EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.

⚠ *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).)*

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	Empowering youth Participation for Inclusive and plural Communities , EPIC_IDEA
Participant:	RPCI - REDE PORTUGUESA DAS CIDADES INTERCULTURAIS CRL
PIC number:	890276186

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	D23.1 (WP23)		
Event name:	Policy Lab with decision makers in Portugal		
Type:	Event		
In situ/online:	In situ		
Location:	Vila Verde, Portugal		
Date(s):	May 7th and 8th, 2026		
Website(s) (if any):	https://icei.it/en/progetti/epic_idea/		
Participants			
Female:	25		
Male:	15		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 [Portugal]:	40		
Total number of participants:	40	From total number of countries:	1

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

The Policy Lab was the third national meeting of the EPIC_IDEA project, serving as a structured forum for participatory governance and multi-sectoral dialogue. The meeting facilitated interaction between young people, youth workers and those responsible for formulating and implementing public policies, with the aim of fostering the equitable and meaningful participation of young people and promoting more informed and inclusive policy-making processes. Over two days in Vila Verde, young people nominated by the national consortium's member organisations took part in a capacity-building and co-creation process aimed at strengthening youth participation in public decision-making processes. The programme included sessions to raise awareness of active citizenship and democratic participation, as well as training to identify structural challenges and formulate concrete, well-founded and feasible proposals. The resulting proposals were the subject of a structured

dialogue among all those involved, with a view to defining commitments and their eventual integration into future public policy measures for the future of the European Union. Thus, by systematising and translating the proposals into jointly drafted policy recommendations, this process amplifies the voices of the younger generations and contributes to the sustainability of policies, with each person in a political role expected to commit to at least one measure. The costs have been fully covered by thethe project and by Vila Verde, including accommodation at the Hotel Vila Luena. Transport to the event and back home was the responsibility of each of the cities, and logistics during the event were provided by the co-organising bodies.

The consortium's partner organisations were responsible for mobilising the youth activists involved. Youth activists from the three cities and the European Intercultural Club took part; this included people who had already been involved in previous stages of the projects, as well as a small number of people who had only recently been contacted and who expressed a willingness to join this stage and also get involved in promoting the campaign.

The schedule and logistical details were discussed at preliminary meetings with the partner cities. The detailed programme, the timetable of activities and the venue, as well as authorisations for the use of images, were sent out in advance of the event. Registrations were made via a Google Form created for this purpose by the RPCI. RPCI contracted insurance for all young people who were not covered by the insurance provided by the cities as part of their own projects.

A total of 40 people took part in the event:

	Youth activists	Youth Workers	Decision Makers	TOTAL
RPCI	-	2	-	2
Clube Intercultural Europeu	2	1	-	3
Cascais	5	1	1	7
Santa Maria da Feira	5	2	1	8
Vila Verde	10	8	2	20
TOTAL	22	14	4	40

1. PRE-EVENT ANALYSIS: EXPECTATIONS AND YOUTH EXPECTATIONS

The Policy Lab Portugal began before the physical meeting, with participants being invited to reflect on social issues alongside older generations in their respective territories. This intergenerational baseline set the stage for a high-intensity encounter. Upon arrival at Vila Verde, a digital assessment revealed a group with a remarkably proactive disposition. The participants' initial "mindset" was measured at a weighted average of 3.96/5, indicating that they arrived not as passive observers, but as active contributors ready for intervention and debate. They were asked to respond to a Mentimeter survey with questions such as: How would you rate your mindset for participating in this policy lab? Do you feel comfortable discussing policy? What do you hope to achieve by the end of this policy lab?

The primary motivation identified by the youth was the "real opportunity to influence local policy," followed closely by the desire to meet peers from other cities and create innovative solutions. Their expectations were focused on concrete outcomes: they expressed a strong need to "have a voice"

and, crucially, to ensure a "political commitment" from the decision-makers. They sought more than just a training session; they demanded a platform where their proposals would be taken seriously by the municipal executives.

2. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK PLAN

Day 1: From Assessment and Mapping to the Participatory Process

The first day was strategically designed to build social capital and move the group from identifying general social concerns to articulating particular policy needs. Following a digital onboarding process via QR codes and an energetic "Human Bingo" session to break geographical silos, the afternoon shifted into an intensive participatory laboratory. The objective was to allow youth to experience a real collaborative process while concretizing problems that could be addressed through new local policies.

The 40 participants were organized into four groups, specifically mixed to ensure a diversity of ages, experiences, and home cities. Each group was composed of approximately five young people and two municipal staff members. Crucial to this dynamic was the assignment of specific roles: a young "Youth Councilor" with experience in assemblies served as the Facilitator to extract ideas and maintain focus, while municipal staff members acted as rapporteurs (recording all notes digitally for immediate reporting) and Timekeepers.

Within these groups, participants were tasked with investigating specific data and trend studies related to their chosen central problem. They were challenged to apply foresight techniques by answering the question: "If no action is taken now, what will this issue look like in 10 years?" To structure this diagnostic, they used a Stakeholder Mapping template to analyse how the challenge affects youth, schools, governments, companies, and NGOs, and to define the role of each actor in the solution. The day concluded with a "Large Fishbowl" plenary session (16:00 – 16:30), where a central group of representatives debated the findings while others listened and prepared for the next phase of co-creation.

Day 2: Co-creation, Branding, and Strategic Advocacy

The second day began at 09:15 with the "NINJA" dynamic, a high-energy morning energizer designed to stimulate focus and fast-paced interaction. The first work block focused on Future Thinking and the physical construction of solutions. Using the Serious Play methodology, teams built 3D models of their "2040 Success Scenario," representing a future where their social issue had been resolved. This was immediately followed by a Backcasting exercise, where groups worked backward to define the necessary milestones from 2040 to the present day (2026). This process allowed the youth to draft their final policy recommendations based on four essential elements: the Problem, the Impact, the Solution, and the concrete Action.

Following a mid-morning coffee break, the focus shifted to branding and communication. Under the guidance of the facilitation team, youth utilized Artificial Intelligence tools to develop a professional identity for their proposals, including slogans, logos, and the verbal structure of their pitch. The goal was to transform complex ideas into accessible and persuasive political messages.

The afternoon session marked the climax of the Policy Lab: the dialogue with institutions. The plenary session followed a highly structured "Fishbowl of Presentations & Feedback." Representatives delivered 10-minute pitches from the center of the circle to the political panel, which included Mayor Júlia Maria Caridade Rodrigues Fernandes, Vice-President Manuel de Oliveira Lopes, Councilor Beatriz Silva, and Department Head Helena Bonzinho. Simultaneously, all other participants provided real-time feedback.

3. YOUTH POLICY PROPOSALS

The policy lab resulted in four distinct and highly detailed recommendations:

Campaign "JOVENS EM AÇÃO" (Disinformation): This proposal tackles the "short-circuit in democracy" caused by the rapid spread of fake news and algorithm manipulation. Rather than top-down rules, the youth proposed a Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Program where trained youth act as digital

literacy agents. The plan includes a territorial diagnosis in schools and awareness workshops for parents, ensuring a holistic community defense against misinformation.

Campaign "HUMANIZA-TE" (Minority Rights): With the slogan "Respect builds bridges," this group focused on the isolation and discrimination faced by minority students. They proposed a non-formal education curriculum based on empathy and self-care, inspired by the Ubuntu Leaders Academy and the Escola da Ponte. The goal is to humanize schools by training both students and teachers in intercultural competences.

Housing Strategies ("Desalojados" & "The Best"): Recognizing housing as the primary barrier to youth emancipation, two groups presented structural solutions. These included fiscal reforms such as the reduction of IMI and IMT taxes for first-time buyers, municipal support for modular housing projects, and the creation of a permanent Citizens' Assembly for Housing. They also demanded financial literacy programs in schools to teach youth about taxes and bank loans.

4. EVALUATION AND QUALITATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

The comprehensive evaluation of the Policy Lab Portugal demonstrates a profound success that extends far beyond simple satisfaction metrics. While the quantitative data provided an exceptional baseline, with the performance of facilitators receiving a perfect 5/5 and both activities and logistics (accommodation and catering) scoring a near-perfect 4.9/5, it is the qualitative depth of the event that truly defines its impact. 100% of the participants explicitly confirmed that their initial expectations were met, with many noting that the experience exceeded their hopes for real civic involvement.

The qualitative impact began with the "Social Capital" simulation on the first day. By physically managing symbolic "social capital" representing reputation and voice, participants reported a visceral sense of frustration and empathy. This emotional anchoring was the catalyst for the high-level policy work that followed; youth did not just identify problems, they felt the urgency of the solutions. This was reflected in the words chosen to summarize the lab, which ranged from "Enriching" and "Brilliant" to "Fascinating" and "Discovery." The term "Participação Cívica" (Civic Participation) emerged as a central theme, highlighting that the youth felt like protagonists rather than mere attendees.

When analyzing the methodologies, participants identified the Pitch Construction and Backcasting as the most valuable tools for their practical future. This indicates that the lab succeeded in providing not just ideas, but a transferable "political toolkit." The "Fishbowl" debates were also highlighted as transformative, as they successfully dismantled the traditional hierarchical barriers between the youth and the municipal staff and decision makers, creating a space of mutual respect and horizontal collaboration.

Most significantly, the perception of Political Commitment was rated at a high weighted average of 4.1/5. The unscripted, 50-minute feedback session with Mayor Júlia Fernandes and the Councilors from Santa Maria da Feira and Cascais provided a tangible sense of agency. Participants noted that the decision-makers' willingness to listen and debate the technical feasibility of the "Humaniza-te" and "Jovens em Ação" programs was the ultimate validation of their work. The event concluded not with a farewell, but with a formal commitment to follow-up meetings, ensuring that the qualitative success of the lab translates into an actionable, and sustainable political legacy for the three municipalities involved.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).