills and civic education, with a notable focus on integrating young people into decision-making processes and school mediation programs. Hungary's educational initiatives centered on critical pedagogy, decision-making simulations, and role-playing games, which aimed to increase young people's self-awareness and understanding of their role in societal issues. Overall, education was viewed as a key tool for empowerment and engagement, equipping youth with the necessary knowledge to become active participants in their communities.
2. **Multi-Stakeholder Projects:**
   Multi-stakeholder projects, which involve collaboration between local governments, NGOs, and community groups, were emphasized in both Italy and Portugal. These initiatives aimed to provide youth with structured opportunities to influence local governance and policymaking. In Italy, projects like DiverCities, GeO, and anti-rumours campaigns focused on empowering youth to engage in civic activism and contribute to policy development. Similarly, Portugal implemented Youth Councils and structured youth dialogues to encourage youth participation in local governance. Spain also had notable multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the Anti-Rumours project, where youth groups were actively involved in local decision-making. Although Hungary mentioned multi-stakeholder projects, it did so less frequently, focusing on creating direct connections between young people and local decision-makers. This category highlights a trend across countries to integrate youth into policymaking and local governance, fostering a sense of agency and responsibility.

3. **Workshops & Game-Based Methods:**
   Workshops and game-based methods were common tools across all four countries to engage youth in a dynamic and interactive way. In Portugal, workshops and educational games were used extensively to develop teamwork, promote artistic expression, and offer new cultural experiences. Spain also made use of such methods, particularly to help young people acquire the skills necessary for executing their ideas and proposals within their communities. Italy also highlighted the use of role-playing, gaming, and artistic workshops, particularly for addressing social issues and mental health, and helping participants actively engage with the content. In Hungary, workshops were commonly organised at student councils and local festivals, where young people could actively participate in planning and executing events.
   These interactive approaches were highly valued in all countries as effective means of fostering engagement, learning, and a sense of ownership over social issues.
4. **Debates & Assemblies:**
   Debates and assemblies were widely used in all countries to provide a platform for youth to express their opinions, engage in dialogue, and participate in decision-making. Portugal particularly emphasized youth assemblies and consultations on local projects, transport issues, and voting rights. This provided young people with a direct way to contribute to policy and community decisions. Spain also organised debates and creative summits, especially on issues like youth leisure and housing, where young people had the opportunity to propose solutions. In Italy, debates played an important role in promoting critical thinking, democratic engagement, and collective problem-solving. Similarly, Hungary used debates to support decision-making within schools and local communities. Overall, debates and assemblies were seen as effective tools for fostering civic engagement and active citizenship.
5. **Local Associations & Volunteering:**
   Local associations and volunteering were crucial for community engagement in all countries, particularly in Italy and Spain. In Italy, volunteering activities included public awareness campaigns, safe sex education, and social activism. These initiatives were seen as a way to strengthen community ties and engage young people in social responsibility. Spain's youth associations, such as Fuenlactívate, provided spaces for social interaction, creative expression, and community service.

Portugal also saw the value of local associations and volunteering in fostering youth engagement, especially in the cultural and social sectors. Hungary highlighted the positive long-term impacts of local associations and volunteering, particularly through mentoring programs that helped marginalized youth build self-confidence and engage with local decision-makers. Across all countries, local associations and volunteering were integral to creating spaces where youth could contribute to their communities and feel more connected to social causes.

6. **Technology:**
   Technology played a less prominent role in Hungary and Italy but was still considered useful in enhancing youth engagement. In Spain and Portugal, technology was used to facilitate communication and feedback from young people. In Spain, social media and digital surveys were key tools for reaching a wider audience, while Portugal used digital platforms to collect anonymous feedback and involve young people in municipal decision-making. These technological tools helped broaden participation and make youth engagement more accessible, although face-to-face activities still remained at the core of youth engagement strategies in all countries.

On the other hand, peculiar national emergent ideas are the following:

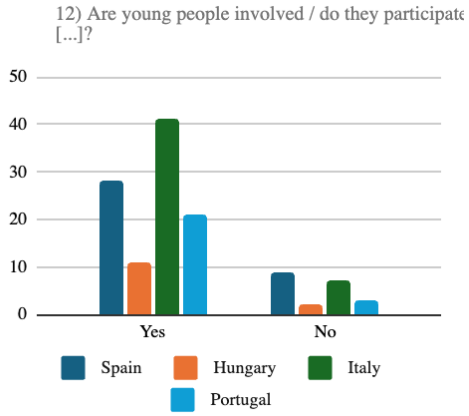
1. **Italy:**
   In Italy, youth participation initiatives often center around educational programs, multi-stakeholder projects, and interactive workshops. These activities demonstrate a commitment to engaging youth by fostering their knowledge, critical thinking, and involvement in civic life. The frequent integration of youth perspectives in local and national projects signals a strong belief in the value of youth voices, especially when supported by a variety of stakeholders like local governments, NGOs, and institutions. The focus on structured programs such as PCTO and anti-rumours campaigns suggests that young people are encouraged to take active roles in their communities, creating spaces where they can co-create and influence decisions. However, the prominence of these educational and collaborative frameworks could also reflect a societal need to provide clear pathways for youth to engage in meaningful ways. This could be an indication that, while there is a genuine commitment to youth participation, the structure of these activities may sometimes be seen as a necessary scaffold to ensure that youth are equipped to take on more responsibility in their communities.

2. **Spain:**
   In Spain, the emphasis on workshops and debates, combined with the integration of multi-stakeholder projects, suggests a commitment to providing youth with tools to engage meaningfully in civic decision-making. These activities not only give youth a platform to voice their concerns but also equip them with practical skills to influence their communities and local governance. The fact that youth are given the opportunity to create and execute their own ideas reflects a strong belief in their capacity to be active agents of change. Additionally, the initiatives like Fuenlactívate and youth councils show a clear intention to integrate young people into the fabric of local decision-making processes. However, there may still be an underlying need for continuous support and mentoring, especially given the challenges in reaching a wider audience or keeping young people engaged long-term. This might indicate that while Spain is fostering youth participation, there remains a focus on helping young people build the confidence and skills needed to maintain sustained involvement in community activities.
3. **Portugal:**
   Portugal places significant value on workshops, game-based methods, and debates, aiming to engage youth through both educational and participatory platforms. The integration of these interactive methods signals a focus on making participation both engaging and accessible. In particular, the use of creative activities like music, theatre, and circus arts in workshops illustrates an effort to connect with young people through diverse and culturally rich experiences.

   The focus on democratic education through youth assemblies and debates further highlights the importance of giving youth a voice in civic and political matters. Portugal's approach seems to center around creating spaces for youth to both express themselves and learn about active citizenship, indicating a strong belief in the importance of youth ownership over the activities they participate in. However, the reliance on these structured, often community-based initiatives suggests that there may be a desire to provide young people with ongoing support in navigating and understanding their roles within broader societal structures.

4. **Hungary:**
   In Hungary, there is a notable emphasis on education and psychological support as key drivers for youth participation. This suggests a belief that young people may not always be taken seriously or fully engaged in decision-making processes without the proper mediation. The focus on educational approaches, such as critical pedagogy, decision-making simulations, and self-awareness workshops, reflects a structured approach to empowering youth. This could be interpreted as an indication that Hungarian youth might face greater psychological challenges or social barriers compared to peers in other countries, making it essential to provide them with more intensive guidance and support. Moreover, the strong role of mentors and local mediators indicates a view that young people require external validation and encouragement to overcome these challenges. This reliance on structured support also speaks to a possible lack of trust in the ability of young people to engage independently or effectively in decision-making without these interventions.

Question 12: Do young people get involved/participate in the management or implementation of your organisation's activities?



Across all four countries, the data reflects a strong positive trend regarding youth involvement in management and implementation within organisations.

Portugal shows the highest level of positive responses, indicating strong youth engagement in active roles. Italy and Hungary also report high involvement, reflecting a broad recognition of youth in decision-making. While slightly lower, Spain still demonstrates significant commitment to youth participation. Overall, the data suggests a shared emphasis on involving young people as co-organisers and decision-makers.

Question 12b: If YES, in which activities? How is their involvement promoted and supported? What are the effects on the young people themselves, their peers, education professionals and the community?

Across the countries, there is a consistent emphasis on involving young people in meaningful activities that foster leadership, autonomy, and personal development. Common themes include:

1. **Managerial and Practical Responsibility**:
   Italy and Spain both emphasize youth leadership, but while Italy ensures structured engagement with real decision-making power, Spain fosters greater autonomy, even offering stipends for certain roles. Portugal integrates young people into formal governance structures, reinforcing civic education through programs like the Young Mayor initiative. Hungary, on the other hand, takes a more guided approach, involving young people in structured community projects with external support.
   While Spain promotes self-management, Italy balances leadership with institutional backing, Portugal embeds participation into policymaking, and Hungary relies on mentorship to sustain engagement.
2. **Engagement through Events, Workshops, and Social Media**:
   Events and social media are key engagement tools in all four countries but serve different purposes. In Italy and Spain, they act as platforms for youth-driven initiatives, though Spain struggles more with retention. Portugal incorporates events into broader participatory frameworks, ensuring long-term involvement, while Hungary treats them as structured engagement opportunities rather than organic youth spaces. Spain and Italy focus on accessibility and outreach, Portugal connects events to governance, and Hungary approaches them as organised interventions rather than spontaneous youth-led initiatives.

3. **Education & Orienteering**:
   Education plays a strong role in all countries, but with different emphases. Italy and Spain focus on personal growth and active citizenship, with Spain placing more weight on structured mentorship. Portugal integrates education deeply into youth participation, using formal programs to strengthen engagement. Hungary relies on educational initiatives with strong external support, such as financial and legal aid, indicating a need for institutional backing.
4. While Portugal embeds participation in education, Italy and Spain treat it as a means for empowerment, and Hungary emphasizes structured assistance.
5. **Volunteering**:
   Volunteering is most prominent in Italy and Spain, but with different approaches—Italy sees it as a long-term civic commitment, while Spain frames it as a tool for personal and professional growth. Portugal has lower participation, with efforts concentrated on social causes, while Hungary does not highlight volunteering as a key engagement method. This suggests that in Portugal and Hungary, other structured forms of participation take precedence over voluntary initiatives.

On the other hand, peculiar national emergent patterns are the following:

1. **Italy**:

In Italy, youth involvement in organisations is often a concrete responsibility. Young people who manage initiatives, participate in administrative decisions, or organise events demonstrate a high level of autonomy and competence. This approach seems to reflect a culture that emphasizes learning through direct experience, turning participation into an opportunity for personal and professional growth.

At the same time, the strong presence of events and workshops suggests that participation is also promoted in more informal and engaging ways, possibly to ensure accessibility and attract young people with diverse interests. While volunteering is less widespread, it still represents a meaningful space for those seeking continuous involvement and a deeper connection with the community. Overall, the Italian model seems to balance leadership opportunities with more guided pathways, showing an effort to make youth engagement sustainable over time.

2. **Spain**:

In Spain, youth involvement is strongly oriented toward autonomy and co-management. The fact that young people participate in designing educational programs, organizing tournaments, or even evaluating initiatives while receiving stipends suggests a model that fully recognizes the value of their contribution.

Here, youth empowerment is not just a means for learning but an end in itself, with organisations investing in them as key actors in social projects. However, there is also awareness of the challenges in expanding participation: while some young people are highly engaged, many others remain on the sidelines. The use of events and social media to attract youth reflects an attempt to lower barriers to participation, while the emphasis on orientation and training shows a vision where youth empowerment is also structured through guidance and mentorship.

3. **Portugal**:

Portugal appears to emphasize highly institutionalized youth participation, with programs like the Young Mayor, participatory budgets, and youth councils creating a direct bridge between young people and institutions. This suggests a context where participation is not just an opportunity but an embedded part of the local decision-making system.

At the same time, the focus on cultural events and youth festivals reveals an interest in making participation an engaging and creative experience, where young people can feel part of a broader community. The significant presence of educational and orientation activities demonstrates a commitment to supporting young people in developing their skills, indicating that participation is also seen as a way to build solid professional and civic pathways. This model seems to strike a balance between institutionalization and informal engagement, aiming to establish youth participation in a lasting and structured way.

4. **Hungary**:

In Hungary, youth involvement appears more selective and structured. The emphasis on education and support suggests that participation is not seen as something spontaneous but rather as a process requiring continuous guidance. The presence of mentoring programs, financial support, and training courses could reflect a context where young people face significant obstacles before feeling fully engaged.

The fact that activities are often oriented toward event planning or solidarity projects shows a practical approach, but also the need to create safe and structured spaces for youth empowerment. Compared to other countries, the social and spontaneous aspect of participation seems less prominent, possibly due to a context where youth engagement requires strong external support. This could indicate a lower level of trust in young people's ability to self-organise and take initiative without adult guidance.

Question 13: What do young people need to participate more? What works best to promote youth participation?

Across the countries, we found some common themes which we report here:

1. **Engagement, agency, and opportunities:**
   All four countries stress the importance of providing young people with agency in decision-making processes. They all highlight the need for spaces where youth can contribute actively, make decisions, and have a real impact on the projects they are involved in. This is central to fostering engagement and ensuring that young people feel their participation is meaningful
2. **Be heard, support, and safe spaces:**
   In each country, young people value having safe spaces where they can express their opinions without fear of judgment. They also emphasize the need for institutional or community support that acknowledges and acts on their ideas. This sense of safety and support is critical for ensuring youth feel empowered and heard.
3. **Role models, discovery, education, and knowledge:**
   Across the countries, there is a strong emphasis on providing educational tools and opportunities for young people to develop leadership, project management, and problem-solving skills.
   Young people in all four countries want to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to succeed, which is often linked to their participation in various activities or projects. The presence of role models, whether peers or adults, is another common trait. Young people are motivated by the example set by others who have successfully navigated the path of participation and leadership. This encouragement can come in the form of mentorship or simply seeing others who have made an impact.
4. **Problem-Solving, organisation, and trust:**
   There is a shared focus on the importance of trust in the institutions or organisations facilitating youth participation. Young people in all four countries want transparent processes and clear communication about the impact of their contributions. Trust is essential for motivating youth to engage and remain committed over time.

On the other hand, peculiar national emergent patterns are the following:

1. **Italy**:

Italian youth workers emphasize young people want to have the freedom to experiment and lead their initiatives, with a strong desire for ownership over the projects they engage in.

Youth workers state that youngsters view participation not only as a way to contribute to society but also as a personal opportunity for growth and exploration. There is also a notable desire to connect local issues with broader, national, and international perspectives, allowing Italian youth to bring in a more global view into their initiatives. Here, there is a reference to fun and entertainment as key initial entry points to youth participation, helping attract young people into more serious and impactful activities.

2. **Spain**:

Youth workers report that Spanish youth prioritize participation that is easily accessible and has clear, transparent processes. They value flexible spaces that allow them to navigate their involvement at their own pace, without feeling restricted. Furthermore, for Spanish youth, it's important that their contributions lead to tangible outcomes. They are motivated by the opportunity to see their efforts translate into real-world changes, emphasizing a results-oriented approach to participation. Spain puts a strong emphasis on youth-led initiatives, where young people are trusted to take charge, showing a preference for projects that put them in leadership roles.

3. **Portugal**:

Portuguese youth workers say that youth are particularly focused on initiatives that have clear, meaningful purposes, and they want to see their ideas developed by institutions. Their participation is strongly tied to seeing tangible progress and having their voices shape actual decisions or projects. For them, mentorship is an important component of engagement. Youth often seek guidance from peers or older role models who can support them in their personal and professional growth. Lastly, Young people in Portugal value the acknowledgment of their contributions and see incentives like scholarships or recognitions as motivating factors that encourage sustained involvement.

4. **Hungary**:

Unlike other countries, Hungarian youth are reported to place a greater focus on the tangible, personal benefits they can derive from participation. They are more inclined to participate if the process offers clear, direct personal gain, such as skill development, networking opportunities, or future job prospects. While all countries emphasize mentorship, Hungary stands out for placing a particular focus on personalized mentorship, which is seen as an essential element of youth engagement. This one-on-one guidance ensures that young people feel supported and confident in their roles.

To conclude, Hungarian youth also favour clear organisational structures and practical guidance on how to participate. They seek well-defined paths that lead to tangible outcomes, preferring less ambiguity about the steps they need to take in their engagement.

Chapter 4: Focus groups & Interviews

1. ITALY

Online Focus Group with Young people from Portomaggiore

The online focus group was conducted with young people from Portomaggiore, representing diverse backgrounds.

Icebreaker Activity: AI-generated images based on participants' desires and fears

The activity invited participants to engage in a moment of visual exploration and personal reflection, using AI-generated images created from the responses given in the preliminary questionnaires about dreams and concerns. Young people were asked to indicate the image that struck them most, and then to freely share their motivations.

Desires

- **Economic Well-being:** Some participants indicated the image representing financial success. They expressed a desire for wealth, associating it with a better lifestyle and the ability to support their families.
- **Family and Recognition:** Others chose an image showing familial relationships and achievement (e.g., children with medals). This was interpreted as a symbol of unity, shared success, and belonging.
- **Personal Growth and Fulfilment:** A few participants connected with images suggesting freedom and serenity, expressing aspirations to follow their dreams and find peace within themselves. These reflections often included humour, showing comfort and openness in the group.
- **Emotional Resonance:** One participant selected an image purely based on the peaceful feeling it evoked, showing that some decisions were guided by emotional instinct rather than rational thought.

Fears

- **Academic Pressure:** Several participants identified school and homework as significant sources of stress and anxiety, highlighting the role of the educational system in shaping their daily worries.

- **Social Isolation:** The fear of being alone or not being accepted emerged as a relevant concern, particularly for one participant who stood by the image of a lone figure.
- **Global Issues:** Some pointed to war and climate change as sources of fear. Although sometimes expressed with uncertainty (e.g., confusion over water in an image), this showed a broader awareness of current global challenges.

The activity served as an effective first moment of sharing among participants, allowing both concrete aspirations and deeper personal reflections to emerge. The images worked well as conversation starters, fostering an atmosphere of mutual listening and curiosity.

Main Activity: Discussed a moment related to people's prejudice toward other ethnicities. Discussion of outputs.

Question 1: What prejudices have you heard about people coming from another country?

- **Racial Discrimination:** A general sense of mistrust toward understanding and inclusion emerged. One participant mentioned the so-called "Maranza Marocchini" who "cause trouble" in Milan's Piazza Duomo but clarified that it's wrong to label all North Africans with such criminal stereotypes, emphasizing that many are good people. The same participant told a fictional story in which a school principal discriminates against Black students by denying them access to lessons—not something that happens in his school, he said, but something he believes could happen.
  A widely shared experience involved a teacher known for making racist remarks such as "go do that in your own country." This behaviour, well-known among the group, reflects a broader pattern of exclusion, even among peers, where classmates often form cliques that exclude those seen as "different" or "outsiders." Participants agreed that the strongest feelings of racism come from adults—those more distant and less accustomed to daily interaction with people from different backgrounds, unlike in schools. More than one Black participant said they had heard, witnessed, or personally experienced mistrustful or discriminatory behaviour from white adults.
  During the activity on the discussed topics, several young people talked about stories of racial discrimination. One discussion talked about a Black person insulted by racist phrases. Another talked about white youth shouting racist insults at a Black peer. The participants explained that such remarks are sometimes made in a joking context, not always perceived as offensive. However, when intentions are clearly hurtful, reactions vary from indifference to aggression.

Question 2: What should be done so that everyone is treated equally?

- **Cultural Participation:** Some participants believed that schools can and do teach equality. However, most agreed that discrimination in Italy is deeply rooted and likely to be passed down from older to younger generations. Despite some scepticism about change, participants proposed activities to foster inclusion among people of different ethnic backgrounds. One idea was to organise a festival led by black people, open to everyone. This would promote cultural knowledge and mutual understanding. The proposal was then expanded into a “festival of traditions,” where everyone—regardless of origin—could share aspects of their customs and heritage. Such events were considered especially effective for younger children, like those in primary or middle school, who are more open-minded and less influenced by societal stereotypes. Holding these events in schools would also ensure greater participation. One participant shared that he had Pakistani classmates, and to build stronger friendships, he asked them to teach him words and expressions in their language. Others also mentioned language barriers as a common obstacle and described how learning a traditional Pakistani ball game helped them engage and include their peers. A similar proposal emerged: organizing a “sports day” focused on traditional games to counteract discrimination and foster connection.

Online Focus Group with Young people from Montesilvano

The online focus group was conducted with young people from Montesilvano, representing diverse backgrounds.

Icebreaker Activity: AI-generated images based on participants' desires and fears

During the focus group session, participants were invited to choose four AI-generated images that represented common desires and fears among young people. The exercise prompted a rich and emotionally nuanced discussion, bringing to light both personal experiences and shared generational concerns.

Desires

- **Personal Success:** The first image evoked reflections on intergenerational support and the meaning of achievement. It was seen as a symbol of assistance across generations—where older family members encourage and guide younger ones in their personal growth. The scene appeared to capture a moment of celebration, possibly related to a milestone or personal success, generating feelings of warmth, pride, and unity.
  However, the image also raised more complex interpretations. While it conveyed joy and togetherness, it was also perceived as potentially burdensome suggesting a predefined path that younger people may feel expected to follow. This dual reading highlighted a tension between encouragement and pressure within family dynamics. One interpretation focused on the symbolism of medals depicted in the image: the youngest wears the largest one, suggesting generational progress made possible through the support of others. This perspective emphasized the idea of collective effort and improvement across time.
- **Economic Well-being and Wealth:** The second image sparked a conversation about material success and personal value. It was perceived as a reflection of contemporary priorities, where wealth often becomes a central goal. Some interpretations emphasized how self-worth is increasingly tied to income, and how many young people view effort as worthwhile only when it leads to substantial financial gain. The presence of coins and faceless figures underscored this message, evoking a sense of depersonalization—success defined more by economic indicators than by meaningful experiences or human connection. At the same time, there was acknowledgment of the pragmatic value of money. While not inherently negative, wealth was seen as important for the opportunities it can unlock experiences, autonomy, and the ability to shape one's life. The discussion revealed a nuanced understanding—money as a tool, not an end in itself.

Fears

- **Global Problems and Environmental Anxiety:** The third image elicited strong emotional reactions related to climate anxiety and environmental collapse. It was described as apocalyptic, embodying widespread fears about ecological destruction.
  The visual impression was one of a world turning against itself, a form of self-inflicted damage.
  There was also a critical awareness of social numbness to these issues. Despite the severity of climate change, its omnipresence in media and discourse has led to a sense of normality—diminishing urgency and emotional engagement. This normalization of catastrophe emerged as a major concern, highlighting the gap between awareness and action.
- **Academic and Work-related Pressure:** The final image was associated with stress, burnout, and isolation related to study and work. It brought to mind the pressure of exams and deadlines, evoking exhaustion rather than passion for learning. The atmosphere appeared heavy, with figures immersed in their own thoughts and burdens.
  This sense of individual struggle and emotional disconnection was central to the discussion. The image suggested a society where everyone is absorbed in personal challenges, leaving little space for empathy or shared support. The background and posture of the characters contributed to a feeling of indifference, not only from others but from the environment itself.

The four images served as powerful conversation starters, enabling participants to explore both individual and collective experiences. Each visual prompted introspection and group discussion around key themes—such as family expectations, the role of money, environmental fears, and academic pressure.

This activity demonstrated the effectiveness of using imagery to surface unspoken thoughts, stimulate dialogue, and foster empathy. It highlighted the emotional landscape of today's youth, shaped by both internal aspirations and external challenges.

Main Activity: Asking direct questions about social context in the territory.

Question 1: What can we do as individuals and as a community to build a more desirable future?

- **Active citizenship:** Participants noted that until recent years, the local context offered few spaces or initiatives aimed at young people. This absence contributed to a widespread sense of disengagement and lack of direction among youth. Over the last two years, new projects and opportunities have started to emerge, creating a shift. These initiatives helped participants become aware of concepts like active citizenship and provided them with tools to recognize and counter stereotypes often associated with their generation (e.g., being passive or disengaged).

- Many participants expressed the importance of leading by example through small but meaningful actions—supporting peers who are excluded, helping those with less confidence, and promoting a more open and inclusive mindset in everyday life. Some youth highlighted their use of social media to spread awareness on social issues—for example, through pages that discuss books or series with strong social or political messages, or by using memes and reels to provoke reflection and discussion. Several noted the need to foster inclusion not only across cultural or ethnic lines but also among students with different learning abilities or interests. One participant shared that simply being greeted doesn't mean being included—true inclusion requires intentional actions and invitations.

Question 2: How do you perceive discrimination and the role of young people in countering it?

- **Superficial engagement:** Montesilvano is seen as a highly multicultural city. In some contexts (e.g., associations, community projects), this diversity is embraced and promoted through interaction and collaboration. However, in everyday life—particularly in schools and social groups—participants still observe strong boundaries between different cultural or social groups. While discrimination is a topic young people are aware of, discussions are often shallow or performative, especially online. Some participants felt that social media activism is sometimes more about following trends than sincere commitment. Despite this, several young people have taken concrete steps to get involved—for instance, through volunteering, civil service, or proposing inclusive activities in their schools. They emphasized the importance of moving from awareness to action.

Question 3: How is discrimination discussed in everyday life? Is it a taboo topic?

- **Need for External Support:** Participants agreed that discrimination is rarely addressed in schools in a meaningful way. When it is, it often happens in response to specific episodes rather than as part of a structured educational process. Much depends on individual teachers—those who are more open and empathetic may create space for dialogue, but this is not common. There was a shared desire for more educators trained in managing and facilitating conversations about social issues. Associations working in schools were praised for providing workshops and active citizenship modules that address discrimination and promote respectful dialogue. These were seen as valuable complements to the formal education system.

Question 4: What role can institutions (schools, universities, local authorities) play, and what are they currently doing or lacking?

- **Passive reactivity:** Participants acknowledged that local authorities have recently begun showing greater interest in youth involvement, citing examples like youth assemblies with the mayor or municipal support for community projects. Despite this progress, there's a sense that institutional attention is often temporary or tied to specific events. Young people called for more consistent support and permanent spaces for dialogue and expression. Many felt that institutions often act reactively rather than proactively responding to problems after they arise instead of creating preventative educational programming around discrimination and inclusion.

How do environmental issues and technology factor into your concerns for the future?

- **Environmental awareness but low efforts**: Participants noted that concern for the environment varies based on school background. Those in technical schools (e.g., agriculture) reported more awareness and engagement due to curriculum content and practical activities. Others felt that general education settings offered only surface-level discussions of sustainability. Some participants criticized the diminishing attention to climate education, especially after the shift of the 2030 Agenda deadline to 2050. They suggested this has led to reduced institutional and educational commitment.
- **Technology and AI as Double-Edged Swords:** Artificial intelligence was discussed as both a useful tool and a potential risk. While open to its possibilities, participants stressed the importance of ethical guidelines and the development of critical thinking to ensure technology is used responsibly.

Online Focus Group with Young people from Reggio Emilia

The online focus group was conducted with young people from Reggio Emilia, representing diverse backgrounds.

The participants were invited to reflect on themes such as youth participation, discrimination, inclusion, environmental awareness, and the role of media in shaping perceptions. The dialogue emerged from a shared need to rethink civic engagement and collective responsibility, with a focus on how young people can be both subjects and agents of change in their communities.

Question 1: What can we do, as individuals and as a collective, to build a more desirable future?

- **Youth Engagement and Project Impact:** The participants noted that only recently—within the past two years—has youth participation started gaining visibility in Reggio Emilia, largely thanks to initiatives like LabAv and DiverCities. Before these efforts, the topic was rarely addressed, and young people felt largely excluded from local processes. The projects helped create spaces where young people could develop ideas and feel heard, often fostering a stronger sense of civic awareness.
- **Citizenship and the Role of Institutions:** Participants emphasized the importance of civic education and meaningful collaboration between youth and local institutions. Although the municipality supports some youth-led activities and associations, many agreed that these are not widely known and lack sufficient visibility, which limits their impact. They noted the importance of increasing both communication and opportunities to attract broader youth engagement.

Question 2: How do you experience anti-discrimination and the role of young people in fostering inclusion?

- **Discrimination and Safety Perceptions:** Many young people identified certain areas, like the bus and train station, as unsafe—especially for girls or young people of foreign origin. These areas were associated with unease, even though they are central and frequently used. Some expressed those police presence often targets racial minorities, reinforcing feelings of exclusion.
- **Diverse Coexistence and Positive Examples:** Despite these concerns, places like libraries were mentioned as positive examples of multicultural coexistence, where young people of different backgrounds study and interact peacefully. However, a gap remains between these isolated “safe zones” and broader public spaces, where stereotypes and discomfort persist.

- **Youth as Agents of Change:** Participants highlighted that young people can be key influencers among peers—more so than adults—especially when using platforms like social media. They suggested that peer-to-peer influence and relatable communication are essential in promoting inclusive values and challenging discriminatory behaviour.

Question 3: What is the current state of youth participation and inclusion in Reggio Emilia?

- **Local Projects and Limited Outreach:** Projects and youth centers do exist, but they tend to involve a narrow circle of already active individuals. Young people outside this group often remain unaware of opportunities. The lack of a centralized youth hub contributes to the sense of disconnection. Many agreed that both communication and outreach strategies must be improved.
- **Social Media as a Communication Tool:** Participants widely agreed on the influence of social media, particularly Instagram and TikTok, as powerful tools for communication and awareness. They also noted that pass-along communication among friends is equally important. The combination of digital and interpersonal channels was seen as the most effective way to mobilize youth and share information about rights, initiatives, and opportunities.

Question 4: How is climate change perceived by young people?

- **Internalized Responsibility:** While climate issues are not at the forefront of daily conversation, many participants shared that sustainable behaviour has become second nature. From reducing plastic use to choosing public transport, their generation has grown up with environmental awareness, and this often translates into small daily actions
- **Decline in Public Focus:** Some participants noted a decrease in the public momentum that once surrounded environmental activism (e.g., Fridays for Future). This shift may be due to competing social concerns or a perceived delay in global policy action, such as the shift of the Agenda 2030 goals to 2050.

Question 5: What does it mean to be an active citizen, and what is the role of young people in civic life?

- **Participation and Access:** Participants described active citizenship as being aware, informed, and engaged in initiatives that impact the community. However, they also highlighted that participation often depends on access to information, which remains uneven. Young people who are already involved tend to stay engaged, while others may not even hear about opportunities.
- **Communication Gaps:** A recurring theme was the failure of institutions to reach potential participants. Despite existing initiatives, many young people feel left out due to poor communication, lack of targeted outreach, or unclear messaging.

Question 6: How do young people get informed, and how do they assess information quality?

- **Information Sources:** Young people reported using a variety of sources, including Instagram, TikTok, podcasts, online news sites, and conversations with teachers or peers. Many noted that their primary access to information comes through social platforms, which are seen as faster and more engaging.
- **Critical Thinking and Misinformation:** Participants expressed awareness of the risks of fake news and the importance of verifying information. Some admitted they don't always fact-check, but when a topic feels personally relevant or controversial, they are more likely to research it further. Wikipedia and Google were frequently used to clarify unfamiliar concepts or historical context.

Question 7: What impact do media and misinformation have on public perception and discrimination?

- **Media Framing and Public Opinion:** Participants acknowledged the powerful influence of how media frame stories—especially when headlines mention a person's origin in a stigmatizing way. They noted that misleading or sensationalized reporting can contribute to prejudice and reinforce existing stereotypes.
- **Need for Media Literacy:** There was a shared understanding that full transparency in information is hard to achieve due to political and economic interests behind media platforms. The solution proposed is to educate people—especially young people—on how to critically consume and compare multiple sources to get a more accurate picture of events.

Comparison of results

1. Evolving Youth Participation

The focus groups revealed that youth participation in civic and community life is often episodic and project-dependent, rather than embedded within institutional structures. In many cases, young people only became aware of concepts like active citizenship through their recent involvement in temporary initiatives. This signals that, while the potential for engagement exists, its sustainability remains fragile and contingent on the presence of motivated institutions or associations. Despite these limitations, participants across all territories expressed a strong desire to be involved, responsible, and heard, reflecting a readiness for more permanent and structured avenues of participation. Their reflections indicate that youth are not disinterested—they simply need the space, encouragement, and recognition to act.

2. Discrimination and the Call for Deeper Inclusivity

Discrimination—particularly on the basis of ethnicity and social class—emerged as a consistent concern. While the severity of exclusion varied among participants, many shared the perception that diversity is often acknowledged only superficially, especially within school contexts. Inclusive messaging was described as trend-driven rather than transformative, and discussions around discrimination were often seen as taboo or underdeveloped. Participants called for the creation of safe, moderated spaces where these topics can be explored openly and respectfully. They also highlighted the need for skilled facilitators who can guide complex conversations and foster genuine inclusion, rather than symbolic gestures. The young people's input points to a critical gap between the rhetoric and practice of inclusion—and a clear demand to close that gap through ongoing, intentional efforts.

3. Lack of Spaces for Youth Expression and Belonging

A major recurring theme was the absence of dedicated, youth-driven spaces for socialization, creativity, and self-expression. Participants described a lack of physical venues and lamented the fragmentation of youth communities, which limits opportunities for connection, collective agency, and community involvement. This spatial and social disconnection is experienced not just as an inconvenience, but as a barrier to personal and civic development. Young people across all locations expressed a need for inclusive environments where they can gather, explore ideas, and shape initiatives together—spaces that are co-owned and co-managed by youth, rather than simply made available to them. Without these, their capacity to act meaningfully and collaboratively remains constrained.

4. Environmental Awareness and the Challenge of Prioritization

Although climate change and sustainability were not perceived as top concerns among the wider youth population, the participants themselves recognised their strategic importance. Environmental issues were seen as needing greater emphasis in school curricula and public discourse, especially to counter the general disengagement or apathy that may exist among peers. The focus groups suggested that without intentional integration into daily conversation and education, these issues risk remaining abstract and detached from young people's realities. The call was for more practical, visible action and educational engagement around environmental challenges, to bridge the gap between awareness and agency.

5. Digital Misinformation and the Need for Critical Media Literacy

Participants expressed significant concern about the proliferation of fake news and disinformation, especially via social media. They acknowledged that misinformation not only distorts perceptions but can also amplify stereotypes and polarisation, particularly around social and political issues. There was a clear consensus on the urgency of promoting critical thinking and media literacy, both as a protective strategy and as a tool for empowering youth to navigate digital environments responsibly. These skills were seen as essential not just for personal understanding, but for democratic participation and social cohesion in the digital age.

6. Trust, Recognition, and the Need for Continuity

Underlying all themes was a shared sense of readiness and commitment among young people. Participants demonstrated a strong willingness to contribute constructively to society when provided with real opportunities and institutional trust. They expressed a desire not to be treated as future citizens, but as current co-creators of community and culture. However, this motivation must be supported by sustained and authentic partnerships—not symbolic gestures or one-off consultations. Youth are asking for continuity, transparency, and recognition from adult allies and institutions. When invited meaningfully, they respond with creativity, empathy, and responsibility, offering a compelling argument for their deeper integration into all aspects of community and democratic life.

Online interviews with Youth Workers from Casalecchio di Reno

This section summarizes insights from an in-depth online interview with a youth worker operating in Casalecchio di Reno. The discussion explores the composition of the local youth community, the forms and challenges of participation, and the structural limitations affecting inclusive youth engagement. Particular attention was given to how social and cultural dynamics—both within the peer group and in relation to institutions—shape the capacity of young people to participate meaningfully in civic life. The section reflects on existing approaches to anti-discrimination, participation, and youth agency, highlighting both achievements and areas requiring strategic development.

Question 1: What is your role, and what kind of youth do you work with?

- **Diverse Backgrounds and Challenges:** The youth workers operate in both school settings and youth centers, engaging with adolescents from highly diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The youth center serves as a space for both well-integrated adolescents and those with marginalized backgrounds, particularly families from Eastern Europe (mainly Serbian and Roma communities). Many of the latter face significant educational disengagement, economic hardship, and social exclusion, often perpetuated by family dynamics rooted in illegal activities or lack of emphasis on education.
- **Segregation and Integration Efforts:** Despite efforts to avoid creating a segregated or stigmatized space, the center struggles with cultural tensions, particularly between Balkan-origin youth and North African youth, which limit social integration. Some progress has been made in bringing together different youth groups through carefully designed programs such as gender-specific activities and consistent mediation by youth workers.

Question 2: What do you think about youth civic engagement?

- **Low Engagement and Future Disconnection:** Youth participation in civic life is described as extremely low, particularly among marginalized groups. The youth interviewed exhibit little interest in civic discussions or political dialogue and often lack tools and motivation to engage beyond immediate concerns. Their focus is mostly short-term, limited to daily survival or personal status, rather than long-term aspirations or collective initiatives.

- **Mismatch Between Youth Culture and Institutional Formats:** Attempts to engage them in institutional or formal debates are seen as ineffective. Traditional formats of participation appear disconnected from young people's realities and interests, especially when perceived as too serious or imposed from above. There is a need to restructure participation models using formats that resonate with youth culture—such as informal dialogue, creative tools, or digital media.

Question 3: What stimulates or hinders youth participation?

- **Barriers: Institutional Tone and Irrelevance:** Institutional language and formal setups are major deterrents. Young people often feel that civic activities are designed without consulting them and lack relevance to their lives. The absence of spaces where they feel truly welcomed, combined with a perceived need to "perform" even in activism, reinforces disengagement.
- **Lack of Future Perspective:** Many youths feel their future is already determined, often by family expectations or socio-economic constraints. This fatalistic view discourages active participation and creates a sense of helplessness and resignation.
- **Opportunities: Tailored Engagement and Use of Peer Language:** Successful engagement is possible when activities are rooted in young people's real experiences and when they feel heard. Using creative and relatable entry points—such as games, conversations about popular topics (e.g., drugs, sex), or peer-led formats—can foster involvement. However, even these require deep trust and long-term relationships.

Question 4: What can adults and institutions do to help?

- **Support Through Community Networks:** Creating consistent and interconnected support systems around young people is key. Effective interventions must go beyond isolated actions and involve the entire ecosystem: schools, families, coaches, religious institutions, and social services. A coherent and shared approach among all adult figures in a young person's life increases the chances of success.
- **Improving Institutional Communication:** Youth workers highlight the need for improved communication among institutions (e.g., schools, municipalities, ASLs). Currently, the lack of coordination leads to fragmentation and missed opportunities. A shared platform for resource sharing and event visibility would help both youth and youth professionals.

- **Bottom-Up Initiatives:** Institutions are encouraged to consult youth more often and genuinely, asking them what topics they care about before designing projects. This could foster a stronger sense of ownership and participation.

Question 5: What are the biggest fears youth have?

- **Lack of a Liveable Future:** The predominant fear among youth is having no future. They are deeply affected by negative news—ranging from climate crisis and war to job insecurity. Even well-educated youth workers report feeling anxious about the future, which they see as even more overwhelming for less privileged youth who lack access to opportunities and support systems.
- **Pressure to Perform:** Young people are under constant pressure to succeed—academically, professionally, and socially. Exposure to idealized success stories on social media reinforces a sense of inadequacy and failure. This leads many to escape into digital distractions or seek easy gains through risky or illegal behaviours.
- **Escape Through Detachment:** Many youths respond to these pressures by emotionally detaching from the world around them. The strategy of avoidance—through social media, entertainment, or substance use—is seen as a coping mechanism in a context that feels increasingly unliveable.

Conclusion

The youth workers from Casalecchio di Reno paint a complex picture of today's young people: simultaneously overexposed to information and under-supported in translating that information into empowerment. Participation in civic life is hindered by cultural disconnection, lack of trust in institutions, and socio-economic obstacles. Yet, the potential for engagement exists—especially when adult allies invest in relationships, adapt to youth realities, and foster environments that prioritize authenticity, listening, and shared responsibility. Rather than blame or disillusionment, what emerges most strongly is a call for better tools, better networks, and a better listening culture.

Online interviews with a Youth Worker from Portomaggiore

This section summarizes the insights from a youth worker interview. The interview explores the socio-demographic profile of young people attending the youth center, their levels of participation and integration, and the broader systemic and structural challenges in fostering youth engagement and anti-discrimination practices.

Question 1: What is the composition of the youth group and how do they interact?

- **Cultural and Social Composition:** The youth center primarily serves adolescents aged 11 to 16, with a significant majority coming from migrant backgrounds, particularly from North Africa, Pakistan, and Eastern Europe. Most Italian youth from the local area no longer attend the center, which is now largely perceived as a space reserved for "non-Italians."
- **Integration and Group Dynamics:** Integration levels vary within the group. While some youth, particularly second-generation migrants, participate more fluidly across cultural lines, others—especially among certain Pakistani subgroups—tend to remain isolated and resist cultural exposure. Internal divisions even exist within ethnic communities, reflecting broader national or regional tensions. Participation is often reactive rather than proactive, with limited collaborative or co-creative engagement.

Question 2: How is the youth center structured and funded?

- **Organisational Structure:** The youth center in Portomaggiore is the product of a district-wide initiative funded by local youth policies. It is managed by a network of cooperatives under the coordination of local social services. Although well-financed and part of a broader program across nine municipalities, it faces challenges in engaging youth as co-designers rather than service recipients.

Question 3: How is youth participation understood and practiced?

- **Lack of Civic Awareness and Tools:** Young people in Portomaggiore demonstrate limited awareness of civic rights and pathways to participation. Their reactions are often emotional—anger when resources are lacking—rather than grounded in a clear understanding of their rights or the mechanisms to claim them. This lack of structural literacy makes it difficult to engage them in long-term civic involvement or community activism.
- **Fragmented Participation Models:** Participation tends to happen within highly specific interest groups—such as fan cultures or peer-based cliques—rather than around broader civic or political causes. The absence of a unifying civic narrative or shared local engagement opportunities further hinders collective action.

Question 4: What are the structural barriers to participation?

- **Outdated Systems and Misalignment with Youth Needs:** Existing services and policies are perceived as outdated and misaligned with the lived realities of today's youth, especially those from migrant backgrounds. Although services exist, they often fail to resonate with the values or daily experiences of the young people they aim to serve. Consequently, youth have little motivation to engage with institutional mechanisms.
- **Lack of Long-Term Vision:** There is a sense that youth policy efforts are often short-term or pilot-based, lacking a coherent long-term vision. Sustainable transformation would require extended investment and a generational shift supported by continuous programming and community integration.

Question 5: What could effectively stimulate youth engagement?

- **Building Motivation through Purpose:** Rather than adding more resources, the key lies in cultivating internal motivation. Youth need to recognize the purpose and utility of their involvement. However, this is difficult in a context where needs are often anticipated and met before being truly felt, leaving little room for desire, struggle, or ambition to develop organically.
- **Pragmatic Civic Education:** For a future-oriented approach, political and educational institutions should focus on civic orientation—explaining local institutions, services, and opportunities in accessible, real-life contexts. Basic awareness about how their town works and where to access rights or support is essential before expecting deeper civic engagement.

Question 6: How do current youth policies and collaboration with institutions function?

- **Positive Intent, Weak Structure:** While local authorities show a strong willingness to act, their initiatives often lack structural coherence. Projects tend to be one-off rather than part of a strategic plan. Long-term success would require sustained investment and more cohesive planning, ideally over a span of 8–10 years to produce visible change.
- **Campanilism and Fragmentation:** Territorial rivalries and an overly localized mindset can limit the effectiveness of broader youth policies. This contributes to fragmented implementation and hinders efforts toward systemic inclusion or unified youth development programs.

Conclusion

The youth center in Portomaggiore serves a vibrant and diverse population, yet structural and cultural barriers limit deeper civic participation. While integration efforts are ongoing, real transformation requires a generational strategy built on practical civic education, cultural mediation, and long-term institutional commitment. The key challenge lies in moving from reactive engagement to proactive participation—bridging the gap between service consumption and civic co-creation.

Comparison of results

The online interviews with youth workers in Casalecchio di Reno and Portomaggiore reveal both shared challenges and distinct local dynamics in fostering youth participation and inclusion.

Shared Challenges

- **Low Civic Engagement and Disconnection from Institutions:** In both municipalities, youth—especially those from marginalized backgrounds—exhibit limited civic participation. They often lack awareness of their rights and feel disconnected from institutional processes. This aligns with findings from broader studies indicating a gap between institutional rhetoric and the practical implementation of youth policies in Italy.
- **Cultural Segregation and Identity-Based Divisions:** Both contexts experience cultural divisions among youth groups. In Casalecchio, tensions exist between Balkan and North African youth, while in Portomaggiore, Pakistani youth often remain isolated. These divisions hinder integration and collective participation.
- **Perceived Lack of Future Opportunities:** Young people in both areas express concerns about their future, citing issues like job insecurity and social exclusion. This sense of hopelessness contributes to disengagement from civic life.

Distinct Local Dynamics

- **Casalecchio di Reno: Institutional Engagement with Limited Impact:** Casalecchio benefits from a well-structured network of youth services and institutional support. However, despite these resources, youth participation remains low. The formal nature of institutional processes may not resonate with the youth's lived experiences, leading to disengagement.
- **Portomaggiore: Fragmented Services and Cultural Isolation:** In contrast, Portomaggiore's youth services are more fragmented, and there is a notable absence of Italian youth in the youth center. The center is predominantly attended by youth from migrant backgrounds, leading to cultural isolation and limited cross-cultural interaction.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Both cases underscore the need for youth policies that are inclusive, culturally sensitive, and responsive to the actual needs of young people. Strategies should focus on:

- **Enhancing Cultural Mediation:** Implementing programs that bridge cultural divides and promote mutual understanding among diverse youth groups.
- **Reforming Institutional Approaches:** Adapting institutional processes to be more accessible and relatable to youth, moving away from formalism towards more engaging methods.
- **Addressing Structural Inequalities:** Tackling underlying socio-economic disparities that contribute to youth disenfranchisement and hinder participation.

By addressing these areas, municipalities can create environments that not only encourage youth participation but also empower young people to become active contributors to their communities.

2. SPAIN

Online Focus Groups with Young people

This section represents a summary of the main findings from the online focus groups conducted with young people from different cities and associations in Spain.

Question 1: What are the barriers to fulfilling your dreams?

1. **Capitalism:**
    - **Structural Priorities**: Participants noted that the capitalist system instils the idea that job stability is the ultimate goal.
    - **Limited Definitions of Success**: This focus forces individuals to prioritize employment above other forms of stability, often neglecting alternative ways of living well.

2. **Mental Health**:
    - **Interconnection with Employment**: There's a strong belief that achieving job stability is tied to maintaining mental health.
    - **Pressure and Wellbeing**: The constant pursuit of secure employment, driven by societal expectations, creates stress that can compromise mental health.

3. **Education System:**
    - **Academic Pressure**: The education system is seen as contributing to the problem by emphasizing high grades and qualifications as the sole path to job stability.
    - **Neglect of Holistic Development**: This system leaves little room for activities like volunteering or developing other aspects of personal wellbeing, thereby narrowing the scope of success.

Question 2: Why are you worried about your mental health?

4. **Barrier to Do Everything Else**:
    - **Foundation for Life's Tasks**: Participants expressed that if one's mental health is compromised, it becomes extremely challenging to manage personal, social, and professional responsibilities.
    - **Transition Stress**: The step toward joining the labour market, with its accompanying uncertainties, underscores the need for robust mental health as a buffer against everyday challenges.

4. **Global Issues**:
    - **Wider Uncertainty**: Global concerns – ranging from climate change to socio-economic instability – amplify worries about mental health.
    - **Future Anxiety**: The constant exposure to global uncertainties contributes to a persistent anxiety about the future, reinforcing the priority of maintaining mental health.

Question 3: How does the non-fulfilment of human rights affect your daily life?

3. **Social injustice**:
    - **Everyday Impact**: Participants highlighted that violations – such as restricted work rights for migrants or inadequate recognition of mental health as a right – directly undermine quality of life.
    - **Exclusion of Vulnerable Groups**: A lack of recognition of rights for minority groups exacerbates systemic inequities and negatively impacts overall wellbeing.

3. **Job Market**:
    - **Barrier to Stability**: The violation of basic rights, especially related to employment, not only undermines job opportunities but also contributes to ongoing anxiety about entering and succeeding in the labour market.
    - **Mental Health Link**: This directly ties back to mental health, as the inability to secure a stable job further pressures one's psychological wellbeing.

3. **Economic Stability**:
    - **Ripple Effects**: The non-fulfilment of human rights translates into broader economic instability.
    - **Precarious Conditions**: Unstable economic conditions and precarious employment directly affect daily living standards, reinforcing the challenges faced in achieving personal and professional aspirations.

Question 4: What do you think should be done to improve the human rights situation (in Europe)?

Enhance Awareness:

- **Broad Dissemination**: Increase the global reach of human rights knowledge so that all young people across Europe know their rights.
- **Empowerment through Knowledge**: When young people are well-informed, they are better equipped to assess which rights are being fulfilled or violated and make their claims in a more effective manner.

Improve the Education System:

- **Foundational Change**: Education and awareness-raising actions are seen as the most crucial starting points.
- **Skill Development from Early Age**: Reforming the education system to nurture creativity and critical thinking from childhood, rather than just focusing on academic achievements for job stability.
- **Political Advocacy**: Embedding human rights education into the curriculum and supporting political advocacy can help ensure that more rights are recognised and upheld across Europe.

Improve Policies:

- **Inclusive Policy Reforms**: Change policies regarding inclusion and integration and address economic and social inequalities.
- **Reallocation of Resources**: Stop financing arms and re-evaluate international policies that contribute to conflicts.
- **Broader Recognition:** Ensure that all population groups have their rights acknowledged, moving towards a more comprehensive and inclusive human rights framework in Europe.

Question 5: Why do you think that technology seems to be the least important topic among young people?

Relevance:

- **Secondary to Core Issues**: Compared to pressing concerns like health, the economy, and education, technology is viewed as less urgent.
- **Foundation First**: A strong educational and mental health foundation is seen as necessary before technology can play a pivotal role.

Use of It:

- **Ubiquity and Familiarity**: Technology is already deeply integrated into daily life, making it less of a concern for many young people because it is taken for granted.
- **Built-in Acceptance**: Its early incorporation into everyday activities means that technology feels like a natural part of life rather than an emerging issue.

. **Technological Literacy**:

- **Need for Better Education**: The focus is on improving technological literacy through education rather than technology itself being a primary worry.
- **Balancing Use and Skills**: While technology offers many tools for learning and communication, there is a growing need to balance its use with traditional skills such as critical thinking and reading.

Question 6: What is your experience of the quality of the information you receive? Do you think that the information you receive on social networks is good, bad, credible?

. **Reliability Issues**:

- **Misinformation Concerns**: Social networks are often seen as unreliable due to the prevalence of hoaxes, manipulated content, and posts aimed solely at generating views.
- **Guidance Required**: The lack of clear guidelines on identifying reliable sources contributes to stress and anxiety over which information to trust.

. **Saturation**:

- **Overload of Information**: The constant and easy access to multiple devices creates a sense of information overload, leading to overstimulation and difficulty in filtering accurate information.
- **Stress Factor**: This saturation can be overwhelming and even detrimental to mental health, as individuals struggle to navigate the constant influx of data.

. **Diversity of Information**:

- **Multiple Perspectives**: Despite its drawbacks, social networks also offer a broad range of opinions and perspectives that traditional media might not provide.

- **Balancing Risks and Benefits**: While risks such as bullying, manipulation, and misinformation exist, the diversity of viewpoints can enrich understanding if users are guided on how to seek out credible sources.

Question 7: If we want to make a plan for youth participation and share it with public institutions, what response would we get back from them?

1. **Sharing Means**:
   - **Social Media Emphasis**: Youth expect institutions to recommend leveraging social media platforms (such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok) as a primary channel for disseminating proposals, since these are effective in reaching other young people.
   - **Traditional vs. Digital**: While some may still suggest offline methods like flyers, the prevailing view is that digital platforms are more aligned with youth habits.

2. **Priorities Based on the Audience**:
   - **Varied Institutional Attitudes**: Responses may vary depending on the team or officials involved. Some institutions might be receptive and supportive, while others could be dismissive.
   - **Selective Engagement**: The willingness to engage often depends on whether the officials understand and prioritise youth issues.

3. **Align Proposals with Government Plans**:
   - **Strategic Alignment**: Institutions are likely to take youth proposals more seriously if they align with existing government plans or the institution's political and ideological agenda.
   - **Access vs. Implementation**: Even if a proposal gains an initial hearing or gets an appointment, its incorporation into policy remains uncertain if it doesn't match governmental priorities.

4. **Talk to Administrations**:
   - **Big Issue Focus**: Youth are advised to address major societal challenges (e.g., reducing warfare and pollution) in their proposals, suggesting that administrations would appreciate projects that tackle significant, widely relevant issues.
   - **Substance**: The expectation is that administrations might listen if the issues are framed as both urgent and transformative.

5. **Create Sound Proposals**:
    - **Well-Structured Projects**: There is a strong belief that youth need to develop clear, strategic, and coherent proposals to gain institutional attention.
    - **Learning Curve**: Young people must understand administrative processes and the nuances of political advocacy to navigate participation effectively.

6. **Create Safe Spaces**:
    - **Need for Genuine Platforms**: Current participation mechanisms are seen as inadequate. Youth feel that institutions do not sufficiently protect or support safe spaces for expressing ideas.
    - **Building Networks**: There's a call for linking external networks and internal institutional mechanisms to foster a more supportive environment for youth voices.

7. **Less Bureaucracy**:
    - **Simplify Processes**: Bureaucratic procedures are viewed as a major deterrent for youth engagement.
    - **Resource Ownership**: While institutions hold resources that could support youth initiatives, cumbersome formalities often discourage active participation, highlighting a need for streamlined, more accessible processes.

Online Focus Groups with Youth workers

This section represents a summary of the main findings from the online focus groups conducted with youth workers from different cities and associations in Spain.

Question 1: What do young people need to participate?

1. Networks
Young people come from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and are often involved in various associations. Participants noted that these networks play a pivotal role in:

- **Facilitating information flow**: By being part of established networks, young people receive training and share experiences, which prepares them to become future agents within their communities.
- **Enhancing visibility and engagement**: Networks create opportunities for youth to showcase their abilities and engage in social participation. The existing fabric of local associations and multicultural groups acts as a living example of how integrated networks can encourage active participation.

2. Safe Spaces
Alongside robust networks, creating safe spaces emerged as a critical need for young people's active participation:

- **Addressing isolation**: Many young people, especially those from abroad – such as individuals from Morocco, Mali, or other cities – often experience loneliness. Providing spaces where they can meet peers helps combat isolation.
- **Encouraging social interaction**: Safe spaces offer a secure environment for sharing personal experiences and building supportive relationships. For instance, in Bilbao, having a designated space where young people who might not otherwise interact can connect is seen as an essential step towards fostering community engagement.
- **Building confidence**: These environments not only promote the social well-being of young people but also empower them to contribute meaningfully to their communities, reinforcing their sense of belonging and visibility.

Question 2: What are the motivations for youth participation?

1. Desire for change & Empowerment
Young people are drawn to participation because it offers them the chance to affect meaningful change. Many expressed that engaging actively allows them to address specific deficiencies in their environment. This drive is often linked to an initial taste of autonomy – an opportunity to step away from passivity and start shaping their own futures.

2. Belonging & Identity
A recurrent theme is the need to belong and build a shared identity. Participants highlighted that being part of a community where they feel listened to and valued reinforces their sense of self. Through participation, they not only contribute to collective change but also solidify their own identity, establish common bonds, and evaluate themselves in a supportive context.

3. Social Interaction & Enjoyment
Socializing is a core motivation. Many young people see participation as a way to meet others, build friendships, and simply enjoy themselves.

Events such as annual meetings are cherished not only for the networking opportunities, they offer but also for the fun and relaxed atmosphere they create. These social experiences help foster trust and a sense of community.

4. Being Supported & Heard
Feeling genuinely listened to is essential. Youth are motivated by environments where their ideas and demands lead to tangible outcomes. This sense of support not only validates their contributions but also reinforces their self-esteem, encouraging them to persist in their efforts.

5. Clear objectives & Agency
The focus group emphasized that knowing there are defined goals behind participatory activities makes involvement more meaningful. When young people see that their actions have clear, positive repercussions, they are more likely to take the initiative. The empowerment that comes from being the protagonist of change is a decisive factor in their sustained engagement.

6. Social Conscience & Dreams
Underlying these practical motivations is a strong social conscience. Youth participation is often fuelled by a desire to address broader societal issues and to keep alive the dreams and ideals characteristic of youth. The optimism and "illusion" of youth – believing that they can truly make a difference – further propel them into active roles within their communities.

Question 3: What advantages do you think young people have when it comes to participation compared to adults?

1. Creativity & Unconventional visions

- **Innovative thinking**: Young people are noted for their ability to generate unconventional, "crazy" ideas that often challenge traditional methods. This creativity prompts older generations and decision-makers to reconsider established projects and approaches.
- **Fresh perspectives**: Their renewed vision and unconventional views allow them to see problems – and solutions – in ways that adults might overlook. Although society may sometimes underestimate the depth of their opinions, these innovative insights serve as catalysts for change.

2. Dynamic attitudes & Enthusiasm

- **Passionate engagement**: Youthful energy and enthusiasm are seen as key drivers of participation. Their impulsive and unfiltered approach often translates into a willingness to fight for what they believe in, even if they lack extensive experience.
- **Optimism & Resilience**: Having encountered fewer setbacks, young people tend to maintain a sense of hope and ambition. This optimism fuels their persistence, making them more inclined to take risks and engage actively in social struggles.

3. Proactive engagement & Agency

- **Empowered action**: Young participants are often at the forefront of change, turning personal vulnerabilities into a commitment to improve their surroundings. Their eagerness to be part of the change reflects an inherent drive to shape their future and their communities.
- **Building identity**: Through active participation, young people not only contribute to communal change but also reinforce their own sense of identity and belonging. This dual benefit strengthens both individual self-esteem and collective social bonds.

4. Social networks & Information access

- **Broader networks**: Youth tend to have wider social circles – fostered during their school years and through modern digital platforms – which provide them with more opportunities to connect and mobilize. These expansive networks can lead to a richer pool of ideas and resources.
- **Ease of access to information**: With the pervasive influence of technology and the internet, young people have easier access to current information and diverse perspectives. This advantage equips them with the knowledge and resources necessary to engage effectively in participatory processes.
- **Time & Flexibility**: Compared to older adults, young people often have greater flexibility and time to invest in participation, further amplifying their potential to drive change.

Question 4: What do we need to guarantee youth participation?

1. Presence in their spaces

Young people are most accessible in the spaces they already frequent. Rather than expecting them to come to traditional public or institutional settings, efforts must be directed toward engaging with them where they naturally gather. This approach requires tailored facilities and outreach strategies that resonate with their daily environments.

2. Transforming the education system

The current educational framework often confines youth within a rigid, scholastic environment. Participants argue for a reimagined education system – one that transforms high schools into dynamic youth centers. By integrating spaces that nurture debate, creativity, and social interaction, schools can become more effective platforms for fostering participation.

3. Promoting agency & Allowing mistakes

A key aspect of participation is granting young people the freedom to act autonomously – even if that includes making mistakes. Embracing a model that values experimentation over immediate perfection is crucial.

Institutions and educators need to adopt flexible approaches that encourage risk-taking and support learning through trial and error, rather than imposing rigid expectations that stifle creativity.

4. Flexibility in approach
Flexibility is essential both for institutions and for the young people themselves. A willingness to experiment, adapt, and iterate – accepting that not every initiative will work as planned – can create a more resilient participatory culture. This trial-and-error mindset allows for innovation and continuous improvement in how we engage with youth.

5. Building alliances
Overcoming adult centrism is a critical step in fostering genuine youth participation. Establishing alliances – both between young people and adults, and among different youth groups – creates a supportive network where experiences and concerns can be openly shared. Such alliances help build trust, making it easier for young people to express their needs and feel validated.

6. Ensuring economic & Political stability
Long-term participation requires the backing of stable political and financial support. Without dedicated funding, coherent policies, and sustained political will, initiatives risk being undermined or short-lived. A stable environment not only secures resources for youth centers and projects but also builds trust in youth professionals and participatory frameworks.

7. Strengthening skills building
Lastly, the development of soft skills and self-confidence is fundamental. Youth professionals and participants alike need opportunities for skills building – ranging from effective communication to leadership and conflict resolution. This internal capacity is vital for guiding, mentoring, and enabling young people to take on meaningful roles in their communities.

Question 5: What do we need from institutions?

1. Economic & Political stability

- **Long-term commitment**: Institutions must invest in youth policies and allocate adequate resources that go beyond short-term projects tied to political cycles. A commitment from the highest levels – for example, strong support from the mayor's office – is crucial to empower young people.
- **Empowerment & Individuality**: Recognizing that every young person has a unique background and life process, institutions should design policies that account for diverse economic, personal, and family situations. Only through tailored support can youth build the confidence they need to participate actively.

- **Sustained processes**: It is essential to create programs that accompany young people throughout their development. One-off initiatives risk disillusionment and frustration; instead, institutions must ensure continuity to nurture long-term trust and engagement.

2. Creating & Adapting spaces

- **Diverse youth spaces**: Institutions should generate and diversify spaces that are specifically designed for young people. In places like Castellón, this means creating environments that are not adult-centric but instead are adapted to the interests and needs of youth.
- **Autonomy in resource management**: Beyond simply providing facilities, institutions need to empower young people to manage these spaces. Reducing the paternalistic approach allows youth to take ownership, experiment, and innovate within their own environments.

3. Effective communication

- **Rethinking visual & Verbal messaging**: Current strategies that rely on stereotypical images—such as skateboarding or graffiti—fail to address the true diversity and complexity of young people. Institutions need to update their communication, ensuring that designs and messaging resonate authentically with youth.
- **Visibility & Outreach**: More proactive communication efforts, such as larger, more inclusive posters and billboards, can better promote youth participation. The goal is to shift the focus from adult-centric activities to dynamic, youth-oriented initiatives that invite young people to engage without preconceptions.

3. PORTUGAL

Online Focus Group with Young people from Santa Maria da Feira

The online focus group was conducted with young people from Santa Maria da Feira aged 17–21, representing diverse backgrounds (student associations, youth wings of political parties, civic movements).

Question 1: What has been your experience with civic or political participation, and what motivated you to join this conversation?
Participants began by introducing themselves and explaining their reasons for participating. The discussion revealed a spectrum of engagement: some align closely with formal structures (party youth wings or student bodies), while others adopt a critical, non-partisan stance. Traditional channels were often described as restrictive – summed up by the refrain "it's always been that way" – whereas many voiced a desire to innovate, favouring more direct, horizontal, and digital forms of participation.

Question 2: What do the images depicting young people's dreams and fears evoke for you? What struck you most?
The AI-generated images served as a springboard for reflection. Participants split between those who found it easier to relate to the fears, which felt grounded in everyday reality, and those who resonated more with the dream images, despite their abstract nature. This visual exercise activated both emotional and intuitive responses, prompting rich dialogue about freedom, work, stability, and future aspirations.

Question 3: If you had to think to one of your worries or dreams, what would it look like?
This prompt highlighted a pervasive sense of societal inertia. Attendees criticised the "always been that way" mindset as a barrier to change. Through their imagination, they expressed frustration at feeling powerless to shape their own futures, balanced by a collective conviction that change is both possible and essential – provided young people assert themselves more forcefully.

Question 4: What obstacles do you see in communicating opportunities aimed at young people?

Discussion then shifted to the disconnect between institutional messaging and young audiences. Current channels were deemed too fast-paced and fragmented – echoed in difficulties participants faced using tools like Miro. They argued for simpler language and more engaging formats, stressing that it's not youth apathy but poorly designed communication that alienates them.

Question 5: Which themes connect your dreams and your fears?

A sense of precarity emerged as a unifying thread. Economic and social instability permeates every aspect of life – education, work, housing – and hinders young people's ability to build stable futures. This chronic uncertainty was described not merely as a material condition but as an ever-present mindset affecting hopes and fears alike.

Question 6: What do you make of the fact that many young people say they will emigrate after graduation?

The statistic mentioned by one of the participants – over 70% of young people emigrating – provoked alarm. Emigration was framed less as choice and more as necessity. Participants saw it as a symptom of a national system unable to retain its most qualified talent. The gap between high-quality local training and inadequate domestic opportunities fuels this exodus.

Question 7: How do you envision a better future for your country?

Visions for an improved Portugal coalesced around ambition and retention. Youth called for long-term strategic planning that balances economic growth with social justice and innovation. They spoke of a nation that not only educates its young people but also provides them compelling reasons to stay and contribute.

Question 8: Between economy and the right to housing, which concerns you more?

The right to housing was flagged as an urgent issue. High property prices combined with low wages leave many young people unable to secure independent housing without crippling debt. This predicament reinforces precarity and often becomes the tipping point driving emigration.

Question 9: Why didn't you list technology among the main themes?

Although not initially prominent (in the survey), technology and AI quickly became a focal point when participants considered its impact on employment and education. Enthusiasm for innovation was tempered by fear that traditional degrees might soon be obsolete, as machines encroach on professional domains.

This tension underscores a broader anxiety about society's ability to adapt to rapid technological change.

Question 10: What worries you about information and today's society?
Excessive and often unreliable information – particularly online – creates confusion and mistrust. Participants described difficulty distinguishing fact from fiction, a condition that breeds insecurity and a sense of powerlessness in tackling systemic challenges.

Question 11: Do you believe education is truly accessible to everyone today?
While scholarships and grants exist, many noted that higher education remains effectively elitist.
Indirect costs – transport, housing, living expenses – force some students to abandon or alter their academic ambitions, perpetuating social inequality.

Question 12: Which topic do you regard as the highest priority?
When asked to rank all the issues discussed, several participants highlighted climate change as fundamental: without a habitable planet, no other rights or opportunities can exist. Although only about 15% initially prioritized the environment, the group agreed that awareness must grow given its overarching impact on all facets of life.

Online Focus Groups with Young people from Cascais

The online focus group was conducted with young people from Cascais aged 12–17, from local youth centers and associations.

Question 1: What feelings or thoughts do these images provoke in you?
Participants alternated between confusion – calling some images "strange" or "all mixed together" – and momentary clarity, identifying solitude, hunger, pollution, or relational toxicity. The rapid-fire exercise revealed how visuals can both engage and alienate, with many young people admitting they "couldn't fully grasp" certain abstract scenarios.

Question 2: Do these images reflect your own concerns and dreams as youths?
When asked whether the depicted worries and hopes matched their own, most agreed broadly but felt the representations needed to go further. They saw family, work-study balance and environmental threats as personally salient, yet noted that some images oversimplified complex issues like social inequality or mental health.

Question 3: Education and human rights emerged as top priorities in the survey. How do you respond to that?

Hearing that over half of respondents prioritized education – and a similarly high share valued human rights – participants confirmed these as fundamental. They stressed that without quality schooling or guaranteed rights, other challenges become insurmountable. One participant noted that "without education you can't earn money," tying learning directly to economic opportunity.

Question 4: If you had to choose between education and the economy, which would you pick first?

Faced with this trade-off, most selected education, arguing that robust schooling underpins future prosperity. They insisted that money only follows when people are well-qualified, and that neglecting education would sabotage any long-term economic gains.

Question 5: Why did the climate issue register as less interesting in the survey?

Participants speculated that climate change feels abstract or distant, despite acknowledging its real impact – pollution, dying marine life. They suggested greater visibility of environmental consequences and more hands-on projects could elevate young people's sense of urgency.

Question 6: The survey showed strong support for human rights. Which rights matter most to you?

Young people emphasized equality and freedom – especially freedom of expression and assembly. They linked those rights to fair treatment in school, warning that discrimination or bullying by teachers undermines trust in institutions. They argued that genuine human-rights education must tackle racism and elitism head-on.

Question 7: What improvements would you make in your educational experience?

Critiques focused on motivation and relevance. Some felt schoolwork was uninspiring or too theoretical. They called for more practical, community-oriented projects, greater teacher accountability, and stronger anti-bullying measures. One suggestion was to integrate local issues, such as environmental initiatives, directly into the curriculum.

Question 8: How safe do you feel, both locally and in the wider world?

Most reported feeling personally secure but expressed anxiety about global conflicts and the lingering effects of the pandemic. They linked public health scares and geopolitical tensions to a broader sense of uncertainty, noting that "you never know what might happen next".

Question 9: If you could implement one local change, what would it be?
Proposals ranged from reducing rent and ensuring free library access to organising community tournaments with prizes and cultural exchanges. They envisioned tournaments, intercultural visits, or exchange programmes that would both engage peers and strengthen neighbourhood bonds.

Question 10: At a European level, what policy would you advocate?
Participants looked to countries with strong social safety nets (e.g. Scandinavian models) and suggested mandatory recycling laws, universal housing rights, and more youth-oriented mobility schemes – such as subsidised trips to European institutions in Brussels – to foster a sense of belonging and shared responsibility.

Question 11: Do you feel empowered to tackle climate change as young people?
They insisted that small acts – reducing litter, recycling properly – matter now and that youth should champion these practices. “We are the future,” one said, stressing that early habits can shape broader cultural shifts.

Question 12: How do adult behaviours influence you?
Participants recognised that adults set examples – good and bad – especially regarding environmental care and respect for public space. They proposed designated smoking areas and stricter fines for littering, arguing that visible adult responsibility would encourage youth to follow suit.

Question 13: How do you source information, and what role do social media play?
Most obtain news from TV and social networks, but they lament the prevalence of misinformation and the ease of encountering “offensive or hateful” content. They called for stronger moderation and clearer age guidelines, noting that some online platforms feel like “a mass of unfiltered noise.”

Question 14: If you could design your own social network, what content would it feature?
Their ideal platform would prioritise educational and community-building content – interactive quizzes, local event listings, positive storytelling – over sensationalism. They want spaces that promote civic engagement rather than gossip or clickbait, with robust controls to prevent hate speech and protect younger users.

Online Focus Group with Young people from Vila Verde (1)

The online focus group was conducted with young people from Vila Verde aged 17–20, many founding members of the local youth collective GIF J.

Question 1: Can you introduce yourselves and mention any civic or youth-group involvement?
Participants opened by naming their age, place of origin, and affiliations. Three had co-founded GIF J; others were active scouts, theatre-club alumni or school volunteers. Although some had paused extracurriculars due to university commitments, all expressed intent to re-engage. This diversity of engagement set the tone for a discussion rooted in both grassroots organizing and personal passion.

Question 2: How do these AI-generated images of dreams and fears make you feel?
When shown ten dream images and ten concern images, reactions ranged from confusion – calling some visuals "strange" or "mixed together" – to immediate emotional labels like "solitude," "hunger," or "pollution." That mix of bewilderment and clarity highlighted how abstract AI art can both hinder and spark authentic emotional responses among youth.

Question 3: Do these images reflect your own fears and dreams?
On whether the images matched personal experience, one participant rejected the "traditional family" scene as unrepresentative of single-parent households, while another reframed the wealth motif, expressing desire for a "comfortable life" rather than luxury.
A third one connected the first image to their goal of financial independence, and another identified with an isolated figure watched by many eyes, capturing adolescent struggles with belonging. Lastly, one other projected their teaching-career precarity onto these visuals, underscoring instability in their future profession.

Question 4: The survey ranked education and human rights as top priorities. Do you agree?
All agreed that education's prominence reflects their life stage – many years of formal schooling – and underpins future stability. Human rights also resonated: youth described a drive to "leave a mark" through causes like anti-racism and LGBTQ+ inclusion and saw rights as a broad framework for societal fairness.

Question 5: Why was climate rated less urgent in the survey?
It was argued that climate change feels abstract or distant, leading to apathy. Information overload and a sense of helplessness – "people think nothing can be done" – diminish engagement, despite severe temperature spikes and threats to infrastructure.

Question 6: Why are human rights rated so highly?

Today's youth reportedly seek active participation in shaping society. Historical parallels (e.g. Berlin Wall's fall) were mentioned, alongside modern movements. Many peers align behind human-rights causes – anti-xenophobia, anti-homophobia – as a way to "participate in history" in new, digital-age ways.

Question 7: Which human rights matter most to you?

Rights were discussed generally, with emphasis on freedom of expression, assembly, and equality. Participants saw human-rights education as essential to combating discrimination – particularly racism and elitism – in schools and communities.

Question 8: How do these topics affect your daily life?

Exam anxiety and peer distress were highlighted: some reported classmates crying before assessments due to grade pressure. Education's emotional toll was thus underscored as a lived reality.

Question 9: What concrete interventions would you propose?

Suggestions included holistic reform of Portugal's education system – extending beyond curriculum to career support for teaching and support staff – and stronger human-rights training that balances freedom with responsibility.

Question 10: What would you like to see in Vila Verde to improve youth participation?

Participants listed several interventions:

- Public events showcasing local artistic talent, to bring culture beyond school walls.
- Reliable, youth-friendly transport enabling minors without cars to attend extracurricular activities.
- More recreational venues – cinema, theatre, art spaces – and job opportunities to retain youth locally.
- Upgraded animal-welfare facilities, recognising pet care as part of civic life.
- School workshops normalising public-speaking skills to build confidence and civic engagement.

Online Focus Group with Young people from Vila Verde (2)

Another online focus group was conducted with young people from Vila Verde aged 12–15.

Question 1: Can you introduce yourselves and tell us about any civic or group involvement?
Participants described themselves primarily as students with limited formal civic engagement. Some were involved in informal activities such as school projects, church choirs, and community challenges focused on teamwork and self-development. Their accounts showed that while formal participation was low, there was openness to informal, collective initiatives.

Question 2: How do the AI-generated images of dreams and fears make you feel? Do these images reflect your own concerns and aspirations?
Participants found the images broadly reflective of their own experiences. They recognised themes such as achieving personal goals and emotional experiences like loneliness and family affection. There was little sense that important aspects of their realities were missing from the visuals, and, overall, they affirmed that the images captured their key aspirations and worries. Scenes related to achieving financial independence and finding emotional security resonated strongly, suggesting that core material and relational needs remain central to youth aspirations today.

Question 3: The survey ranked education and human rights as top youth priorities. Do you agree?
Participants largely agreed with the prioritisation of education and human rights. However, they emphasised that the high interest in education reflects a need for change rather than satisfaction. They mentioned challenges like mistreatment within schools, both in peer relationships and in general school dynamics.

Question 4: What would you change in education if you could?
Participants suggested strengthening respect among peers and combating violence and bullying within the school environment. They expressed the need for more proactive citizenship education and stronger emotional support systems in schools, addressing issues indirectly related to education quality but critical for a healthy learning environment.

Question 5: Why do you think climate change was a lower priority in the survey?
When reflecting on why climate and technology attracted less interest, participants suggested that these issues feel less urgent or personal compared to education and rights. Although aware of environmental problems, they admitted to struggling to connect those issues directly to their daily lives.

Question 6: What sources currently shape your interest in social issues?
Participants pointed to school and social media as their main sources of information and interest. The internet and peer interactions often expose them to themes like rights and societal concerns, although depth and critical understanding sometimes remain limited.

Question 7: Which human rights matter most to you?
Participants viewed all human rights as important but acknowledged that some, such as housing rights, education access, and protection against abuse and domestic violence, hold urgency in their view. Respect for others, anti-bullying efforts, and safe learning environments were repeated themes.

Question 8: What role does technology play in your lives?
Technology was seen as a double-edged sword. Participants appreciated its role in maintaining long-distance friendships and facilitating communication. However, they also pointed to the risks, such as identity deception online and the overexposure of very young children to mobile technology. They expressed mixed feelings, with a preference for maintaining the benefits while curbing the negative impacts.

Question 9: What about security issues? Do you feel affected?
The group acknowledged rising insecurity both locally and globally, citing incidents like prison breaks as signs of declining public safety. They connected this broader climate of fear to their personal lives, expressing concerns about personal and community security.

Question 10: Do you believe young people can act to address these challenges?
Participants believed that collective action was essential. Working as a team – among students, teachers, and staff – was seen as a more effective strategy than acting individually. While teamwork was recognised as challenging to implement, it was also seen as key to meaningful change.

Question 11: What local project would you like to develop?

When asked to imagine a project to improve their community, participants suggested:

- Repairing and maintaining sidewalks damaged by heavy trucks.
- Promoting responsible pet ownership, specifically encouraging dog owners to clean up after their pets.
- Organising school campaigns to keep school grounds clean and increasing the number of rubbish bins on campus.

These suggestions focused on small but tangible improvements that could significantly enhance community well-being.

Comparison of results

1. Civic and Political Engagement

A prominent theme across the focus groups was young people's eagerness to engage in civic and political life, coupled with frustration at traditional channels. Participants described varied levels of involvement – some were active in student unions, youth councils, or local initiatives, while others felt alienated by formal politics. Many criticized the "it's always been that way" mentality in established institutions, indicating that conventional party or school structures often feel too rigid or hierarchical. Instead, youths expressed a strong desire for more direct, horizontal forms of participation, including digital platforms and grassroots movements that allow their voices to be heard. This pattern reflects their lived experience of often being sidelined in decision-making, as well as an aspiration to assert greater agency. Indeed, even the youngest participants showed openness to collective action (through school projects or community groups) when it felt meaningful, highlighting a generational urge to innovate how they contribute to society.

2. Education and School Experience

Education emerged uniformly as a top priority and a deeply felt concern in all groups. Young people affirmed that quality education is the bedrock of their future – without it, they cannot access good jobs or opportunities. This conviction was so strong that when forced to choose, most placed education above the economy, reasoning that long-term prosperity depends on an educated society. However, their high prioritization of education was *not* a sign of satisfaction; rather, it stemmed from first-hand awareness of flaws in the current system. Participants across regions noted that school often fails to motivate or relate to real life – describing coursework as overly theoretical and uninspiring at times.

They advocated for practical learning and curriculum reforms, such as integrating community projects or contemporary issues (e.g. environmental initiatives) into lessons to make learning more relevant. Additionally, school climate was a recurring topic: youths recounted experiences of bullying, discrimination or poor student-teacher relations that undermine a healthy learning environment. They called for greater respect among peers, better teacher accountability, and stronger emotional support systems in schools. The stress of academic pressure was also evident, with some mentioning anxiety and classmates in tears before exams – a clear sign that educational success comes at a psychological cost. Altogether, this theme reveals both the importance of schooling in young people's aspirations and their critique of how the system must change to truly support their development.

3. Economic and Housing Precarity

A pervasive sense of economic insecurity threaded through the conversations, encompassing worries about jobs, financial stability, and housing.

Young people consistently described a feeling of precarity in trying to build independent adult lives.

Low wages, scarce quality jobs, and the skyrocketing cost of living (especially housing) were cited as major obstacles that leave them unable to achieve stability. Several participants highlighted housing as an urgent concern: high rents and property prices, combined with modest incomes, make it nearly impossible for youth to live independently without incurring crippling debt. This precarious situation not only causes day-to-day stress but also shapes their long-term plans. In one focus group, alarm was raised over a statistic that over 70% of young people plan to emigrate after finishing their studies. Emigration was largely framed as a forced choice – a symptom of a country that educates its youth well but fails to provide matching opportunities. Across discussions, the prospect of having to leave Portugal to find adequate work or affordable living was a common fear. Even those not yet at the point of migration voiced the underlying issue: they aspire to a "comfortable life" with a stable job and home, but often perceive their own country's system as a barrier to that dream. This theme reflects both lived experiences of economic hardship (many have seen family or friends struggle to find secure jobs) and a concern that without significant change, their generation's aspirations for stability might only be achievable abroad.

4. Social Inclusion and Human Rights

Another strong pattern was the emphasis on human rights and social inclusion, which young participants regarded as fundamental to a fair society. In surveys and discussions, equality, freedom, and respect repeatedly rose to the top of their values.

Many youths expressed a desire to “leave a mark” by advocating for causes such as anti-racism, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and anti-xenophobia, seeing these as ways to participate in shaping a more just future. Across the focus groups, participants stressed that rights like freedom of expression and assembly are not abstract ideals – they connect directly to their daily lives, for instance through demands for fair treatment in school. There was frequent mention that discrimination or bullying (whether by peers or even teachers) erodes their trust in institutions and must be confronted. As a result, they called for genuine human-rights education that addresses issues like racism, elitism, and gender-based violence head-on from an early age. Even the younger teens echoed that all fundamental rights are important but singled out certain urgent needs: access to education for all, the right to housing, and protection from abuse and domestic violence, among others. This theme highlights that Portuguese youth are highly attuned to social justice issues — likely influenced by both historical memories and current movements — and they aspire to a society where everyone is treated with dignity. Their focus on inclusion and rights reflects personal experiences (such as witnessing bullying or inequality in school) and a broader idealism to build a more equitable community around them.

5. Environmental Awareness and Climate Action

Climate change and environmental sustainability were discussed in every group, revealing a nuanced pattern: young people recognize the fundamental importance of a healthy environment, yet often feel a degree of detachment or powerlessness regarding this issue. When prompted, participants agreed that without a habitable planet, no other ambitions (education, jobs, rights) can ultimately matter. In fact, some eventually ranked climate change as a *foundational* concern that underpins all others. However, this urgency was not initially top-of-mind for many. Several youths admitted that climate threats can feel abstract, distant, or “too big” to grasp in everyday life. They suggested that this sense of distance – along with information overload about global problems – breeds apathy or helplessness in their generation, despite clear signs of environmental trouble (like extreme temperatures or pollution that they themselves noted). Consequently, a recurring view was that making environmental issues more concrete and relatable could boost engagement: for example, showing visible local impacts of pollution or involving youth in hands-on eco projects could transform climate change from a remote concept into a personal priority. Indeed, when discussing practical action, participants across groups showed enthusiasm for small but meaningful steps. They believe youth “are the future” and emphasized that everyday acts – recycling properly, reducing litter, conserving resources – do matter. Some even proposed policy ideas such as stricter recycling laws or more green public spaces, reflecting a willingness to champion sustainability if given the chance.

Overall, the environmental theme reveals a mix of concern and psychological distance: young people aspire to live on a sustainable planet and many are quite aware of climate issues, but they struggle to connect this global challenge to their immediate reality and agency.

6. Digital Technology and Information

Growing up in the digital age, participants shared complex views on technology's role in their lives. On one hand, they celebrated the benefits of modern technology and social media: these tools help them maintain friendships across distances, access information quickly, and even organise community activities. Some focus group members expressed excitement about innovation and the possibilities that digital platforms offer for learning and connection. On the other hand, a strong undercurrent of concern ran through their comments about the online world. Many youths feel overwhelmed by the flood of information on the internet and struggle to distinguish reliable facts from false or misleading content. Several described today's media environment as a "mass of unfiltered noise" that breeds confusion and mistrust in society. Encounters with hate speech, bullying, or offensive material online were commonly mentioned, and participants worried about how easily young users (even children) can stumble upon harmful content.

The advent of advanced technology like AI also sparked anxiety: some wondered if their hard-earned degrees or skills would become obsolete as automation encroaches on jobs, reflecting a broader fear of society not adapting fast enough to rapid tech changes. Despite these worries, youths did not advocate rejecting technology; rather, they called for *smarter* use of it. Ideas raised included stronger moderation of social networks to combat misinformation and protect users, clearer age-appropriate guidelines for content, and designing online spaces more geared toward education and positive community engagement instead of mere sensationalism. In sum, technology and media represent a dual theme in young people's lives – empowering in the opportunities they provide yet challenging in the new risks and uncertainties they introduce. This duality mirrors the participants' experience of being digitally connected almost by default, while remaining wary of the pitfalls that come with that connectivity.

7. Personal Well-Being and Security

Throughout the discussions, youths frequently alluded to their personal well-being, revealing worries about mental health and general safety. The pressure they face in academic and social settings emerged in anecdotes about anxiety – for example, students described intense stress around exams, with some peers even breaking down in tears due to fear of poor grades. Such experiences underscore how the competitive educational environment is affecting their emotional health.

Beyond school walls, young people also voiced a broader sense of insecurity tied to the state of the world around them. In one group, participants noted that while they feel physically safe in their local community day-to-day, they remain anxious about larger-scale threats: ongoing global conflicts, public health crises like the pandemic, and even local incidents (such as news of a prison break) contributed to a feeling that "you never know what might happen next." This pervasive uncertainty feeds into their fears for the future and can dampen optimism. At the same time, many youths clearly yearn for greater stability and support. They advocated for more approachable mental health resources and supportive relationships (with teachers, mentors, or peers) to help navigate stress. Likewise, the importance of collective security was mentioned – a sense that communities should work together (students with teachers, neighbours with authorities) to address safety issues and build trust. In essence, this theme shows that alongside big social and economic issues, young people are acutely aware of their own psychological and physical safety. Their concerns reflect lived experiences of stress and exposure to a tumultuous news cycle, while their hopes – for stronger support networks and a safer environment – reflect an aspiration for peace of mind as they move into adulthood.

Online interview with Youth Worker from Santa Maria da Feira (1)

The online interview was carried out with a youth worker from the Santa Maria da Feira Youth Office.

Question 1: Can you briefly introduce yourself and your work?

The youth worker described coordinating local projects that focus on young people with fewer opportunities, promoting skill development beyond formal education, and supporting volunteering and international mobility. There was a strong emphasis on inclusion, accessibility, and creating pathways for diverse personal growth.

Question 2: What role do you have in youth associations or civic engagement activities?

Beyond their municipal role, the professional is active in cultural associations and NGOs dedicated to solidarity work, both in Portugal and internationally. This experience gives a broad perspective on young people's needs, including the role of culture and community solidarity in youth development.

Question 3: What were your first impressions of the AI-generated images depicting youth concerns and dreams?

The images were perceived as reflective of youth experiences, evoking themes such as the uncertainty of transitioning from education to work, the loneliness driven by societal pressures, and the challenges of maintaining mental health. Positive imagery around material success, family building, and the search for a healthy work-life balance resonated strongly.

Question 4: Do the survey results align with your experience of working with youth?

Overall, the survey findings aligned well with local realities. Education and human rights emerged as key concerns, though issues like climate change appeared less prominently. The participant noted that although some young people show interest in environmental issues, this is not widespread.

Question 5: Why do you think environmental issues received lower prioritisation among youth?

It was suggested that environmental issues, while important, seem distant or overwhelming. Youth may feel discouraged by the perceived lack of impact from their actions compared to the responsibility of larger actors such as corporations. As a result, attention shifts toward areas where they can perceive more direct influence, like education, economy, or community well-being.

Question 6: What are the most pressing issues for youth locally?

Rights, society, and economy were identified as top priorities. Access to opportunities, combating stigma and discrimination, and ensuring fair economic prospects dominate young people's daily concerns. Educational quality, more than educational access, was also highlighted as a crucial factor.

Question 7: How do technology and information shape youth concerns today?

The growing influence of digital technologies was seen both as a source of empowerment and as a cause of concern. Young people access more information than ever, but the way communication occurs – often without empathy or critical filtering – can lead to emotional harm. Misuse of digital platforms and online misinformation were noted as significant risks.

Question 8: What kind of social network would better serve youth information needs?

It was suggested that a positive-news-focused platform could counterbalance the current dominance of negative, sensationalist narratives. A network highlighting uplifting and constructive stories could foster optimism and more meaningful engagement.

Question 9: What concrete projects would you propose to meet emerging needs?
A project was proposed to specifically support young immigrants facing communication barriers in local schools. The aim would be to create targeted initiatives to improve language skills and integration, addressing a gap in the support system for new arrivals. Community engagement, including volunteers and cultural associations, would be essential for success.

Question 10: How motivated are young people to contribute to social change?
Although some young people perceive their impact as limited, many are highly active and committed. They believe in contributing to change, even if systemic challenges sometimes discourage long-term engagement. Practical initiatives and visible results help sustain motivation.

Question 11: Which issues should be prioritized locally, nationally, and internationally?
Locally and nationally, human rights, society, and economy were highlighted as the most urgent areas. At the European level, human rights remained central, with added attention to security. Globally, economic challenges were seen as dominant, though there was also hope for greater emphasis on human rights.

Question 12: What topics are less addressed in your youth work?
While most topics are integrated into programming, areas like economic development are addressed indirectly, focusing on supporting disadvantaged youth.
Environmental topics, while present, have received less recent emphasis, highlighting an area for future development.

Online interview with Youth Worker from Santa Maria da Feira (2)

The online interview was conducted with a youth worker active in national and local youth sectors.

Question 1: Can you briefly introduce yourself and your work?
The participant described an extensive background in youth leadership and civic engagement, having been active in associations from a very young age. Professionally, they work in communication, education, and school management, while continuing to volunteer for various youth initiatives. This diverse experience provided a strong foundation for the reflections shared during the interview.

Question 2: What were your first impressions of the AI-generated images depicting youth concerns and dreams?

The AI-generated images were interpreted as illustrating critical issues faced by young people. Visuals portraying a descent through a spiral staircase symbolized the devaluation of education, while empty spaces suggested feelings of loneliness and unmet social expectations. Other images highlighted career ambition, lifestyle aspirations, and the pressure for professional success, indicating a shift toward standardised, conformist dreams among youth.

Question 3: Do the survey results align with your experience of working with youth?

The participant confirmed that the survey findings were consistent with broader perceptions: young people today show a strong awareness of key issues like society, education, and human rights. This awareness, however, contrasts with a feeling of limited capacity to effect change, particularly regarding systemic issues like climate action.

Question 4: Why do you think environmental issues received lower prioritisation among youth?

Environmental concerns were seen as saturated topics. Years of intensive campaigning, combined with a lack of impactful political action, have created fatigue among young people. While they recognise the importance of the environment, they increasingly feel powerless to make a meaningful difference, leading to disengagement from environmental activism. Furthermore, traditional environmental discourse often fails to offer new, relatable narratives, causing young people to lose interest.

Question 5: Which issues do you believe are most urgent at local, national, and international levels?

Society was identified as the primary concern at local level, with growing signs of social disintegration among youth in the municipality. Economic challenges were considered the most pressing issue at national level, particularly regarding opportunities for young people. Economic stability was again prioritised, reflecting concerns over prospects within the EU context. Lastly, security was highlighted, with references to increased global instability affecting travel and international relations.

Question 6: What types of youth activities do you organise, and what topics do you address less often?

Youth activities have largely focused on technology and society, including work on artificial intelligence and digital literacy. Environmental issues are touched on far less frequently, partly due to a perceived lack of expertise in the area and youth disengagement. Economy-related topics are also less directly addressed, despite their relevance.

Question 7: What factors do you think influence youth interest or disinterest in social issues?

Policy effectiveness and the perceived adequacy of responses to societal problems were considered decisive. When young people see ineffective or insufficient political action, it can either discourage them or motivate them to become agents of change. Broader political and media environments play crucial roles in shaping engagement levels.

Question 8: How do you assess the communication of youth policies today?

The participant praised recent efforts to digitise and simplify youth policy communication, making it more accessible and relatable to young audiences. Digital dissemination and direct consultation events were seen as effective in strengthening awareness and encouraging participation.

Question 9: What local project would you propose to strengthen youth engagement?

A proposal was made for a live podcast format – a casual, deconstructed public conversation involving political leaders, association representatives, and young people. Unlike formal conferences, this format would prioritise open dialogue and avoid politicised rhetoric, offering a relaxed space to discuss real issues. The event would target around 30 - 40 young participants and foster civic rather than strictly political engagement.

Question 10: What are your views on the current online information system?

There was significant concern over the spread of misinformation across digital platforms. Although digital tools were acknowledged as powerful communication vehicles, the lack of fact-checking and the speed of information dissemination were seen as major risks, leading to corruption of the information ecosystem.

Question 11: If you could create a new social network focused on news, how would it work?

The ideal model would involve validated news, with every story cross-checked by credible, relevant sources before publication. Reducing disinformation and ensuring journalistic professionalism were considered essential to rebuilding trust in media, especially among young audiences.

Online interview with Youth Worker from Santa Maria da Feira (3)

The interview was carried out with a youth worker active in NGO and with a background in early childhood education and scouting.

Question 1: Can you briefly introduce yourself and your work?

The participant shared extensive experience in both formal education and non-formal youth engagement through NGO projects and scouting. Their perspective was shaped by daily interactions with young people and educational staff in Santa Maria da Feira, combining fieldwork with a strategic understanding of funding, project development, and consortium management.

Question 2: What were your first impressions of the AI-generated images depicting youth concerns and dreams?

The images prompted emotional reflections: a descent metaphor signified an overload of information rather than growth; a floating child symbolised loneliness and vulnerability; scenes of public scrutiny evoked feelings of constant observation and pressure; images related to school backpacks triggered associations with daily burdens and academic stress. Dream-related images – like modern homes, family gatherings, and serene cityscapes – were seen as positive representations of common youth aspirations for comfort, safety, and belonging.

Question 3: Do the survey results align with your experience of working with youth?

The participant confirmed that the survey findings reflected real priorities among local youth. There was recognition of rising concern for human rights, social diversity, and economic futures, while interest in climate and technology, although present, appeared secondary. Recent local and global events, especially migration flows and security crises, had clearly influenced youth concerns.

Question 4: Why do you think environmental issues received lower prioritisation among youth?

It was suggested that older youth (ages 15 - 24) are currently more sensitive to social issues like migration, justice, and human rights than to environmental concerns. In contrast, younger children (primary and middle school ages) show greater environmental sensitivity. This generational shift reflects the evolving context of Portuguese society, where diversity and migration have become more visible and pressing topics.

Question 5: Which issues have the strongest impact on young people today?
Security concerns and human rights violations – especially related to migration and conflicts like Gaza – were seen as highly impactful. Youth are described as sensitive to distant crises, feeling both emotionally connected and frustrated by the international community's inaction. This awareness makes rights and social justice more tangible and urgent topics for them.

Question 6: What roles do schools, NGOs, and associations play in shaping youth concerns?
Schools and NGOs were seen as having a crucial role in countering prejudice, misinformation, and superficial political narratives among youth. The participant emphasised the importance of equipping young people with critical thinking tools, helping them distinguish informed opinions from uncritical repetition of slogans encountered through media or peer networks.

Question 7: How are different topics addressed in your activities?
Youth initiatives span education, climate, society, economy, security, human rights, and technology. Examples included financial literacy workshops for children to understand family expenses, projects addressing migration and violence, and requests from teachers for non-formal educational activities to enrich classroom learning. Environmental themes are addressed, although not as prominently as social topics.

Question 8: Which topic would you prioritise if you were a policymaker?
Social diversity was highlighted as the most urgent theme at local, national, European, and global levels. Promoting an attitude of openness and welcome towards migrants and fostering shared ethical values were considered crucial steps towards ensuring a more inclusive and cohesive society.

Question 9: How do you view the use of social media by young people?
A very critical stance emerged: social networks were described as overwhelming spaces filled with disinformation, absurdities, and radical content. Concerns focused on children's inability to filter reliable from unreliable information, leading to fears of manipulation and early radicalisation. Social media was seen as creating "bubbles" that limit curiosity and critical engagement, posing risks for both personal development and democratic participation.

Online interview with Youth Worker Vila Verde

The online interview was carried out with a youth worker from Vila Verde.

Question 1: Can you briefly introduce yourself and your work?

The participant described a diverse career path, starting as an early childhood educator before specialising in child sociology. Their work spans formal education, library reading initiatives, child protection commissions, and community-based support services. Their current role involves coordinating the GIF Office for Children and Families, a municipal service addressing children's, youth's, and families' needs through participatory and empowerment-oriented activities.

Question 2: What were your first impressions of the AI-generated images depicting youth concerns and dreams?

The images were perceived as deeply reflective of today's youth experiences. Visuals evoked themes of social isolation, information overload, pressure to succeed, and fragile emotional security. Dream-related images, such as serene cityscapes or family gatherings, resonated with youth aspirations for safety, belonging, and emotional well-being.

Question 3: Do the survey results align with your experience of working with youth?

The participant confirmed a strong alignment between the survey data and the realities they observe. Youth are highly sensitive to societal injustices, economic instability, and human rights issues, while climate concerns, although present, appear secondary in their daily priorities.

Question 4: Why do you think environmental issues received lower prioritisation among youth?

It was suggested that young people today feel somewhat defeated about the environment. There is a tension between a sense of irreversible damage and a simultaneous hope for action, though feelings of helplessness often prevail. This dual perception diminishes environmental urgency compared to more immediate social issues.

Question 5: What are the most urgent topics in your local context?

Human rights were identified as the most urgent issue locally, particularly in relation to inclusion and anti-discrimination efforts. Education and social cohesion were also seen as critical, especially considering Vila Verde's rapid demographic diversification due to immigration.

Question 6: How do young people view their participation and agency?

Young people reportedly feel that although opportunities to voice their opinions exist, their ideas are often not taken seriously or are used more for public image than for real influence. This creates frustration and scepticism, highlighting a need for more genuine, structured pathways for youth participation.

Question 7: What kind of activities or projects would better support youth engagement?

The participant proposed establishing independent spaces for youth civic engagement, detached from schools, where young people could discuss, propose, and influence decisions. These spaces would help counter the variability of school-based opportunities and provide a stable platform for youth expression beyond formal education.

Question 8: How do social networks affect youth participation and communication?

Social media were seen as double-edged tools: while essential for visibility and connection, they also generate pressure, misinformation, and fear among youth. Some young people recognise the dangers and hesitate to fully engage online, revealing a need for education around critical digital literacy and responsible online behaviour.

Online interview with Youth Worker from Cascais (1)

The online interview was conducted with a youth worker from Cascais.

Question 1: Can you briefly introduce yourself and your work?

The participant outlined a career dedicated to working with children and youth, especially those at risk. Their experience spans formal education, social interventions, and extensive involvement in community projects targeting various age groups. They currently work in a ludoteca (recreational center) that serves a wide age range, up to young adults aged 22–23. This role emphasises youth participation and community engagement.

Question 2: What were your first impressions of the AI-generated images depicting youth concerns and dreams?

The images prompted immediate associations: the figure with books symbolised education as both opportunity and burden; solitary figures captured feelings of isolation and uncertainty about the future; family and workplace scenes evoked aspirations for stability, achievement, and belonging. The participant found the tool powerful for eliciting diverse interpretations based on personal experience.

Question 3: Do the survey results align with your experience of working with youth?

The participant confirmed strong alignment. They noted that while education remains central to many young people's worries and hopes, it is not universally valued, some view school as irrelevant. Concerns about professional futures and a sense of existential emptiness also surfaced as major themes among the youth they work with.

Question 4: Did any survey results particularly surprise you?

The participant was not surprised by the survey results but stressed the importance of understanding why many young people feel disconnected from change-making processes. A common perception is that their voices are either ignored or have little real impact. This discouragement undermines their motivation to engage actively.

Question 5: Why do you think environmental issues received lower prioritisation among youth?

Many young people, especially those in local contexts like Cascais, tend to have a more localised view of issues rather than a global perspective. This is partly due to limited exposure to global news and discussions beyond their immediate educational and social environments.

Question 6: Why are human rights a central concern for youth?

The participant observed that young people today are highly aware of their rights, both individually and collectively. This awareness often translates into a strong concern for human rights generally, although their understanding tends to focus on rights that directly affect their lives and aspirations rather than a broad, systemic view.

Question 7: What factors shape youth interest in societal topics?

Proximity to issues – through personal experiences, education, or association work – was seen as a major factor. Social media also plays a strong role in shaping youth interests and opinions, though often without critical engagement or fact-checking.

Question 8: Which topics are most addressed in your activities?
Participation and civic engagement were prioritised, especially encouraging young people to understand and act upon what they can change at a local level. Macro-issues like climate change or security were less prominent unless triggered by specific current events, which would then be discussed informally.

Question 9: What challenges emerge when engaging youth in long-term projects?
The participant noted that youth today prefer short-term initiatives with visible results. Long-term engagement strategies are often less effective because immediate feedback and achievements are highly valued. This trend is attributed in part to the influence of fast-paced digital communication environments.

Question 10: How do informal conversations help address complex topics like security and migration?
Rather than structured projects, discussions about sensitive topics often arise spontaneously in reaction to news events. These informal moments are seen as critical opportunities for deconstructing myths and providing alternative viewpoints in a way that is accessible and non-threatening to youth.

Question 11: Which priorities do you see at different levels (local, national, European, global)?
Security was identified as a key concern at local level, especially the need to address misinformation about local safety issues. Education was prioritised at national level, with worries about declining expectations and the value placed on learning. Economic issues, particularly wage disparities and job opportunities across different countries, were highlighted as urgent. Security again emerged as a priority, given its growing impact on political stability and personal safety worldwide.

Question 12: What types of participation processes would better involve diverse youth?
The participant advocated for developing participatory processes that involve youth from all social backgrounds, ensuring diverse perspectives are represented. These processes must lead to tangible outcomes to prevent cynicism and reinforce young people's belief that participation matters.

Question 13: How do you view the flow of information online?
While the abundance of information was recognised as a positive feature of the digital age, the participant warned about the overwhelming spread of misinformation. Young people often lack the critical skills needed to filter and verify what they consume online.

Question 14: What would an ideal social network look like for youth information?
An ideal platform would prioritise educational and culturally enriching content over gossip or superficial entertainment. The goal would be to provide young people with reliable, meaningful information that enhances their understanding of the world and fosters global citizenship.

Online interview with Youth Worker from Cascais (2)

The online interview was conducted with a youth worker from the Ludoteca do Alcoitão, part of the Municipal Network of Ludotecas in Cascais.

Question 1: Can you briefly introduce yourself and your work?
The participant described a professional trajectory in education, beginning in early childhood and progressively expanding to youth work. Currently managing a ludoteca in a public housing neighbourhood, they support around 95 young people aged 10 - 16. Their approach is highly participatory, creating open spaces for learning, experience-sharing, and personal growth outside formal school settings.

Question 2: What were your first impressions of the AI-generated images depicting youth concerns and dreams?
The images triggered immediate emotional interpretations. Worry-related images evoked stress, loneliness, and academic pressure, while dream-related visuals represented aspirations for stable family life, home ownership, career success, and travel. The participant noted how such imagery resonated with the ambitions and insecurities expressed daily by local youth.

Question 3: Do the survey results align with your experience of working with youth?
The participant confirmed a strong alignment. Young people in the ludoteca community show concerns about education, employment, and life stability, but often struggle to articulate concrete future plans unless guided. Economic hardship and barriers to higher education access, especially linked to ethnic or social origin, were also highlighted as prevalent worries.

Question 4: Why do you think environmental issues received lower prioritisation among youth?
Environmental concerns were seen as less immediate for local youth. Media saturation, lack of direct personal impact, and the prioritisation of economic survival over abstract future threats contribute to lower engagement with climate issues. Interest tends to be driven by external triggers rather than intrinsic awareness.

Question 5: What factors shape young people's main concerns and interests?
Family history, cultural background, and social media exposure were cited as key influences. Experiences of inequality and narratives within families regarding work and success deeply shape youth perspectives. Social media amplify certain issues but often lack the depth needed to foster critical engagement.

Question 6: How do young people relate to human rights issues?
Awareness of human rights begins with personal experiences of exclusion or disadvantage. Many young people initially focus on their own access to rights but, over time, this self-awareness can foster broader solidarity with others. Topics such as racial and gender equality are increasingly part of their conversations.

Question 7: Which themes would you prioritise at local, national, European, and global levels?
Education was seen as the foundational pillar for tackling all other issues at local level. Education remained the priority, with special emphasis on improving access and quality at national level. Society was prioritised at European level, focusing on social cohesion, inclusion, and how citizens perceive and treat one another. Lastly, education again was stressed as essential, encompassing both formal and non-formal learning to equip individuals for an evolving world.

Question 8: What kind of project would you propose to support youth participation locally?
A project on financial literacy emerged as the most pressing idea. Based on recent informal activities, there was a clear need to help young people better understand budgeting, financial planning, and collective resource management, especially to support ambitions like travel or personal projects. This theme resonated deeply given the socio-economic background of the youth.

Question 9: How do you view the use of social networks among young people?
Social networks were described as primarily entertainment tools, not reliable information sources. The participant criticised the loss of empathy caused by online communication and expressed concerns about disinformation, cyberbullying, and the negative impact of anonymity. While recognising the advantages of digital access, they emphasised the need for stronger digital literacy and face-to-face communication skills.

Question 10: If you could create a new type of social network, what would it look like?
An ideal platform would minimise written communication to reduce online hostility, focusing instead on images and real-world interaction. The participant envisioned a space oriented more toward positive entertainment and human connection rather than debate or conflict.

Comparison of results

1. Pressures and Aspirations in Youth Lives

Across the interviews, youth workers consistently observed a dual reality in young people's lives: high levels of pressure and anxiety on one hand, and hopeful aspirations on the other. Many young people experience significant stress, loneliness, and "information overload" as they navigate academic and social pressures. Feelings of uncertainty about the future are common, with youths burdened by daily schoolwork and societal expectations that challenge their mental health and emotional security. At the same time, these young people harbour strong aspirations for stability, belonging, and success. Images of happy families, home ownership, career achievement, and a healthy work-life balance resonated with their dreams, reflecting a widespread desire for comfort and future security. This contrast between present struggles and future hopes emerges as a fundamental theme in how youth workers describe the mindsets of today's youth.

2. Education as Opportunity and Burden

Education stands out as a central theme, viewed by youth and youth workers as both an essential opportunity and a source of frustration. On one hand, education is seen as the foundation for young people's future success – a pathway to employment, personal growth, and empowerment. Interviewees frequently identified improving education access and quality as a top priority for addressing youth issues at local and national levels. Young people's worries often revolve around their schooling and what comes after: there is widespread anxiety about the transition from education into stable jobs and adult life. However, not all youth see formal schooling as positive or relevant. Some youth workers noted that certain adolescents feel alienated by traditional education – viewing school as "irrelevant" – which contributes to disillusionment or even a sense of existential emptiness regarding their future. Thus, while education is universally acknowledged as critical for opportunity, it can also be experienced as a heavy burden or a flawed system that does not fully engage or benefit every young person.

3. Economic Insecurity and Life Opportunities

Closely tied to education is the theme of economic insecurity and inequality. Youth workers reported that young people are deeply concerned about their employment prospects, financial stability, and the fairness of economic opportunities available to them. In many communities, youths confront economic hardship and limited job options, which is especially acute for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Barriers linked to social or ethnic origin – such as unequal access to higher education or quality jobs – were highlighted as persistent worries shaping young people's futures. As a result, economic issues like unemployment, low wages, and job precarity dominate many youths' concerns alongside education and social issues. Youth workers across different regions emphasized the need to equip young people with skills to navigate these challenges. For example, proposals for financial literacy workshops arose as a practical way to help youths manage budgeting, plan for projects, and achieve a measure of economic independence despite difficult circumstances. Overall, securing a stable livelihood and narrowing inequality is seen as crucial for empowering young people, making the economy a central thread in their daily concerns and aspirations.

4. Social Inclusion and Human Rights Awareness

Another prominent theme is young people's heightened awareness of social inclusion, equity, and human rights. The youth workers noted that many youths are acutely sensitive to issues of discrimination, exclusion, and injustice in their surroundings. Often, this awareness begins with personal experiences – for instance, instances of bias or disadvantage that a young person faces can spark their interest in rights and fairness. Several interviewees observed that youths initially focus on defending their own rights and access to opportunities, but this can evolve into broader solidarity with others who face similar challenges.

Topics such as racial equality, gender equality, and inclusion of immigrants were frequently mentioned as being at the forefront of youth conversations today. Young people are described as increasingly vocal about the need for respect and equal treatment, reflecting Portugal's growing social diversity. In fact, some youth workers identified "society" – referring to social cohesion and acceptance – and human rights as urgent priorities to address with young people at local and national levels. Furthermore, youths are not only concerned with their immediate community; they also react to global human rights issues. For example, participants noted that conflicts and humanitarian crises abroad (such as migration issues or events like those in Gaza) resonate with young people, making social justice a tangible and urgent topic for them. Across the interviews, fostering an attitude of openness, anti-discrimination, and human rights awareness is seen as essential to empowering the new generation.

5. Environmental Concerns as a Secondary Priority

When it comes to environmental issues, the consensus among these youth workers is that climate change and ecology, while recognised as important, tend to be a secondary priority for many young people. The interviews suggest several reasons for this lukewarm engagement. First, environmental problems often feel abstract, distant, or overwhelming to youth when compared to more immediate life challenges. Young people may care about the planet, but many feel that their personal actions have minimal impact in the face of large-scale forces like government and corporations, leading to a sense of discouragement or powerlessness. Second, some respondents described a fatigue factor: years of hearing about climate crisis without seeing effective political action has led to diminished urgency among youth. They perceive environmental discourse as saturated with doom, yet lacking new solutions or relatable narratives, which causes attention to drift elsewhere. Additionally, a subtle generational dynamic was noted – younger adolescents and children in school might display more environmental concern (thanks in part to education on the topic), whereas older youth (teenagers and young adults) are currently more attuned to social and economic issues than to climate activism. One youth worker summarized that many youths feel "defeated" about the environment, caught between hope for action and a fear that it's too late. Consequently, unless a specific event or project brings climate issues to the forefront, environmental action tends to be eclipsed by other concerns. The interviews underscore a need to re-energize environmental engagement in a way that empowers young people, but as of now, climate issues remain important yet not top-of-mind in comparison to education, jobs, or social justice.

6. The Impact of Social Media and Information Overload

All the youth workers interviewed highlighted the profound influence of social media and the digital information environment on young people's lives. Social networks are described as double-edged tools that simultaneously connect youth to the world and subject them to new risks. On one side, online platforms enable communication, creativity, and access to information; on the other, they inundate young users with content that is often unfiltered and unreliable. A recurring concern is the spread of misinformation and extremist or harmful content through social media. According to the interviewees, many adolescents struggle to distinguish credible information from "absurdities" or falsehoods online, which can leave them vulnerable to manipulation, anxiety, or even radicalization. Social media algorithms tend to create echo chambers or "bubbles" that reinforce existing views and limit curiosity, reducing young people's exposure to diverse perspectives. Moreover, the impersonal nature of online interaction – often anonymous and text-based – can erode empathy and healthy communication.

Youth workers gave examples of how constant comparison on social networks generates pressure and fear among youth, and how cyberbullying or toxic debates can harm their well-being. In response to these challenges, the interviewees stressed the importance of critical digital literacy. They see a pressing need to equip young people with the skills to critically evaluate online information and engage responsibly. Schools and NGOs are viewed as key actors in teaching youth how to filter news and think independently, countering prejudice and simplistic narratives spread on the internet. Some youth workers even imagined new information platforms tailored for youth – for instance, social networks focused on verified news or positive content – to rebuild trust and encourage meaningful engagement rather than passive scrolling. In sum, navigating the flood of digital information is a major theme in youth work, with efforts aimed at protecting and empowering youths in their online lives.

7. Youth Voice, Participation and Empowerment

Finally, a strong theme across all interviews is the emphasis on empowering young people to have a voice and participate meaningfully in society. The youth workers agreed that today's youth are often very aware of societal issues and want to be involved in change, but they face obstacles in translating that desire into real influence. A common observation is that while opportunities for youth input exist (such as youth councils, surveys, or forums), young people frequently feel their voices are not truly heard or valued. Several interviewees shared that youths perceive their contributions to be tokenistic – used for appearances or consultation checkboxes – rather than leading to concrete action. This breeds frustration and cynicism: when young people sense that their opinions will be ignored or have "little real impact," they can become disillusioned and withdraw from civic engagement. Despite these hurdles, many youths remain eager to contribute. Youth workers noted that a significant number of young people are highly active and committed to causes they care about, and they believe in contributing to change at local and global levels.

The **challenge**, then, is to provide channels for participation that are authentic and effective. Interviewees emphasized the need for more inclusive and structured pathways for youth engagement, where diverse young voices can influence decisions and see results. In practical terms, they suggested creating independent youth spaces and forums beyond the school setting, where young people can gather, discuss issues, and collaborate on solutions with support but without patronising oversight. Others proposed innovative formats – for example, informal dialogues or "live podcast" events bringing together youth and policymakers – to encourage open conversation and bridge the gap between young citizens and authorities. Crucially, all youth workers agreed that for empowerment to be genuine, youth participation must lead to tangible outcomes.

When young people observe that their initiatives (even small local projects) result in visible change, it validates their efforts and sustains their motivation to remain engaged. This theme of strengthening youth agency underscores many of the interviews: it is about moving from listening to youth toward entrusting them with real roles in shaping the community, thereby turning their awareness and energy into positive action.

4. HUNGARY

Online Focus group with young people (1)

Question 1: Can you introduce yourselves and what you see as the most pressing issues for young people?

Participants introduced themselves and immediately emphasized a range of interconnected concerns. A major issue identified was social isolation: many felt that individuals increasingly retreat into their own worlds, leading to loneliness and fragmentation. Difficulties in communication between different social groups and heightened sensitivity in interactions were also seen as significant problems. Other pressing concerns included difficulties in finding meaningful employment, women's rights in the labour market, migration issues, and a widespread sense of mental health deterioration linked to societal acceleration. Participants reflected on how these challenges not only affect personal well-being but also erode social cohesion.

Question 2: How do you perceive education as a social issue in your communities?

Education was seen as both a gateway to opportunity and a system in need of deep reform. Several participants recognised the widening access to higher education, but they noted that increased access has not necessarily improved social mobility, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Criticism was directed at the perceived oversaturation of university degrees, leading to overeducation and underemployment. Moreover, participants highlighted that education too often tries to fit diverse students into a rigid meld, ignoring individual strengths and interests. The system's strong emphasis on theoretical over practical knowledge was also critiqued, with calls for better career guidance, more recognition of vocational professions, and the integration of life skills and emotional intelligence training.

Question 3: What local-level policy changes would you suggest?

At the local level, participants advocated for improving the status and conditions of teachers. They suggested higher salaries, greater autonomy in curriculum development, and measures to restore prestige to the teaching profession. There was also a call for strengthening mentoring programs within schools to better support students' personal and professional development. Some emphasized that community service and volunteering should be made more meaningful and better integrated into educational pathways.

Question 4: What European-level changes would you propose?

On a European level, participants proposed reforming education methods toward more interactive and group-based learning. Inspiration was drawn from Finnish and Western European models, which prioritize student collaboration, critical thinking, and enjoyment in learning. Participants also stressed the importance of improving access to international mobility programs, such as Erasmus, and enhancing alternative language learning methods to make studying abroad more accessible. They highlighted the value of sharing best practices among EU countries and suggested that exchange programs not just for students but also for teachers could foster innovation.

Question 5: What role can young people play in driving change?

Participants agreed that young people must act as catalysts for change but emphasized the need for intergenerational cooperation. They advocated for horizontal, partnership-based relationships between youth and adults rather than hierarchical ones. Empowering young people to ask questions, initiate dialogue, and participate equally in decision-making processes was seen as essential. Participants also highlighted that change should start locally, with youths building small, supportive communities and modelling the behaviour they wish to see.

Question 6: How do you view environmental issues locally and at the European level?

Environmental concerns were recognised as important, though participants noted that engagement often remains superficial. Recent recycling initiatives were seen as well-intentioned but poorly implemented, leading to public frustration. Participants expressed scepticism about individual actions' effectiveness when corporate and governmental regulations remain weak. Nonetheless, examples of good practices, such as school projects promoting recycling and sustainable creativity, were cited as effective ways to foster environmental responsibility from an early age. At the European level, participants called for stronger regulation of multinational corporations to address pollution and environmental degradation. They argued that while individual efforts are valuable, systemic changes are essential for real impact.

Question 7: If you could create an initiative around an issue important to you, what would it be?

Participants imagined projects centred on combating loneliness, building small community networks, and fostering positive social interactions.

They emphasized that even small initiatives – such as organizing local meetups, using social media creatively, and encouraging everyday kindness – could make a difference. Some reflected on the difficulty of mobilizing people initially, citing a general lack of proactivity, but expressed optimism that with persistence and good team-building, meaningful change is possible.

Online Focus group with young people (2)

Question 1: What are the main dreams and fears that guide young people's lives?
Participants highlighted a highly diverse set of dreams among youth, shaped by social background and environment. Some young people aspire to professional success or artistic achievements, while others focus on more immediate and pragmatic goals, such as completing their education and securing financial independence. However, many young people from marginalized backgrounds appeared to lose the capacity to dream altogether, confronted early with the harsh realities of segregation, poverty, and limited opportunities. It was observed that coping mechanisms often replace long-term aspirations, with youths adjusting their expectations downwards in response to systemic barriers.

Question 2: What social issues most concern or affect young people?
Social isolation, exclusion, and discrimination were recurring themes. Participants noted that many young people experience profound loneliness and a sense of powerlessness in influencing their environment. Racism and prejudice, especially against Roma youth and other minorities, were described as persistent and often overt. Some youths internalize these forms of discrimination, while others reflect them outward, perpetuating exclusionary attitudes within their own peer groups. Issues related to gender equality and sexual orientation were also raised, with young people sometimes showing high sensitivity and defensive reactions around these topics. Overall, while youth are increasingly exposed to discussions on social justice, their engagement is complex and influenced by internalized biases.

Question 3: What aspects of education most hinder young people's development?
The discussion highlighted deep systemic issues within the education system. Participants pointed to widespread functional illiteracy, especially among disadvantaged youth, and emphasized that schools often fail to compensate for social inequalities. The system was criticized for enabling segregated schooling, facilitated by the policy of free school choice, which often reinforces socio-economic divides.

Teacher shortages, low morale among educators, and outdated pedagogical methods were cited as major obstacles. Participants stressed that education rarely addresses emotional or relational skills and instead reproduces disadvantage rather than alleviating it.

Question 4: What local policy changes would you recommend?

At the local level, participants called for a complete restructuring of the education system rather than minor adjustments. Proposals included raising the social status and salaries of teachers, decentralizing school district management, abandoning top-down national curricula, and introducing more inclusive, less hierarchical educational models. There was strong criticism of the dominance of church schools in rural areas and the resulting educational segregation. Participants also urged for a reconsideration of how school choice is handled to prevent further marginalization of vulnerable groups.

Question 5: What European-level actions could be effective?

Participants expressed scepticism about the European Union's ability to intervene meaningfully in deeply nationalized education and social systems. Nevertheless, they valued project-based initiatives that promote youth mobility, inclusion, and cultural exchange. They emphasized the importance of spreading best practices across member states, but noted that these good practices often cannot fully counteract national-level deficiencies.

Question 6: What role can young people play in driving change?

Participants agreed that young people possess significant potential for action but often lack awareness of the opportunities available to them. There was strong self-criticism regarding the difficulty of reaching and motivating young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Opportunities like youth exchanges and travel programs exist but often remain underutilized due to economic barriers, lack of language skills, or disbelief that participation is possible. Efforts to build confidence and strengthen agency among young people were seen as essential. It was stressed that young people need to be shown, through accessible communication and supportive structures, that they can influence their own lives and communities.

Online Focus group with young people (3)

Question 1: What are the main dreams and fears that guide young people's lives?

Participants shared that young people's primary dreams revolve around securing a livelihood, achieving financial independence, and building a stable family life. However, fears related to economic insecurity, lack of job opportunities, and long-term uncertainty were widespread.

Some youths also expressed concerns about the ongoing global conflicts and their potential impacts, such as war or political instability. These larger threats contributed to an overall feeling of vulnerability and apprehension about the future.

Question 2: What social issues most concern or affect young people?

Social fragmentation and a lack of meaningful connections were seen as significant problems. Participants described how many young people retreat into online spaces, leading to a passive observation of life rather than active participation. Political tension and the risks young people face during protests were also highlighted. Overall, participants felt that young people are increasingly isolated, discouraged from engagement, and susceptible to external influences without strong critical thinking skills.

Question 3: What aspects of education most hinder young people's development?

Education was perceived as highly stressful and often counterproductive. Participants reported that the pressures of graduation exams, combined with constant testing and administrative burdens, create an overwhelming environment. There was also criticism of how schools handled the transition to digital learning during the pandemic, with many feeling unprepared for new learning methods. More broadly, the education system was seen as failing to equip young people with life skills, self-awareness, and emotional resilience. Participants argued that basic relational and emotional competencies should be taught from early childhood.

Question 4: What local-level policy changes would you recommend?

At the local level, participants advocated for a greater focus on children's rights, support services, and opportunity-driven education. They called for school reforms that would prioritize listening to young people's needs, building self-awareness from kindergarten, and providing better early developmental support. There was a strong consensus that young people often feel unheard and that existing education structures are unresponsive to their real experiences and aspirations.

Question 5: What European-level actions could be effective?

On a European level, participants emphasized the value of spreading best practices and supporting mobility initiatives. However, they expressed concern that European programs often remain inaccessible to many youths due to language barriers, lack of financial support, or limited awareness. Participants stressed the importance of making youth opportunities more inclusive and visible, particularly for those from marginalized communities.

Question 6: What role can young people play in driving change?

Young people were seen as capable of initiating change, but participants highlighted that support structures and role models are crucial. They emphasized the importance of small community-building efforts, peer support networks, and local initiatives that empower young people to feel agency in their own environments. Nevertheless, participants also pointed out that systemic obstacles often lead to burnout, cynicism, or disillusionment if young efforts are not recognised or supported.

Question 7: How do young people access information, and what challenges do they face?

Access to reliable information was identified as a major challenge. Participants explained that many young people rely heavily on social media, especially TikTok, for news. However, this often results in fragmented, superficial understanding, driven by short video formats that hinder deeper attention spans. They also noted that once young people are exposed to a certain narrative or "rabbit hole," they tend to stay within it without critically questioning the information. There was consensus that digital literacy, including critical thinking about sources, needs to be actively taught both in schools and through youth programs.

Online Focus group with young people (4)

Question 1: What are the main dreams and fears that guide young people's lives?

Participants described a generation whose dreams and fears are deeply shaped by uncertainty. The dominant fear among youth is not achieving stability: concerns around career prospects, housing, and life direction were seen as major sources of stress. Political instability and socio-economic pressure were highlighted as significant fears, particularly among urban youth. Dreams were often pragmatic rather than grand: achieving personal success, building memories, and finding a secure place to belong were common aspirations. For many, stability itself – rather than ambition or exploration – has become the central dream.

Question 2: What social issues most concern or affect young people?

Social fragmentation, loneliness, and a lack of community ties emerged as key concerns. Participants emphasized the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people's social development, especially those from rural areas, now often referred to as the "Covid generation". There was also a strong emphasis on mental health struggles, reflecting a widespread desire for calm and emotional well-being. While some youths show interest in political and democratic issues, particularly those engaged through mentoring or activism programs, the majority prioritize personal security over broader political engagement.

Question 3: What aspects of education most hinder young people's development?

The educational system was heavily criticized for being over-structured, stressful, and unresponsive to young people's real needs. Participants noted that curriculum overload, constant evaluation, and an outdated pedagogical model create a toxic environment. Young people feel disconnected from the rigid, traditional education system, and value non-formal methods that foster autonomy, creativity, and emotional safety. Schools were also seen as unsafe spaces where bullying is common and where students lack genuine relational support.

There was consensus that the Hungarian education system fails to prepare students with practical skills, critical thinking abilities, and emotional resilience, perpetuating inequalities rather than alleviating them.

Question 4: What local-level policy changes would you recommend?

Participants called for greater school autonomy, decentralization of education, and the reintegration of civil society actors into schools. They stressed the importance of allowing schools and teachers more freedom to innovate and adapt to their students' needs. Proposals included revising the National Curriculum to focus more on skills than rote knowledge, raising the attractiveness of the teaching profession, and ensuring greater support for disadvantaged students, including restoring compulsory education until 18 years old. Participants also called for more funding to support school innovation and extra-curricular learning opportunities.

Question 5: What European-level actions could be effective?

At the European level, participants advocated for greater support for educational innovation, teacher training, and youth mobility programs. They stressed that EU resources should better reach the actual users – young people and educational institutions – rather than being lost through bureaucratic inefficiency or corruption. Expanding access to Erasmus programs and strengthening transnational youth exchanges were seen as critical to building both European identity and local democratic resilience. Participants also suggested that the EU should actively support civil society in member states where national support is lacking.

Question 6: What role can young people play in driving change?

Youth were seen as capable agents of change, but the focus group noted major structural barriers. While many young people engage through volunteering and civic activities, participants stressed that activism is often precarious: involvement can carry social and professional risks, leading many to withdraw once they enter the workforce or start families.

There was a strong emphasis on the need to create safe, supportive environments where young people can gradually build their confidence and leadership skills through small-scale initiatives, collective decision-making, and project-based learning.

Question 7: What information do young people have access to, and what are the challenges?
Participants expressed serious concern about the erosion of critical information ecosystems. Young people primarily access news through social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. However, these platforms often favour entertainment and sensational content over critical or objective information. Participants reported that many youths are unable to distinguish reliable information from biased or misleading sources. The role of influencers in shaping young people's political and social perceptions was highlighted as a worrying trend. It was acknowledged that while a small minority of youths engage with more rigorous news sources, the majority have neither the time nor the tools to do so, underscoring the urgent need for strengthened digital literacy education.

Online Interview with Youth Workers

Question 1: What are the biggest dreams and fears of the young people you work with?
The participant reported that many young people's dreams are linked to financial security and the ability to afford basic recreational activities. However, their biggest fears include the deterioration of social relationships, lack of accessible community spaces, and economic hardship. Young people often feel they lack spaces where they can relax and socialise without financial pressure. The cost of simple activities like bowling or go-karting was cited as a barrier that contributes to feelings of exclusion.

Question 2: What social problems concern young people most?
The main social issues identified were homelessness, poverty, and global conflicts. Younger children expressed fear about war, particularly in light of the Ukraine conflict. Older students showed more concern about environmental issues, social inequality, and the lack of effective communication among peers, often citing overreliance on digital devices as a cause of increased loneliness.

Question 3: What aspects of education most hinder young people's development?
The participant strongly criticized the education system for being overly demanding, outdated, and detached from young people's realities. Young people reported feeling unable to "stay children" due to academic pressures, excessive homework, and the expectation to constantly perform.

The education system was also seen as mismatched with contemporary digital environments, failing to adapt to the new ways young people learn and engage. Issues such as teacher shortages, curriculum overload, and stress-induced anxiety were frequently cited.

Question 4: What local policy changes would you recommend?

The participant proposed increasing the number of teachers, reducing class sizes, and providing more recreational activities for students and teachers. They stressed the importance of organizing family days, sports events, and recreation programs to prevent burnout among both students and teachers. Creating youth-friendly community spaces within schools, such as areas with foosball tables or quiet zones, was also suggested to promote relaxation and peer bonding.

Question 5: What European-level interventions could be helpful?

At the European level, the participant emphasized the need for free or affordable professional training for teachers, especially in fields such as special education and art therapy.They also called for increased funding to support educational innovation and infrastructure. There was strong support for initiatives that would bring environmental education, mental health promotion, and community-building activities into schools, ideally led by NGOs or supported through EU programs.

Question 6: What role can young people play in driving change?

The participant expressed optimism about young people's potential for change, but stressed that they often lack real opportunities to engage meaningfully.
Initiatives like student jobs, volunteering opportunities, and community service programs were seen as critical pathways to foster responsibility and empowerment.
However, the participant highlighted that without proper guidance, youth often miss out on these opportunities, either due to lack of information or because such activities are perceived as burdensome when made compulsory.

Question 7: How do young people access information and what challenges do they face?

The participant noted that young people mainly consume information through social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where content is often superficial or misleading. While a minority engage critically with news and public issues, the majority are exposed to sensationalist or irrelevant content, which diminishes their ability to process reliable information.

There was a strong call for more credible, youth-targeted platforms and better digital literacy education to help young people navigate information critically.

Comparison of results

1. Civic and Political Participation

Young people described diverse engagement in civic life, ranging from involvement in political youth wings and student associations to more informal, independent activism. Traditional participation channels were viewed as rigid and constrained – often dismissed with the refrain *"it's always been that way"* – which fuels frustration among youth. Participants voiced a strong desire for more innovative, horizontal forms of engagement, including digital platforms and direct community action. They emphasized that the problem is not youth apathy but rather poorly designed communication and outreach by institutions. Despite feeling occasionally powerless, the group maintained that change is possible if young people assert themselves and collaborate, favouring teamwork and collective initiatives over hierarchical approaches.

2. Economic Insecurity and Emigration

A sense of socio-economic precarity emerged as a unifying concern for the participants. They reported that instability in education, employment, and housing pervades their lives and hinders their ability to plan for a stable future. Many noted that emigration is increasingly seen as a necessity rather than a choice: a striking proportion of youth intend to leave Portugal after finishing their studies because they feel the domestic job market and opportunities are inadequate. In particular, the lack of affordable housing and low wages create a situation where achieving independence often means incurring crippling debt, a predicament that pushes young people to seek better prospects abroad. This "brain drain" was framed as a symptom of a system failing to retain its educated youth. Consequently, participants called for long-term national strategies to improve economic conditions, such as creating quality jobs and affordable living options, so that young people have compelling reasons to build their futures in their home country.

3. Education and School Experience

Education was identified as both a top priority and an area in need of significant improvement. The focus group underscored that schooling should be a foundation for opportunity, yet many found their current educational experience lacking. Participants criticized the prevalence of uninspiring, overly theoretical coursework and a curriculum that often feels disconnected from real-life skills.

They advocated for more practical and community-oriented learning — for example, projects tied to local issues or hands-on activities — to make education more engaging and relevant. At the same time, they raised concerns about the school environment: disrespect among peers, bullying, and even mistreatment by educators were mentioned as problems undermining a healthy learning atmosphere. The pressure-cooker nature of the system, marked by constant evaluation and high-stakes exams, takes an emotional toll on students (some noted severe anxiety and classmates in tears before assessments).

Far from being satisfied with the status quo, these young people's strong interest in education reflects a desire for change.
They called for reforms to modernize teaching methods, increase teacher accountability and support, and strengthen emotional support and citizenship education in schools, so that education not only imparts knowledge but also fosters well-being and personal growth.

4. Human Rights and Social Equality
Human rights and equality emerged as core values for the participants, who viewed them as essential to a just society. The youth consistently emphasized the importance of fundamental freedoms — especially freedom of expression and assembly — and the principle of equal treatment for all. They linked these rights to their everyday experiences, pointing out that when discrimination or bullying occurs (for instance, a teacher showing bias or peers engaging in harassment), it erodes their trust in institutions and society. Many of the young people are actively interested in social causes such as anti-racism and LGBTQ+ inclusion, seeing their advocacy as a way to contribute to positive change and "leave a mark" on society. They argued that genuine human-rights education is needed in schools to confront issues like racism, elitism, and homophobia head-on. In discussions, rights like access to housing, quality education, and safety from violence were highlighted as particularly urgent in their community context. Overall, the focus group conveyed that today's youth are keenly aware of social injustices and believe that upholding human rights and equality is the backbone of any improvements in other areas of life.

5. Technology and Information Challenges
The influence of technology and media on young people's lives was acknowledged as a double-edged sword. On one hand, digital tools and social networks enable new forms of connection and civic participation; on the other, they contribute to information overload and misinformation. Many participants admitted that they rely on social media (such as Instagram or TikTok) for news, which often leads to a fragmented, superficial understanding of issues.

They described the online information space as sometimes feeling like a *"mass of unfiltered noise,"* where it is difficult to discern reliable facts amid rumours and sensational content. This confusion breeds mistrust and a sense of powerlessness in tackling societal challenges. The group stressed the need for stronger digital literacy – both in schools and through youth programs – to help young people critically evaluate sources and escape echo chambers. They also noted that current institutional communication doesn't adequately reach youth: fast-paced, jargon-filled messaging alienates them, suggesting that simpler language and more interactive formats are needed to truly engage young audiences. Additionally, rapid technological change was a source of anxiety for some participants. Enthusiasm for innovation (like AI and automation) was tempered by fear that their traditional education and skill sets could become obsolete, underscoring a worry about society's ability to adapt to the digital age.

In summary, while these young people appreciate technology's benefits for learning and socializing, they urge a balance where its risks are managed — through better online moderation, clear age guidelines, and education — so that youth can safely navigate the digital world and use it as a tool for empowerment rather than harm.

6. Environmental and Climate Concerns

Climate change and environmental sustainability were discussed as important but somewhat abstract issues for the group. Initially, only a small portion of participants ranked the environment among their top concerns, reflecting a feeling that climate issues often seem distant from daily life. However, through discussion it became clear that the youth do recognize the fundamental nature of this challenge: several noted that without a habitable planet, no other rights or opportunities can matter. They acknowledged real environmental problems affecting their lives — such as pollution and loss of biodiversity — but explained that many peers struggle to feel an urgent personal connection to global problems like climate change. The focus group suggested that making environmental consequences more visible and relatable (for example, through local projects or education on tangible impacts) could increase young people's sense of urgency. Some participants admitted that an overload of dire information can lead to apathy, with a sentiment that "people think nothing can be done," which needs to be overcome with more empowering narratives. Indeed, by the end of their conversation, there was consensus that awareness must grow given climate change's overarching impact on all facets of life.

The youths advocated for stronger environmental policies and practices, such as stricter recycling laws and sustainability initiatives, starting from the local level up to national and European levels. Importantly, they saw themselves as having an active role in this arena: many insisted that even small personal actions — diligently recycling, reducing waste, caring for community spaces — do matter. As one participant put it, *"we are the future,"* implying that younger generations must champion and model eco-conscious behaviour now to secure a livable world for tomorrow.

7. Personal Well-Being and Security

Throughout the focus group, young people conveyed underlying anxieties about their personal well-being and safety in a rapidly changing world. They noted that recent global events — such as the Covid-19 pandemic and geopolitical conflicts — have created a pervasive sense of uncertainty. Even those who feel generally safe in their local towns expressed concern that *"you never know what might happen next,"* reflecting how unpredictable crises weigh on their minds. Some participants pointed to signs of rising insecurity in society (for example, citing local incidents of violence or crime) that make them worry about community safety. Additionally, the intense pressures they face in daily life contribute to mental and emotional strain.

Academic stress was a recurrent example: youths spoke of classmates experiencing extreme anxiety due to grades and exams, highlighting how the education system can negatively affect mental health. Feelings of loneliness and isolation were also acknowledged, as several young people recognised "solitude" as a real issue depicted in the exercises and mirrored in their own experiences. Despite these challenges, the group's perspective was not one of helplessness. They strongly believed in mutual support and collective resilience as a response to stress and insecurity. Many argued that working together — for instance, students supporting each other or youth cooperating with teachers and community members — is more effective for coping with difficulties than struggling alone. In essence, while Portuguese youth are grappling with uncertainty and personal pressures, they see hope in solidarity: by building supportive networks and open communication, they feel better equipped to handle threats to their well-being.

8. Community Initiatives and Local Engagement

Finally, the focus group highlighted a proactive streak among Hungarian young people in improving their immediate communities. Participants offered a variety of ideas for local initiatives that could enhance youth engagement and overall quality of life.

A common thread was the need for more accessible and youth-friendly spaces: they proposed creating or improving venues like cinemas, theatres, art spaces, and sports facilities to provide positive outlets and discourage talented young people from drifting away to bigger cities or abroad. Reliable public transportation was another priority, as better connectivity would allow minors and non-driving youth to participate in events and extracurricular activities beyond their neighbourhoods. The group also saw local culture and creativity as catalysts for community building – for example, organizing public events to showcase local artistic talent and bring people together outside of school settings. Interestingly, their sense of civic responsibility even extended to areas like animal welfare (suggesting upgrades to pet shelters and promoting responsible pet ownership) as part of a caring community. In the school context, they advocated for workshops to build confidence and skills (such as public speaking clubs) that would encourage greater student involvement and leadership. Additionally, several participants emphasized maintaining clean and safe public spaces: they imagined campaigns for litter cleanup, installing more rubbish bins, and even repairing damaged sidewalks to make their town more livable. These seemingly small improvements were seen as meaningful and attainable steps that young people could initiate. Overall, the youth in this focus group conveyed that strengthening their communities at the grassroots level is both a priority and a realistic avenue for change. By starting with local actions and collaboration, they believe they can foster a sense of belonging and make tangible improvements in daily life, demonstrating the positive impact of youth engagement on society.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

The findings of this **Bottom-up Analysis** represent a critical contribution to the overarching goals of the **EPIC_IDEA** project, offering deep, data-driven insights into the lived realities, aspirations, and challenges faced by young people across Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary.

These insights form the basis for concrete recommendations that can guide future project phases, to promote youth participation, diversity, and inclusion.

At the **heart** of this analysis is a clear and recurring theme: young people feel increasingly **disconnected from institutions and decision-making structures** that shape their lives. There is a persistent **lack of trust in traditional governance systems**—especially at national and local levels—driven by a perception that these bodies do not listen to or meaningfully engage with young people's concerns. Although some level of interaction occurs within educational environments, broader opportunities for civic engagement remain limited or poorly communicated. The report underscores the **urgent need for public institutions to reimagine their relationship with youth**—not simply as recipients of services, but as co-creators of policy and active contributors to community life.

Education emerges as both a cornerstone and a pressure point. On one hand, it is deeply valued as a tool for empowerment and societal transformation; on the other, it is experienced as a source of anxiety and inequality, particularly when combined with economic insecurity and uncertain job prospects. This duality is also reflected in the emotional landscape described by young people and observed by youth workers—a generation navigating high levels of stress and mental health challenges while simultaneously maintaining a hopeful, if fragile, outlook on the future.

Young people across the four countries express a **desire for safe spaces and trusted networks where they can explore their identities, share experiences, and engage in constructive dialogue.** Participation, as described by the respondents, is not limited to traditional forms of activism or institutional engagement; rather, it is perceived as a deeply personal and active process rooted in self-expression, belonging, and the pursuit of social justice. From cultural events to peer-led initiatives, young people show a strong preference for inclusive, grassroots actions that allow them to voice their opinions, confront discrimination, and create positive change in their communities.

The analysis also highlights the **central role of digital environments**, particularly social media, in shaping young people's access to information and social interaction. While these platforms offer visibility and connectivity, they also present risks in terms of misinformation and reduced critical thinking. As such, there is a growing need to equip young people with the tools and skills to navigate these digital landscapes responsibly and effectively.

Importantly, the country-specific findings reveal significant variation in youth agency and optimism. Portugal, for example, demonstrates a particularly strong sense of engagement and belief in youth-led change, likely reflecting successful youth policies and inclusive practices. In contrast, Hungary displays lower levels of trust and empowerment, pointing to the need for more targeted and context-sensitive interventions to reinforce civic engagement and build institutional credibility.

To support and sustain youth participation, it **is essential to invest in long-term strategies that prioritize inclusion, mentorship, and institutional responsiveness**. This includes ensuring access to mental health services, developing youth-friendly spaces, and embedding participatory practices in education systems. Moreover, **youth workers play an indispensable role** in bridging the gap between young people and institutions, and their capacity must be continuously strengthened to meet the evolving needs of the youth they serve.

In conclusion, the Bottom-up Analysis not only provides a snapshot of current trends in youth engagement but also serves as a **strategic roadmap for future action**. It confirms the necessity of listening to young people, amplifying their voices, and building collaborative systems that reflect their needs, values, and visions for the future. Through continued investment in inclusive and participatory structures, the European Union can foster a generation that feels not only represented but empowered to shape the democratic future of Europe.

In this sense, the **EPIC_IDEA project** represents a significant effort to engage young people in shaping the future of the EU, promoting democratic participation, and fostering an inclusive European society. By empowering young citizens and providing them with the tools to advocate for EU values, the project is helping to build a more cohesive and resilient Europe, where all voices are heard and valued.

ANNEX 1 – SURVEY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Demographic and Contextual Information

1. Age and gender
2. What is your main daily occupation?
3. What do you like to do in your spare time?
4. What are your dreams?
5. What are your concerns?

Inclusion and belonging

6. How diverse do you consider the city you live in (in terms of: culture, ethnicity, language, social background, religion)?
7. Do you think that the institutions (municipalities, schools, national government, European institutions) do enough to guarantee equity and respect for diversity?
8. Do you have any relevant relationship with one or more institutions? If yes, can you briefly describe it?)
9. How much do you think young people's voices are heard by institutions in decision-making processes?
10. Who do you feel hears the youngsters' voice the most?

Getting informed and participating

11. What does it mean for you to participate?
12. In what way do you get informed?
13. How do you rate the quality of the information you have access to?
14. In what ways do you participate/activate?
15. If you actively participate in movements, associations, groups, or political parties, which kind and which topic you address/focus on?

TOPICS

16. What topics do you think are the most important to address?

Environment (climate change, resource management, biodiversity…)

Society (inclusion, social well-being, culture…)

Human Rights (justice, peace, international cooperation)

Security (crimes, borders, radicalization)

Economy (equity, labour market, development…)

Technology (AI and automation, social media, digital infrastructures…)

17. Do you think that your actions can contribute to change?

18. How supported do you feel in the activities you do?

19. Who do you get support from?

Tell us more about it!

20. In addition to the topics, you usually focus on, please indicate other subjects or areas of interest in which you would like to be involved

ANNEX 2 – SURVEY FOR YOUHT WORKERS

Demographic and Contextual Information

1. Age and gender
2. What is your nationality and/or cultural background?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. Where are you currently working? What is your professional position and what are your main tasks?

Youth participation

5. When thinking of “youth participation”, what words come to your mind? Name max 3, separated by a comma.
6. In your experience, what makes youth participation important?
7. Did you have any training in the past 12 months on the topic of youth participation? If YES, please give us more information about the training(s): length, topic, focus, methodology, provider…
8. If you had to take a training on “youth participation” in the next months, what would you like it to focus upon?
9. Did you implement activities to foster participation in your daily activity with young people? 10b) If YES, please give us more information about the activity: which ones, how do they go, what are the impacts, …

Topics

10. How do you evaluate/self-assess your level of knowledge regarding the following topic?

Anti-Rumours

Future Thinking

Communication and campaigning

Advocacy

Engagement of young people

11. Are young people involved / do they participate in the managing or implementation of activities in your organization? If YES in which activities? How is their engagement fostered and supported? What are the effects on the young people themselves, on their peers, on the educators, on the community?

12. What would young people need in order to participate more?

ANNEX 3 – GUIDELINES FOR FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

Each online Focus Group lasted approximately 1h30/2h to allow everyone to express their thoughts while covering a wide range of topics. They covered the same sections of the survey, and a draft flow was suggested as follow:

Section 1 – Desires and Concerns | 10 - 15 min

Each country went over the most recurring desires and concerns that emerged in the surveys. Intra provided AI-generated images by entering these desires/concerns as prompts, and the initial activity, using visual tools, also acted as an icebreaker for the subsequent discussion.

Question: "These images were generated by the AI from the answers we collected in the surveys. What do you think they represent? Do/Can you relate to these desires/concerns?"

Based on the answers given by the participants, a follow-up question was proposed.

Section 2 – Topics | 30 - 45 min

This part of the discussion represented the core of the focus group, and therefore, more time was devoted to it. The aim was to gather insights on how young people perceived the main issues and which ones they considered most important to address.

The discussion included four questions:

- A question on the top-rated topic locally
- A question on the least-rated topic locally
- A question on the top-rated topic globally
- A question on the least-rated topic globally

Country	Top-rated locally	Least rated locally
Italy	Society (inclusion, social well-being, culture…)	Environment (climate change, resource management, biodiversity…)
Spain	Human Rights (justice, peace, international cooperation)	Technology (AI and automation, social media, digital infrastructures…)
Portugal	Human Rights (justice, peace, international cooperation)	Environment (climate change, resource management, biodiversity…)
Hungary	Education (accessibility, civic education, education innovation…) Security (crimes, borders, radicalization)	Environment (climate change, resource management, biodiversity…) Technology (AI and automation, social media, digital infrastructures…)

Top-rated globally	Least rated globally
Education Human Rights	Environment Technology

Sample of questions discussed were the following:

- What are the barriers to fulfilling your dreams?
- Why are you worried about your mental health?
- How does the non-fulfilment of human rights affect your daily life?
- Why do you think that technology seems to be the least important topic among young people?
- If we want to make a plan for youth participation and share it with public institutions, what response would we get back from them?
- What has been your experience with civic or political participation, and what motivated you to join this conversation?
- What do you make of the fact that many young people say they will emigrate after graduation?

- Do you believe education is truly accessible to everyone today?
- Do you feel empowered to tackle climate change as young people?
- What prejudices have you heard about people coming from another country?
- What should be done so that everyone is treated equally?

Section 3 – Inclusion and Belonging | 15 - 30 min

The third part focused on the relationship with institutions, how they were perceived, and what young people expected from them.

Question: "Imagine you wanted to organize [bottom-up activities] in your local context, what kind of support could/would you have received from the institution?"

Section 4 – Getting Informed and Participating | 15 – 30 min

This section focused on young people's perceptions of disinformation and fake news, especially online.

First question: "What were your experiences or thoughts about the way information was shared and communicated online?"

Follow-up question: "Imagine you could have created a new social network specializing in the dissemination of news, how would you have liked it to be organized in terms of information quality?"

EXAMPLES OF ONLINE INTERVIEWS:

- What is your role and what are your main responsibilities/tasks?
- Can you describe the young people you work with on a daily basis (age, background, family history...)?
- What do you think when we talk about youth participation?
- What do you think stimulates and hinders youth participation?
- If you think specifically about the young people you work with, does what you have said still apply?
- What can or should adults do to support young people in participatory processes? What do you think your role/contribution is as a youth worker?
- As a youth worker, what do you think are the biggest fears/dreams you perceive in the young people you work with?